

3 Racism in Nationalised States: A Framework for Comparative Research

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There is perhaps no other research field in the social sciences that is more politicised than discussions on the recent rise of racism. Many researchers actively promote such politicisation because according to a widely shared opinion '...the efficacy of a theory about race and racism is to be assessed in terms of the ways in which it renders possible resistance to racism', as Goldberg (1993, p.41) has put it. It would certainly be naive to believe that one could remove oneself completely from this arena of conflicts. Even simple and apparently purely pragmatic definitions of racism and xenophobia do imply a certain political perspective. It is, to borrow an epidemiological metaphor, in the cracks of the small details that the bacteria of ideology take hold.

Despite this, I stick to the pre-post-modern, thus modern, idea that it is not only possible to examine social scientific propositions with regard to their political implications and hidden messages, but also with regard to their empirical plausibility. Added to which, I still hold the currently rather unfashionable conviction that it is precisely this element which distinguishes scientific discourse from others such as political discourse. Statements about the relative validity of an explanation are what can be expected from such a strategy of argumentation, not, as Popper would have it, a decisive experiment allowing a theory to be 'falsified' (cf. Wimmer, 1995a, ch. 2).

In what follows I would first like to discuss the four most prominent explanations concerning xenophobia and racism found in the social science literature and confront them with the results of empirical research. The four models derive from rational choice theory, functionalism, sociobiology and discourse theory respectively.

Building on this, I wish to propose an alternative analytical perspective. In the Weberian view I will try to develop, xenophobia and racism are interpreted as an extreme form of nationalism, a consequence of the ordering of the modern world according to the principle of the nation-state. In which for the first time, notions of political legitimacy were fused with the idea of

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ethnic solidarity. Distinctions based on racial and/or ethnic markers were thus transformed into powerful elements of political discourse and practices of exclusion. In my view, future comparative research should be based on a deeper understanding of this relation between racism and political modernity. Some possible lines along which such a comparative research programme might be developed will be discussed in the final section.

It may be useful to define the concepts of xenophobia and racism before starting the discussion (see Miles, 1991, pp. 93–103; 1993, ch. 3; Taguieff, 1988). Five different ideological constructions of the relation between 'us' and 'them' can be distinguished. Together they form the repertoire of tropes from which modern discourses of exclusion are constructed. First, the fear of being 'inundated' by foreigners and estrangement from one's culture (fears of inundation). Second the idea that mixing different cultural or biological 'entities' is harmful (phobia of interbreeding and creolisation). Third, that marks of certain biological or cultural 'characteristics' are so 'profound', that they cannot be changed during the lifetime of an individual or history of a group (idea of impregnation). Fourth, a hierarchisation of the different entities in which one's own group comes first. Finally, the perception of a zero sum game between foreigners and 'ourselves'. In my opinion, this allows xenophobia and racism to be viewed as two points on a continuum of ever more exclusionist discourses. Fears of inundation, phobia of interbreeding and the perception of a zero sum game constitute a xenophobic worldview. Biological and 'cultural' racisms are additionally characterised by a hierarchic organisation of groups and the idea of impregnation.

Rational Choice Theory

According to one thesis xenophobia and racism stem from an intensive rivalry between migrants and *autochthons*. From the perspective of established inhabitants migrants compete for residential space and working opportunities especially when jobs and cheap housing are scarce, such as in times of economic crisis (for Germany: Von Freyberg, 1994 and Castles, 1987; for the Netherlands: Van Amersfoort, 1982; for the USA: Olzak, 1993). According to these authors, racist or xenophobic discourse helps to legitimate one's position in the struggle over scarce resources. The theoretical core of this argument is often a model of rational decision making (see Banton, 1983; Hechter, 1986, Van Den Berghe, 1997). The thesis thus takes the xenophobic vision of a wave of job seeking foreigners at face value which is not to say that it is an implausible one.

However, if we consider this diachronically, we realise that xenophobic fear of foreign domination are not anymore virulent when wages drop or unemployment rises—both indicators of intense competition in the job market. The Swiss case illustrates this point fairly well. An *Überfremdung*, a surplus of foreigners, was first 'diagnosed' in the 1880s. Complaints were heard from the working class of competition from Italian immigrants, from the Swiss-French about the political influence of Bismarck's Germans over their Alemannic countrymen, and from the bourgeois Swiss-Germans about the number of German workmen and journeymen (Imhof, 1993). There were even riots, as well as pogrom-style evictions of Italians in the Outer Sihl district, in Zurich towards the end of July 1896 (Hoffmann-Nowotny, 1992, pp. 79f.; compare for similar events in other European countries Lucassen, 1995). However, this first wave of fear of foreign domination occurred in a time of modest but steady economic growth (Ritzmann et al., 1995).

The same applies for the second wave, which occurred round 1917 (Romano, 1990). Data on real wages for this period are also available, and show that significant increases were recorded in the building and industrial sector (Ritzmann et al., 1995). Moreover, the percentage of foreigners in the residential population reached its peak in 1914 and dropped continuously after that, from 15.4 per cent to about five per cent at the beginning of World War II. Although direct competition for jobs may also have diminished during this period, the *Überfremdung* remained high on the political agenda until the mid-1930s (Romano, 1990). When voices hostile to foreigners rose again in the mid-1960s both the GNP and real wages were on the increase (until 1970), and full employment prevailed for a further decade.

However, one could object that such aggregate data say little about the competition in specific industries or regions. Unfortunately studies which measure competition selectively are still very rare. Indeed one of the most comprehensive and methodically reliable is a study by Olzak (1993), in which she set out to demonstrate that the ethnic conflicts and pro's tests in the USA between 1876 and 1914 could be explained by a competition model. Comparing the frequency of ethnic disputes, as reported in the press, with various measures of competition (occupational segregation, economic depression, state of work-force training, immigration rates, etc.), Olzak demonstrated that the immigration rate, which in this period attained its historic peak, had no influence on the amount of ethnic conflicts and protests. But the proportional change in these rates did have an effect (Olzak, 1993, pp. 78f.).

On closer examination, however, Olzak's study refutes rather than verifies the competition thesis: changes in immigration figures had no significant influence on the level or frequency of conflicts with *immigrants* (almost exclusively white at the time) but rather with those categorised as

It follows from this that the intensity of hostile feelings towards immigrants or ethnic minorities does not depend on the degree of labour market competition. It seems that xenophobia and racism are based on perceptions of equality and difference, of legitimate and illegitimate competition (Bélanger and Pinard, 1991) that cannot be deduced from the structures of competition in the labour market.

While this proposition runs contrary to much sociological and economic writing on xenophobia and racism, it seems to be widely accepted in social psychology. However, social psychologists rarely go beyond this point in the story (see Poppe, and Hagendoorn and Linssen in this volume), while the true challenge consists in understanding the dynamics behind the inclusion of *specific* groups within the sphere of legitimate competition or, conversely, why competition from certain *other* groups is perceived as unfair (see e.g., Windisch, 1978).

Functionalism and Sociobiology

According to a theses equally widespread at present, though no longer in academic circles, racism and xenophobia are seen as consequences of a clash of incompatible cultures. In contrast to immigrants from Southern or Eastern Europe those from the Third World are seen as incapable of assimilation. They come, as one well known European researcher has put it, from societies with a 'mainly agrarian and often semi-feudal or feudal structure... which internally is still in part strongly oriented to tribe and clan, perhaps equipped with religions which have not experienced the Reformation and Enlightenment'. In addition to this 'cultural incompatibility', low educational qualifications and professional experience are also blamed for the new immigrant's inability to integrate into the class structure of the host society, and therefore for his or her consequent ghettoisation as a marginalised sub-proletariat. It is not only the immigrant but also those culturally or even racially different who are, to follow this view, also favourite targets of xenophobic sentiments that spread in times of social crises (Hoffmann-Nowotny, 1992, pp.74, 22f., 24 and 25).

Thus, according to this functionalist view, it is the minorities' inability to integrate into the structure and culture of the host society that gives rise to the majority population's xenophobia. This, in turn, forces minorities to close their ranks, feeding perceptions of cultural difference and so on.

Immigrants of the most varied ancestry have heard this cultural incompatibility argument repeatedly during the course of history and have often proved it false. The following passage is taken from a work of no less

black or Chinese. Conflicts with 'blacks' amounted to 55 per cent; those with white immigrants to only 30 per cent (Olzak, 1993, pp. 77, 83), even though only approximately 200 000 'blacks' moved into the industrialising North between 1890 and 1910, and thus became competitors for the indigenous residents there (previous figures were insignificant). Paltry figures when compared with the one million people a year who immigrated—mainly from Central, Southern, and Eastern Europe between 1890 and 1914. At the same time, occupational segregation of 'blacks' increased while that of immigrants receded.¹ Thus direct competition between long-time residents and 'blacks' slackened while that with immigrants intensified.

An analysis of the data at the city level also shows that the degree of occupational segregation of immigrants had a greater statistical impact on violence against those regarded as 'black' than on the foreigners themselves, while the degree of occupational segregation of 'blacks' did not significantly influence the assaults on them. On the other hand, the percentage of 'blacks' in a residential population correlated with the acts of violence against them, while the proportion of immigrants did *not* coincide with the level of hostility toward them (Olzak, 1993).

Another line of criticism could be developed on the basis of a large number of studies from social psychology and sociology. In their overwhelming number they reach us that 'negative attitudes' towards foreigners do not prevail especially among people who are unemployed² nor among those who fear the loss of their job (Hoskin, 1985, pp. 14f.; Silbermann and Hüser, 1995, pp. 73–6), or who worked alongside foreigners (Hoffmann-Nowotny, 1973, p. 87; Silbermann and Hüser, 1995, pp. 60–3).³ It should also be noted that, at least since World War II, real competition for jobs between native- and foreign-born has been rather limited. Among economists, to be sure, intense discussion persists if immigrants replace or supplement the indigenous work force. However, Rürup and Sesselmeier (1993, p. 289) conclude in their overview that the supplementation thesis must be viewed 'as the more relevant and until now the clearly better corroborated' (for Switzerland see Ritschard, 1982; for the USA see Borjas, 1990; Tapinos and Ruyg's (1994) review of various studies comes to the same conclusion).

Incidentally, the simple competition thesis also fails to account for the xenophobes' motivation, although rational choice theory refers to this specifically. Thus analyses of Swiss voting results show that in acceptance of more restrictive immigration laws or rejection of improved legal status for foreigners, fear of labour market competition plays a less significant role than generalised fears of loss of social status and identity (Linder, 1993, p. 157). Similar motives also stir up racist football fans, such as those in London's East End (Cohen, 1991, pp. 323ff.).

individuals of 'mixed descent' migrated from the former colony to the Netherlands over a short period of time. Although public opinion and governmental experts regarded them to be culturally completely different, not blessed with a 'Protestant work ethos', they could not be refused entry because they possessed Dutch citizenship. Thanks to a remarkable social effort, these immigrants were so completely integrated into the Dutch labour market and dispersed through mixed residential areas that by the mid-1970s they were no longer clearly discernible as a minority group (Van Amersfoort, 1982, ch. 7).⁴ The question remains open as to under which conditions such a result can be expected and, if this one example is reason enough to push for compulsory assimilation as a policy as well as the allocation of the necessary means to implement it. What the example does demonstrate is that considerable 'objective cultural distances' and degrees of 'racial distinctiveness' can be overcome simply by defining a group of immigrants as 'belonging' to the national 'we' and thus entitled to be cared for by the state. Racism as an extreme form of ethnocentrism is by no means an 'inevitable' outcome of the confrontation of culturally and/or racially clearly discernible populations, as some sociobiological approaches imply (van den Berghe, 1978).

My second example is taken from the history of immigration to the United States. Chinese labourers migrated from California to the Mississippi delta in the 1870s. There they joined free blacks as part of the 'coloured' agricultural labour force in the race-segregated society of the American South. The Chinese immigrants and their children managed gradually to cross the racial divide by distancing themselves socially from blacks and adopting distinctive elements from southern white culture (Loewen, 1971).

As a last example, I refer to Brazil (see Banton, 1983, ch. 3). Despite the recent criticism of the myth of Brazilian racial democracy (Skidmore, 1993), it has been shown that a mixed-race population does not necessarily segregate or have to organise itself in a racially defined hierarchy. The contrast to the US is impressive enough: There, even with upward social mobility, 'blacks' find themselves again in *black* ghettos—this time in the suburbs (Alba and Logan, 1993). Incidentally, studies on segregation in the USA also make it clear that this is due less to 'cultural distance' than to rejection by the white middle class. After all, in the case of Asian immigrants a spatial desegregation occurs concomitant with their upward social mobility—a phenomenon independent of the degree of cultural assimilation (Alba and Logan, 1993). Again the *perception* of incompatibility and unbridgeable cultural distance must be explained: What leads to segregational behaviour if the 'objective' cultural or 'racial distinctiveness' between *autochthons* and immigrants are not the decisive factors?

than Thomas Jefferson. It refers to the immigration of Germans to the USA during the eighteenth century and deserves to be quoted at length:

It is for the happiness of those united in society to harmonise as much as possible in matters which they must of necessity transact together...Every species of government has its specific principles. Ours perhaps are more peculiar than those of any other in the universe. It is a composition of the freest principles of the English constitution, with others derived from natural right and natural reason. To these nothing can be more opposed than the maxims of absolute monarchies. Yet, from such, we are to expect the greatest number of emigrants. They will bring with them the principles of the governments they leave, imbibed in their early youth; or, if able to throw them off, it will be in exchange for an unbounded licentiousness, passing, as is usual, from one extreme to another. It would be a miracle were they to stop precisely at the point of temperate liberty. (Jefferson, 1972, pp. 84f.)

The Irish and Polish immigrants of the nineteenth century were in the eyes of the British officials equally as incapable of assimilation (Miles, 1982). The same holds true for Irish, Jewish and Italian newcomers during the high-water mark of mass immigration to the United States in the early decades of this century. There is ample evidence that native-born whites perceived these immigrants as racially distinct from themselves and incapable of assimilation and that such perceptions blossomed into full-blown racist theorising during that period (Higham, 1970; Jacobson, 1998). Finally, in an official report from the 1960s, Swiss officials considered Italian migrants security risks because they had 'an entirely different attitude towards the state and the community'. Especially the poorer and uneducated among them were found to be traditionally 'more or less hostile to state power' (cited in Hoffmann-Nowotny, 1992, p. 81). Despite these fears the Germans, Irish, Jews and Italians in the US, as well as the Irish in Great Britain, and the Italians in Switzerland (Hoffmann-Nowotny and Hondrich, 1982) were able to integrate themselves into their 'host' society. Xenophobic feelings against them have largely disappeared (for the case of the Italians, see Hoffmann-Nowotny Bösch, Romano and Stolz, 1997).

One could retort as follows, giving the functionalist argument a sociobiological overtone. The fear that cultural incompatibility will lead to discrimination against immigrants, ghettoisation and outbursts of xenophobic hatred has indeed been falsely expressed at times. But it applies precisely if 'objective cultural distance' is actually too great or when 'racial barriers' divide immigrant and native-born, which has not been the case in the examples given above. Three examples can be given to contradict this reformulation.

After the independence of Indonesia, several hundreds of thousands of

A final argument is of a rather theoretical nature. A static and essentialist definition of culture, as was characteristic of social anthropological discourse until the 1960s, still forms the basis for the conception of cultural incompatibility (see the critique by Castles, 1993). Yet in the meantime it is considered to be outdated in this discipline, with discussion focusing on individual and sub-cultural variability, and the processual character and strategic adaptability of cultural practice (compare Wimmer, 1996b).

These critical remarks should in no way be taken to refute the considerable orientation problems that can be experienced, especially by first generation immigrants, due to cultural differences, nor that the presence of immigrants can cause confusion, fear, and defensive reactions among the longer established inhabitants. The issue is only to what extent the degree of cultural difference is responsible for the intensity of rejection. In view of the evidence of the vastly differing abilities of various immigration countries to 'absorb' immigrants from other cultures or 'races', we can conclude that the perception of difference and menace is not directly linked in a straightforward way to objective differences between members of a society. Again, the real task rests in discovering the mechanism which could account for the perception of certain groups at certain points in time and in certain places as foreign while they are perceived as familiar in other circumstances.

Discourse Theory

In the approach that dominates the field of discussion at the moment, at least in the disciplines of sociology and anthropology, this critique is radicalised to its extremes. The analytical relevance and even the empirical existence of cultural differences are simply denied. According to a number of discourse theories currently *en vogue*, it is no longer the immigrants and their characteristics who are focused upon but the discourse of those who speak of them. The discursive construction of unbridgeable cultural or racial otherness helps to exclude the immigrants and ethnic minorities from the core social group and to establish domination over them.

Above all it is those in official or semi-official positions of power who create this discourse of exclusion and self-empowerment, and institutionalise it in multicultural social work or in immigration policies. In this way the consequences of their own politics are made invisible because the cultural difference of the immigrants is made to bear the blame for their exclusion and impoverishment while xenophobia can be explained as cultural conflict. At the same time a definition of the social situation can be imposed which makes the 'immigration problem' responsible even for the general crisis in

political legitimacy and for economic difficulties. 'Ethnics' are categorised as different and are separated, through administrative and discursive practices, from the 'general' population, although they largely share the same culture of mass consumption (Radtke, 1990). As a consequence a 'sociogenesis of ethnic minorities' takes place (Dittrich and Radtke, 1990; Bukow, 1992).

These discursive practices represent a breeding ground, so the argument goes, in which normal, everyday racism as well as politically-organised right wing extremism can thrive. The multicultural idea that every culture should be allowed its place to flourish is open to reinterpretation as the right of *autochthons* to defend their culture and homeland against the threat of cultural creolisation (for France, see Silvermann, 1992; for the Netherlands, Van Dijk, 1991; for Great Britain, Solomos, 1988).

In the aftermath of the British study by Robert Miles (most recently, 1993), 'racist' immigration discourses and administrative measures in France (Silvermann, 1992), the Netherlands (Schuster), and Australia (Castles, 1993) have been examined. Critics of the multicultural social policy of the United Kingdom (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992), the Netherlands (Essed, 1992), Sweden (Alund), Germany (Radtke, 1990), New Zealand (Wetherell and Potter, 1993), and Australia (Castles) orient themselves on this theoretical perspective.

We owe an important insight to such analyses: official or semi-official discourse offers a structure of opportunity to which immigrant groups can relate (compare the sample case of Padilla, 1986), as much as groups hostile to them can. To be sure, these opportunities are not always perceived—or, if so, perhaps with completely different political consequences than the ones intended. Individual groups can promote their own views, contrary to the intentions of the entire publishing, political, bureaucratic, and economic elite of a country. The 'ethnic revival' in the US, for example, directed itself *against* the 'melting pot' model of the majority population and the state apparatus. The same can be shown for ethnic movements in the United Kingdom (Werbner, 1996) or Mexico (Wimmer, 1993).

Additionally the majority's perception of basic social problems can develop independently from those held by the national elites. Swiss history for example shows very clearly that the change in official immigration policy and discourse towards a more restrictive model around 1970 occurred only as a *reaction* to nationalist and xenophobic social movements that had first developed among unionised members of the working class (Wimmer, 1998).

The Dutch case illustrates this point even more clearly. Rath (1993) has shown that Dutch official discourse on immigration and the integration of 'ethnic minorities' cannot be interpreted as 'racist', if one takes the two minimum requirements for a definition of racism to be an acceptance of

cultural or racial hierarchy and an anti-assimilationist stance. Nevertheless, there have been racist and xenophobic political movements in the Netherlands just as in other European countries.

Thus reality effects are not only to be attributed to the discourses of those groups holding the power to define official social categories.⁵ Instead, what must be analysed are the conditions under which these discourses spread within a population and are perceived as credible. The converse is also to be expected: that official views and policies only react to public sentiments and grassroots protest movements. If, however, institutionalised discourses are credited à la Foucault with quasi-magic power and if the concept of society is limited to that of the field of discourses, the conditions for the formation of such social movements—of majorities and minorities—vanish from sight (see Wimmer, 1991). To present such an analysis of discursive shifts, we therefore have to take into consideration the non-discursive conditions that influence the acceptance of different points of view, classifications, and problem-definitions.

Struggling over Collective Goods

In order to develop a political economy of racist discourse, we first have to understand how notions of culture and identity are intertwined with the political structures of modern societies. It is my aim to show in this section that racism and xenophobia are directly linked to the basic characteristics of the nation-state, the key political institution of modern societies. Racism and xenophobia are a consequence of the bundling of the interests and ideas of the members of the nation-state in a way that produces highly integrated communities within the modern world society. This certainly does not imply that xenophobia—for example in the form of anti-Judaism—did not exist before the rise of the nation-state (see the following section). It does mean, however, that xenophobic discourses of exclusion can only have gained the degree of legitimacy and political power that they have had in modern times, because politics is seen as a matter of representing an ethnically defined people in whose interests the state is supposed to act.

The formation of nation-states can thus be analysed as a process of social closure—to use a term of Max Weber's again. Let me briefly mention three aspects of this process of closure, a symbolic, a legal and a political one, before addressing the relationship between this process and racist social movements in more detail.

First, in the late nineteenth century Benedict Anderson's now proverbial 'imagined' community came into being, that is the conception of a community sharing a common origin, historical experience, and political destiny. In Switzerland, for example, this representation centres on a story of common descent from mythic pastoralists and peasants, united in the struggle for freedom and grouped around a heroic alpine landscape (see Marchal and Mattioli, 1992).⁶ Such imaginings implied a new relationship towards territoriality: The immediate surroundings of a settlement, bound by relations of friendship, kinship, and profession, were no longer the horizon for expectations of solidarity. The quasi-familial idea of mutual bonds and assistance was extended to the national group.⁷ The limits of state territory now formed the line beyond which the world of insecurities and dangers began.

The second point is even more important: The new order not only created an imagined community of the kind just described, but also a real community of interests. Still, at the beginning of the last century, all inhabitants of a territory were members of the 'union of citizens' without regard to their linguistic affiliation or cultural origin. The rights of citizenship lapsed after permanent emigration. Beginning in the 1850s, however, citizenship and national membership were fused and the principle of residence was replaced by life-long membership in the club of citizens (for Germany, see Franz, 1992; for France, Withol de Wenden, 1992; for a comparison of the two countries, Brubaker, 1992). The nation-state became the unit within which, after a long period of internal warfare and revolutionary upheavals, citizens were granted the right to freedom of trade within the national boundaries, equality before the law, democratically based socio-political participation, and, finally, varying social rights along the lines of a liberal, constitutional and welfare state society (see Marshall, 1950; de Swaan, 1993; Lucassen, 1995). From here on the rights of participation and solidarity appeared as the collective wealth of a nation and the state as its guardian. In other words, the institution of citizenship can be interpreted as a form of social closure (Brubaker, 1992, ch. 1; Wimmer, 1996a).

The third aspect of the formation of the nation-state is the process of political closure along national lines. Contrary to that of multicultural empires like the Austro-Hungarian monarchy or the Ottoman sultanate, the political process in modern nation-states became and is still highly ethnicised. Access to state power and access to services of the new bureaucracy were restricted to those who could show themselves to be part of the national community. An administrative or military ruling class of 'ethnic others', like the Mamelukes or the Janissaries, became unthinkable; the rule of French-speaking lords over German-speaking peasants was now seen as a scandal

(compare Kappeler, 1992) because the only legitimate form of government had become the rule of like over like (Geertz, 1977; Kedourie, 1988). The ideal of popular sovereignty and the claim to national self-determination were inter-twined in the political thinking of the nineteenth century nationalist movements. These became the twin principles of the modern nation-state. Seen together, the symbolic, legal and political closure along national lines had the effect that state, culture, and territory are now perceived as belonging to the members of the nation (see Handler, 1991; Malkki, 1990). The state and its territory are owned by the people who have been united into a national community of generalised solidarity.

Why has this nationalistic self-image and the political institution of the nation-state been so successful? According to the argument followed here, the nation-state does not appear as a functional necessity of highly differentiated societies (contrary, e.g., to Gellner, 1991). Nor does it automatically result from the rise to power of the bourgeoisie—as Marxists would have it. Rather, it is to be interpreted as the outcome of a successful compromise of interests between different social groups: an exchange of the guarantee of political loyalty for the promise of participation and security. Similarly, the institutional arrangements of the nation-state, a constitution, rules to resolve conflicts, a specific shaping of political and social rights, etc., are negotiated between different interest groups and thus reflect the balance of power between them and their varying capacities to enforce their vision of society.

Of course this social compact between elites and various component elements within society developed only gradually in the course of a long and painful history of struggles over inclusion and exclusion. It is significant that racist constructions were initially used as ideological tools to legitimate the marginalisation of peasant and proletarian sections of the society, and were not directed against non-national 'others' until a later stage of the institutionalisation of the nation-state, as Robert Miles (1993, ch. 3) has recently shown. This process of gradual inclusion

... facilitate[d] the ideological identification of certain social strata within the sub-ordinate classes (which are defined as belonging and therefore as having a natural right of access to scarce rights and resources) with the institutions responsible for the organisation of production and distribution of material resources and political rights (i.e., with capitalists and the institutions of the local and the national state). (Miles, 1993, p. 102)

Periodically this institutional arrangement and the nationalistic self-image associated with it runs into a crisis; the 'social contract' breaks down because the balance of forces between the different groups has changed during the

course of economic and political developments. The space available here does not allow for detailed discussion, but perhaps a reminder is necessary that this does not happen *because* of higher immigration rates. Clear signs of times of crisis are rising rates of suicide and criminality, as well as the appearance of social movements which try to enforce their vision of the future.⁸

One of these projects for the future consists of revitalising the national community by insisting on the right of the 'legitimate owners' of the state and territory to a privileged seat in the theatre of society. During times of intensified social conflicts and general disorientation, appeals for national solidarity aim to safeguard the rights and privileges of the *autochthons* that the state is supposed to protect. Whoever has the shortest or most marginalised history of participation in the formation of the nation-state—immigrants or ethnic minorities who have been excluded from the mainstream of national history—appears as an additional threat to the now precarious social union. In the eyes of the xenophobes there is a zero-sum game to be played out for the right to the collective wealth gained by joint work and suffering, a fight for the institutionalised promises of solidarity.

The 'others' become strangers, intruders in an ideal community of nation or race—the true causes, even, of the break-up of this communal harmony and therefore those responsible for the many insecurities that the future seems to bring. A kind of 'moral panic' spreads, to borrow a term from Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994), the fear of a chaotic breakdown of the social world triggered by the released flood of foreigners. When the 'presumption of loyalty' (Weber) is abandoned, the cultural distance to the strangers seems to become insurmountable and competition for jobs and housing is seen as illegitimate and unfair—independently, as we have seen, from objective cultural distances and the structural segregation in the labour market.

Rather, it is especially those groups seen as traitors to the national political project who are hardest hit by xenophobic exclusion, as is today the case with Muslim minorities stereotyped as fundamentalists. Immigrant groups with high unemployment rates or asylum seekers also become targets of xenophobic hatred, because they seem to hinder the state in its true task, namely to look after the well-being of its 'owners' (compare Willems, 1995: pp. 517f.). Social workers, liberal big business, advocates of a multicultural society and the state who is seemingly unwilling to take action are seen as traitors to the common national cause (see the case study in Göran, 1991).

In the radicalised, racist versions of this vision the 'people' therefore have to take things into their own hands and stop the 'others' from 'invading' one's territory. A Manichean view of a fight between the morally superior 'nations', 'cultures' or 'races' and the barbarian ones is developed. Since

neither accommodation nor assimilation is seen as a desirable or possible solution to this conflict, every measure to segregate the groups involved and to restore the morally sanctioned hierarchy between them becomes legitimate, even acts of violence or overt discrimination.

Such a xenophobic or racist way of interpreting the social crisis does not appeal equally to all members of a society. Shifts in social status and the many intricate balances of power threaten the prestige and socioeconomic standing of some groups more than others. It is these downwardly mobile groups that are most likely to resort to such methods of ensuring a future because they seem more dependent on mechanisms of solidarity organised by a nation-state.⁹ With the current accelerated growth of the tertiary sector, and especially of the information industry, along with the corresponding decline of other economic sectors (see Klauder, 1993), this scenario holds most true for those with weak educational backgrounds. There are many studies on the social distribution of xenophobic attitudes (Hoffmann-Nowotny, 1978, pp. 88, 103, 105, 108; Wagner and Schönbach, 1984; Becker, 1993; Linder, 1993; Mugny et al., 1991; Willems, 1995) and of the composition of the electorate of xenophobic right wing parties (Niedermaier, 1990, pp. 572, 576; Betz, 1991, pp. 12f.; Winkler, 1994) that have shown this.

Similar conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of past waves of xenophobic movements. The most advanced research has been done on the rise of the National Socialist Workers Party in Germany. Falter (1991) found that it was the established Protestant middle classes and the rural proletariat who formed the foci of support for the Nazis' political programme. Both groups were clear victims of the industrialisation process and were threatened by a loss of social standing.

In the eyes of such groups the territorial dimension of the national community is of special importance (Waldmann, 1989); solidarity at the borough or village level becomes a mini-model of the nation. The physical presence or visibility of foreigners in these social spaces—and especially their integration in local schools and communal institutions—nurtures perceptions of invasion, inundation, and existential rivalry in times when the social contract ruptures and promises of a future become rare assets (see the case studies of Cohen, 1991; de Jong, 1989).¹⁰

Xenophobic and racist perceptions of social reality therefore do not become acute because they are strategically instrumental in a fight for scarce jobs or housing. Neither does it make much sense to interpret them as a result of a culture clash caused by migratory movements across countries and continents. Nor are they mere radicalisations of the institutionalised discourse of exclusion and devaluation that political and administrative elites generate in order to overcome deficits in political legitimacy.

According to the hypothesis I am developing, xenophobia and racism are linked in a much more fundamental way to the basic principles of modern societies. They are the result of basing collective identities, participatory rights and of organising the political process on the idea of a national community. In other words, xenophobia and racism are an integral part of the institutional order of the nation-state or as Etienne Balibar so elegantly expresses it, they are 'an inner complement of nationalism and always exceed it' (Balibar, 1988, author translation).

Perspectives for Comparative Research

This is, of course, merely an outline of an explanatory approach, and not an elaborated theory already founded in empirical detail, although I have included as much empirical research as possible in order to establish a comparative base for the argument presented here. The theoretical outline, on the other hand, could just as well be used as a guideline for the design of future comparative research.

A theory, according to which racism and xenophobia perform an integral function in the modern nation-state opens up three different axes of comparison. First, a systematic study of the emergence of xenophobic and racist discourses during the process of nation-state formation could tell us much about the difference between pre-modern and modern forms of exclusion and inclusion. Whereas older forms were based on sacred hierarchies of status groups without clear territorial connotations, the new ones are constructed around the horizontal distinction between territorialised ethnic or national groups (cf. Wimmer, 1996c). Consequently, in pre-modern empires the most crisis-ridden, dangerous and thus most zealously protected 'border' was the one between the palace of the nobles and the rest of the town or village. In the new order of nation-states, however, it is the frontiers between national territories that become the focus of an almost ritualised fear of social disorder (cf. Wilson and Donnan, 1998).

According to the inner logic of these distinctively modern forms of exclusion, the stranger within the national territory becomes even more dangerous than the one lurking on the other side of the frontiers, he or she is the demonised fifth column secreted within one's group. While the stranger 'out there' has become the object of systematised negative stereotyping and the enemy of innumerable nationalist wars (cf. Wimmer, 1997), the stranger within has been the target of the innumerable waves of xenophobia that have swept most Western countries since at least the middle of the nineteenth century.

We would expect racist forms of discrimination and exclusion to flourish exactly at that moment when groups hitherto excluded from the national 'we' gain full citizenship status and thus access to the collective goods of the nation. Two of the most virulent and violent forms of racism, those against Jews and 'blacks', seem to correspond to this hypothesis. Before the formation of modern nation-states, Jews and 'blacks' were, in law and in practice, relegated to the bottom of the social hierarchy. They were so on the basis of the distinction between Christian and non-Christian and between civilised and non-civilised peoples respectively. It is only after the abolishment of slavery and after the so-called emancipation of the Jews, thus after their inclusion into the community of citizens, that modern forms of racist discrimination and hatred have developed against both groups (cf. Geiss, 1988). Future research from such a historical and comparative point of view would surely lead to a revision of the hypothesis and to a much richer and more finely textured account of the relations between racism/xenophobia and political modernity.¹¹

Apart from such an analysis of long-term historical change, shorter periods within the modern epoch could be focussed on for comparative research. Xenophobic attitudes spread into and retreat from the public sphere, evicting or giving way to other vehicles for enacting the national drama: the developmentalist optimism of the 1950s and 60s for example, or the *fin de siècle*-songs of national decay. Such cycles of expansion and contraction have been traced empirically using, for example, longitudinal media content analysis (Imhof, 1996). The task for future research would consist of relating these waves of xenophobic discourses to indicators for downward and upward social mobility. According to the theory outlined here, a clear correlation should be discernible between the degree of status loss and the penetration of the public sphere by xenophobic discourses. This relationship would certainly not be a straightforward one, because it is mediated by the formation of social movements and the various degrees of access these have to the sphere of public representations (see Statham and Koopmans, ch. 7).

The second dimension of a comparative research programme would consist of country or regional comparisons. Two possible research strategies come to my mind. The first one would consist of a comparison of the main targets of xenophobic discourses of exclusion. One could ask, for example, why Muslim communities apparently face more xenophobic rejection in France than they do in the Netherlands. According to the approach developed here, which group is perceived as a danger to the national community would depend on the model of social cohesion around which a national community has been imagined (cf. Schiffauer, 1993). In France, where the nation is conceptualised along republican ideals of democracy, militant Islam with its

blending of religion and politics can easily be portrayed as the antithesis to the very *raison d'être* of the French nation-state. In the Netherlands, the nation has, since the emancipation of the catholic groups, been imagined (and organised) as a collection of various, religiously defined social pillars. Hence adding another non-Christian pillar to the Dutch constitutional state does not seem to be an insurmountable difficulty (cf. Mahnig, 1998).

Such comparative perspectives could equally be developed on a regional level. Cole (1997) has shown, for example, that Sicilian members of the working class feel devalued and discriminated against by their fellow countrymen from the North; this explains their rather distant attitude towards the encompassing notion of Italianness and their astonishing openness towards other 'humble people' arriving from abroad. In other words, working class Sicilians do not feel part of the national contract that has developed around the central state and have consequently held on to other, non-nationalised discourses of belonging (as do other sections of Italian society, albeit for other reasons). A similar study among Northerners from the same social background (or among Sicilian workers that emigrated to the North) would be of great interest. In any case, much more comparative research based on rigorous methodology and data analysis is needed in order to understand the logic according to which racist and xenophobic discourses are applied to and shifted around the various possible targets.

As a second strategy of regional comparison, we should try to compare the *degrees* of xenophobic rejection between different countries or regions within countries. Why is xenophobia a more common reaction in Rotterdam than in Amsterdam, as Chris Husband asked during the conference of which this collection is the record? Why, in the recent Eurobarometer questionnaire, did Belgian citizens choose, far more so than any other participating country, to place their crosses in those boxes that researchers take as indicators for xenophobia? According to the theory of xenophobia as ultra-nationalism, these differences should again be explained by the relative degree of downward social mobility in different regions and countries. The strategy of assuring one's future by an appeal to the national community, excluding those perceived as a threat to its hyper-familial bonds of solidarity, only makes sense for those who see a dark future and are thus prepared to defend their privileges as members of the core national group. Regions of heavy de-industrialisation, such as the port city of Rotterdam, especially when compared to the thriving 'global city' of Amsterdam, or Germany's *neue Länder* (Castner and Castner, 1992) which suffered a collective loss of status and security after their exposure to market mechanisms, are therefore supposed to be centres of xenophobic activity. It is interesting to emphasise, as the case of the *neue Länder* so clearly does, that these mechanisms seem to

work independently of demographic processes such as those measured by immigration rates or percentage of foreign born (weather naturalised or not). However, these are mere hypothesis that would have to be corroborated by solid cross-national and cross-regional comparisons—a research strategy that has, astonishingly enough, not yet been developed in this field.

Table 3.1 summarises the possibilities for future comparative research that flow on from the approach outlined in this chapter. It is obviously a very ambitious programme. Most of the questions asked require data still lacking, cross-nationally valid indicators have yet to be developed, historical archives have yet to be scoured. Not to mention the usual difficulties of comparative research, where *ceteris* constantly refuse to be *paribus* and where we easily get lost in contextualisations and historical specifications.

Table 3.1 Possibilities for Future Comparative Research

Unit of comparison	Object of comparison	Hypothesis
Same society, different periods in time	Epochal shifts in discourses of exclusion (pre-modern to modern)	The process of nation-state formation changes main discourses of exclusion (from hierarchical, non-territorialised ideologies of exclusion to vertical, territorialised forms based on ethnic/racial distinctions) Access to citizenship by groups considered to be outside the national community results in xenophobic/racist rejection of these groups
Same time, different societies or sub-societies	Fluctuations in success of xenophobic/racist discourses (in modern societies)	Xenophobic attitudes spread when processes of downward social mobility take on momentum
Same time, different societies or sub-societies	Target group of racist and xenophobic discourses of exclusion	Targets depends on the model of social cohesion around which the national community is imagined and institutionally organised
Same time, different societies or sub-societies	Different degrees of success of xenophobic discourses	Racist and xenophobic discourses are more readily accepted and reproduced where processes of downward social mobility are strong (e.g., in de-industrialising regions)

At present, much writing on racism and xenophobia comes close to witch hunting in areas most of us had until recently considered to be safe: liberalism's racist shadow was exposed (Goldberg, 1993); multiculturalism was deconstructed until its neo-racist bones lay bare to the sun (Essed, 1992); most recently anti-racism was dismantled as a mirror-image of racism (Taguieff, 1996), to list but a few. Racism seems to lurk behind every corner in the post-modern labyrinth of thought, and thus its focus and focus are nowhere. Going beyond this literature of denouncement implies a change of strategy and of reasoning, away from the deconstruction of texts, allusions to hidden meanings, and the revelations of opaque structures, and towards an empirically dense and argumentatively solid research on a comparative basis. If this will lead us not only to a better intellectual understanding of the dynamics underpinning the production of racist and xenophobic discourse and practice, but also to a new and more effective way of countering them, it would be more than we ever could have hoped for.

Notes

- 1 Olzak, 1993: p.94, footnote; ch.8 for the period between 1870 and 1880; ch. 9 for the entire period.
- 2 Falter (1991, ch. 8.2) reached this conclusion in his analysis of voting behaviour during the rise of the National Socialists in Germany. The lower the rate of unemployment in a region, the more success they had at the polls. In areas with high unemployment, on the other hand, the Communist Party proved very popular.
A questionnaire by Sinus (1983, cited in Heitmeyer 1992: p. 45) measuring unemployed German youths' perception of competition appears to produce results contrary to my thesis. The percentage of officially or unofficially unemployed youths believing that foreigners took jobs was round the 20 per cent mark, approximately double that of employed youths. However, the figures for those youths that consider this belief to be wrong support my thesis: 36 per cent of the short-term unemployed versus 29 per cent of their employed peers. Thus there is no clear connection between unemployment and the perception of illegitimate competition.
Heitmeyer (1992, p. 52) also provides a table (based on Baedige et al. 1980 and Rosen 1985) clearly showing that there is no linear connection between youth unemployment and the number of terrorist acts committed by right wing extremists in the Federal Republic of Germany.

- 3 Hoffmann-Nowotny's extensive Swiss study from the late 1960s, provides empirical data against the thesis that the degree of labour market competition determines the level of hostility to foreigners. Between 1950 and 1960 skilled and unskilled workers faced a quadrupling in the ratio of foreigners to themselves (to 39 per cent). However, they expressed comparable levels of workplace discrimination to that of professional workers (about 46 per cent), who experienced the same quadrupling but only to a total of 6.8 per cent. Further, only 28 per cent of skilled workers pleaded for sharp discriminatory measures

even though the percentage of foreigners in the total workforce during the course of the decade doubled (excluding seasonal workers, to 28 per cent; 40 per cent if including them) (Hoffmann-Nowotny, 1973, pp. 48, 48f, 118f).

- 4 Van Amersfoort found that the geographical and social structural dispersion of the Dutch-Indonesians effected their dissolution as an ethnic group, a view recently criticised by Willems et al. (1990).
- 5 Those producers of public discourse *par excellence*, journalists, are not immune to this. A quantitative content analyses of the Swiss press (Küpfer 1994) acquitted the profession of charges of one-sided or even xenophobic coverage. The contributions most hostile to foreigners were found in the 'Letters to the Editor' section. Only the popular newspaper *Der Blick* tends to report, in line with the views of this section of the paper, often on acts of violence committed by those seeking asylum. Van Dijk's (1991) assertion of a systematic derogation of foreigners in the media is reduced in the case of the Swiss press to the fact of negative coverage, which is characteristic of the media system in general.
- 6 Other metaphors of national communities are discussed in Alonso 1994; pp. 382-4; Kapferer 1989.
- 7 For homogenisation of the space of identification, see Gellner 1991; for France, Weber 1976; for corresponding efforts in Switzerland, see Bendix 1992.
- 8 See Wimmer 1995b, on this terminology for the analysis of social change and a corresponding model of the historical developments in Mexico from the 17th century to the present. For a more detailed theory of crisis causation see Bomschier, 1988.
- 9 One very strong statistical correlation corroborates this thesis. That of the relationship between many people's perception as to the career opportunities available to them coupled with their desire for social mobility on one hand, with, on the other, a perception of being overrun by foreigners, of losing their national particularity, and an approval of work practices discriminatory to foreigners. The higher a person rates their own professional group's future chances, as well as his or her ability to achieve their desired upward mobility, the less he or she will feel, or support, that listed in the previous sentence. 'Estimated future opportunity is notably more significant than a person's professional position in determining the degree of xenophobic attitude a person may have' (Hoffmann-Nowotny 1973, pp. 89, 120; see also the results of the Eurobarometer, 1998 dedicated to attitudes towards foreigners; however, Silvermann and Hülers 1995, pp. 63-7 found only a weak correlation between xenophobia and the estimation of one's future economic opportunities).
There are studies showing that it is more those who fear a downgrading, an economic and social marginalisation or have cause to fear it who are attracted by right wing populism or radical politics. (Kalinowsky et al., 1985, cited in Heitmeyer 1992, p. 54; Niedermayer 1990, pp. 573f.). Winkler (1994, p. 83) cites a German study by Veit, Lepsky, and Mitich which shows Republican voters are deeply uncertain about the future, although he also cites the studies of Roth as well as Falter and Schumann which do not confirm this finding.
Yet the correlation between the perception of future opportunity and fear of being overrun by foreigners appears clearly at the aggregate level. Studying the period 1966-67, Liepelt (1967, cited in Heitmeyer 1992, p. 52) established a clear inverse correlation between the index of private economic expectations in Germany and the election potential of the right

wing radical NPD (*Nationale Partei Deutschlands*).

A study of the winners of the modernisation of the 80s and 90s, lends support to this thesis. It included professional service sector employees, whose 'cosmopolitan self-image' made them—according to the authors, who had set out to prove otherwise—'resistant' to right wing ideologies. Some 113 of the 118 respondents even found multiculturalism exciting and favoured the motto 'Foreigners welcome!' (Grimm and Romberg 1994, pp. 106, 123)

10 However, this territorial aspect should not be over estimated. Racism can exist where the percentage of foreigners is insignificant (see the Polish 'anti-Semitism without Jews' or the marked xenophobic tendencies in Germany's eastern as opposed to its western states, Casiner and Casiner 1992) or where they are hardly identifiable as such (e.g., the Nazi hunt for assimilated Jews who were considered especially dangerous).

11 Compare with that of the history of philosophy, Goldberg, 1993.

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4 Conceptualising Racism and Islamophobia

MALCOLM D. BROWN

Introduction

This chapter examines the conceptual distinctions and overlaps between racism and Islamophobia, and some key issues for comparative research. Earlier debates about the definition of racism, though unresolved, may have become stale. So racism may be considered an ideology premised on somatic differences and a negative judgement about one or more racialised groups, or an assertion of incompatibility between different culturally-defined groups, or a confusion of biological givens with social and historical processes. Furthermore, we may choose to emphasise the conceptual unity of racism, or its diversity. Either way, the relationship with Islamophobia is of increasing sociological and political importance. Although the term is relatively recent, Islamophobia is an expression of something that is deeply ingrained in European history, and which today is significant at the level of international politics and the situations of Muslim communities in Western Europe.

The three sections of this chapter address different reasons for asserting that this is an important topic. In the first of these sections, entitled 'Islamophobia, Orientalism and Religious Prejudice', I look at the historical significance of Islamophobia in the dual context of Orientalist representations of Islam, which date back centuries, and the contemporary significance of Islam in international politics. That the category 'Muslim' is still being racialised, and that this identification of 'Muslim' with 'Arab' or 'Pakistani' is part of a neo-Orientalist homogenising discourse which creates an amalgam of Muslims, Arabs, fundamentalists, extremists and terrorists can be seen by looking at the areas of overlap between Islamophobia and racism. In recent European history, the definition of Bosnian Muslims as an ethnic group was a pretext for 'ethnic cleansing', and it was claimed that this was necessary to prevent the establishment of an Islamic fundamentalist state which would become a base for the Islamisation of Europe.

I also suggest that there is a possible comparison between Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, as both are based on some form of opposition to a group that is defined in religious *and* ethnic terms. In addition, there have been, in

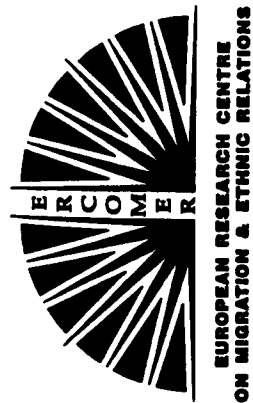
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