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Xenophobia and the New Nationalisms

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Xenophobia is the fear of difference embodied in persons or groups. Transgression is constitutive of xenophobia. Xenophobia transcends time and space—history and culture. Territoriality and territory, a bounded physical space with rules and norms of access, is the procrustean political bed upon which xenophobia operates (Berezin 2003: 4–14).

Since the late eighteenth century, the modern nation-state has been the locus of modern territoriality and fertile terrain for outbreaks of xenophobia. The social science literature on the formation of national states and national welfare systems is voluminous. Scholars agree to some degree on the following summary points. Whereas war-making defined the political and territorial boundaries of the state, citizenship and nationality laws defined the cultural boundaries of the nation. Citizenship and nationality laws articulate strangeness by establishing the rules of membership (Brubaker 1992).1

When politics and society were local, social welfare, as well as government, was local and strangers were not an issue (Somers 1993). Walzer, in Spheres of Justice (1983: 38), argues that localism, by necessity, closed the doors to outsiders. The larger territorial scale of the national state opens doors and makes hospitality in the form of social welfare a normative and political issue. Members of the modern nation-state must ask themselves whether the state should provide social welfare only for those who are citizens, or to provide to all in need as Christian charity demands. Walzer’s later work, On Toleration (1997), further develops the point that he began in Spheres of Justice. He argues that toleration is not simply an attitude expressed towards individuals who are different but something that is built into the structure of diverse forms of political arrangements from nations to empires.

Episodes of xenophobia may occur anywhere on the globe. Since the mid-1980s, xenophobia has become a salient feature of political reality and discourse in the former Western Europe. Acts of violence and vandalism against Jews and first and second generation immigrants from Africa and the Middle East coupled with the rise of ultra-nationalist populist parties suggest that contemporary Europe is intolerant at best and racist at worst.

To meet the growing threat of xenophobia, the Council of Europe established the European Union Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) in June 1997 as a research and prevention organization (Council of Europe, 1997). In addition to monitoring anti-Semitic activities in Europe, EUMC has recently turned its attention to hate speech on the Internet (EUMC 2004). Continuing acts of violence and intolerance are clearly a cause for
concern. Ethnic, racial and religious violence generate popular and social science assumptions that require exploration and elaboration. Prominent among these assumptions is the claim that xenophobia is directly responsible for the resurgence of nationalism in contemporary Europe.

This article uncouples neo-nationalism from xenophobia. Taking Europe as its principal location, this article first discusses xenophobia as a social category and a historical phenomenon. It then proceeds to discuss the relationship between xenophobia and immigration in contemporary Europe. It then explores two facets of contemporary nationalism: first, ultra-nationalism as embodied in the electoral successes of right-wing political parties and second, the reassertion of nationhood in European nations-states confronted by both immigration and European integration.

XENOPHOBIA AS A SOCIAL FORM

Difference is constitutive of modernity. When social life was local, strangeness was not part of the environment. In pre-industrial societies, strangers were strange in the sense that they were odd, not usual. The pre-industrial vocabulary of difference focused on uniqueness. As society became more modern, more industrial, more differentiated, strangeness and the stranger became a customary social phenomenon as well as a political problem. The categories, industrial, pre-industrial as well as global and postmodern, are ideal types that point to composite features of social reality at various historical conjunctures. As composites they have utility for describing social aggregates. Empirical reality is more variegated. Pre-industrial social structures may co-exist with modern forms of social and political structures within contemporary societies.

Social philosopher Georg Simmel (1971 [1908]), in his classic essay *The Stranger*, points out that there were no strangers when social and political life was purely local. According to Simmel, the merchant trader, a social product of the development of markets, is the first 'stranger' who comes into a territory and forces the locals to define themselves. The locals must decide how they differ from the stranger and whether or not they should allow the stranger to live on their territory. In short, they must deal with the issue of trust in the face of difference. Simmel points to the European Jew as the classic social archetypal of the stranger. European Jews were typically traders who owned no land and had no stake in the community. Their control of money and credit permitted the Jews to engage in financial markets and to profit off the established economic positions within society.

Strangeness demands the need for incorporation and definition of the social and political space. But, as Simmel points out, the condition of being a stranger involves a paradox. Groups perceive strangers in their midst as both near and far *at the same time* (Simmel 1971 [1908]: 148). Simmel argues:

> Between these two factors of nearness and distance, however, a peculiar tension arises, since the consciousness of having only the absolutely general in common has exactly the effect of putting a special emphasis on that which is not common. For a stranger to the country, the city, the race ... what is stressed is again nothing individual, but alien origin, a quality which he has or could have in common with many other strangers. For this reason strangers are not really perceived as individuals, but as strangers of a certain type. Their remoteness is no less general than their nearness. (p. 148)

The Jews in Frankfurt serve as Simmel's illustrative example of this point. The city of Frankfurt taxed the Jews as a religious group and always at the same rate simply because they were different, whereas other members of the Frankfurt community were taxed on their income and properties. The Frankfurt Jews were taxed as part of a social category and in the end paid more taxes - so they were members of the community and exploited by the community.

Gotman, in *Le Sens de l'hospitalité* (2001), a theoretical treatise on, and a social history of, hospitality, takes up the issue of the stranger and the relationship between welcoming and owning responsibility to the stranger. France's recent amendment to its immigration law, the Debre law of 1997, is among the empirical cases upon which she draws. The French left
dubbed the Debre law the 'law of inhospitality'. The law established that no one could host a foreign national unless they provided temporary lodging documents for them. Gotman points out that while the French right viewed strangers as outsiders who are to be kept outside, the left took the position that strangeness is a universal condition. According to the French left, the phrase 'we are all immigrants' best approximates the human condition (Gotman 2001: 37–45).

XENOPHOBIA AS A HISTORICAL PHENOMENON: FROM THE DREYFUS AFFAIR TO WORLD WAR II

The term xenophobia came into the vernacular in 1901 in France with the publication of Anatole France's novel Monsieur Bergeret à Paris (Wicker 2001). Xenophobia was listed in the French Nouveau Larousse illustre for the first time in 1906. The Dreyfus affair fueled the development of the term. Anti-semitism and the Nazi genocide of the Jews are paradigmatic in discussions of race hatred and xenophobia in Europe. Naimark (2001) underscores this point in his comparative historical study of genocide and ethnic cleansing by demonstrating that the Jews were the first but not the unique victims of organized hate. Despite the now acknowledged horrors of the Nazi Holocaust, anti-semitism is never far from the surface of European political discourse, as when Jean Marie Le Pen, leader of the French National Front, said the 'gas chambers were merely a detail of the history of the second world war'.

Hannah Arendt's essay on anti-semitism (1973 [1951]) in the Origins of Totalitarianism underscores the importance of insider versus outsider status—a theme that recurs frequently in discussions of xenophobia. She emphasizes the connection between statelessness and the vulnerability of the Jewish people. The Jews, without a national territory to claim as their own, were constantly the victims of discrimination and persecution. Arendt makes the point that the Jews were allowed to be in the territory but not of the territory in European nation-states in the nineteenth century. Their positions as traders made them useful to the development of European capitalism and some strata of European Jews acquired great wealth. In the twentieth century capitalism and finance became intimately connected with the state because private assets were insufficient to ensure its continued wealth. At that point, the Jews became politically and socially vulnerable—with only money, they were perfect victims. Believing that they could survive as outsiders, European Jews had confused monetary power with social and political power.

Brustein (2003) provides empirical elaboration of anti-semitism in Europe in the period before the Holocaust. In Roots of Hate, Brustein conducts an exhaustive study of newspapers in Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany and Romania to document either anti-semitic acts or remarks unfavorable to Jews. He argues that anti-semitism is a special type of xenophobia because it contains elements of political and economic prejudice as well as racial stereotyping. There was a prevailing view that Jews were either political leftists and hence socially destabilizing or excessively rich. A surprising finding is that when he examined newspaper accounts of gypsies, Roma, for the same period, he found that they suffered from more negative reporting than the Jews. Despite popular and, to some extent, scholarly perceptions, the Jews were not the only objects of racism in inter-war Europe. Schor (1985) demonstrates that France was not particularly welcoming to the Armenians, Poles and Italians who flocked into the country between 1919 and 1939.

XENOPHOBIA AND IMMIGRATION: THE POST-WAR PERIOD

There is a tendency to speak of racism and xenophobia as though they were the same phenomenon. Taguieff (2001: 43–67) draws the important distinction between racism of extermination and racism of exclusion. Contemporary xenophobia and accompanying
acts of violence in the former Western Europe reflect a desire to exclude and control the stranger not to exterminate him. Frederickson (2002), in his history of racism, elegantly argues that contemporary racism is about the slow pain of exclusion and denial of resources rather than outright murder. Acts of anti-Semitism in the early 1980s arguably began the current wave of xenophobia. In August 1982, six people were killed and 26 wounded in an attack on a Jewish restaurant on the rue des Rosiers in the Jewish quarter in Paris. Much of the contemporary European discussion of xenophobia centers on Muslim immigrants. In an unfortunate reversal, Muslims are now beginning to attack Jews as they blame them for the current crisis in the Middle East. A recent *New York Times* article cites one Jewish youth living in an Arab Muslim neighborhood saying, "You have to carry an umbrella to protect yourself from the stones that fly."\(^3\)

While Europe has always been a country of movement, the characteristics of immigration dramatically changed in the 1980s (Moch 2003 [1992]: 177–97 and Massey et al. 1998: 108–33 provide an overview). In the period between the two world wars, parts of Europe were political asylums. In the post World War II period, there were a variety of migrants. In the late 1940s and 1950s, refugees and guest workers dominated the body of immigrants— as well as colonials migrating to the mother country. In the 1980s, in contrast, people began to migrate in large numbers for work and without the guest worker arrangements that characterized the 1950s and 1960s. The origin of the new migrants varied by nation-state. In Germany and France, Turks dominated (Kastoryano 2002). They were foreign in two senses: first, they were foreign with respect to country of origin, and second they were foreign with respect to religion. The new immigrants were predominantly Muslim in nominally Christian Europe.

Structural differences in the forms of immigration coupled with the religious 'otherness' of the migrants fueled a mixture of xenophobia and racism that became apparent as early as the first years of the 1990s in Europe. Beginning in the early 1980s in France and followed in the early 1990s in Germany there was a stunning series of events that constituted violence against Muslim immigrants. German social scientists were able to document 276 acts of anti-Semitic and extreme right violence in Germany between 1989 and 1994 (Erb and Kurthen 1997). A recent study of right-wing violence in Germany (Koopmans and Olzak 2004) reported that acts of xenophobic violence were correlated with public discourse about 'problems' with immigrants, particularly asylum seekers, and not with the number of immigrants or the unemployment rates in a site of violence. The study found a steady state of violence directed against immigrants to Germany in the years between 1990 and 1999. However, violence peaked in the years of 1991 and 1992 when asylum seekers were on the public agenda.

In the fall of 1983, after a series of Muslim youths were killed in incidents with police in the housing projects on the outskirts of Paris, SOS-Racisme, an association to prevent racism, constituted itself in response. Throughout the 1980s, the group organized demonstrations against racism. In June 1985, SOS-Racisme mobilized 300,000 people for a rock concert in the Place de la Concorde in Paris. They spread their motto, 'Don't touch my buddy' on a badge that they distributed widely in Paris (Veugelers and Lamont 1991: 143–9). Despite the immediate mobilization against racism in France, incidents have continued to occur. Prominent among these incidents were the murder of a Muslim teenager in Marseilles and the murder of an immigrant youth and the dumping of his body in the Seine (Ardagh 1999: 219–43; Birnbbaum 2001 [1998]: 246–47).\(^4\)

Anthropologists have begun to turn their attention to sites of ethnic conflict and violence (Banton 1996; Hervik 2004; Holmes 2000). To date, journalists rather than social scientists have provided more vivid narratives. In 1992, skinheads on the loose in northern German towns burned down an immigrant Muslim apartment complex. Jane Kramer chronicled these events for the *New Yorker Magazine*. Kramer's articles were later published in a volume on the Politics of Memory...
(1996). She describes the life of a skinhead who is on probation for 'sidewalk cracking', which is finding Turkish immigrants, knocking them down and kicking them in the head. Cramer's subject is marginally literate and employed and spends his spare time listening to Ol music and describing the 'chaos in the head' that he experiences. The Turkish immigrant in Kramer's narrative thinks he has had a good day if he has not experienced any random acts of verbal abuse – despite the fact that the grocery store, in which he had invested his hopes and dreams, was burned to the ground by local skinheads.

Against this backdrop of dramatic events that captured the attention of the national and international media, social scientists began to demarcate the boundaries of xenophobia in Europe. French sociologist Michel Wieviorka (1992, 1994) conducted a series of comparative studies of racism and xenophobia in Europe. Wieviorka (1994: 9–25) argues that there are three crises that face contemporary Europeans and immigration only partially fuels them. These crises are structural, social and cultural. First, European labor markets are changing. Industrial jobs are disappearing and with them the political influence and power of trade unions. A graphic symbol of this change is a map of mobilization routes that appeared in the French left newspaper Le Monde on May Day 2002. Record numbers of French citizens turned out to march against Jean Marie Le Pen's second place in the first round of the Presidential elections. Le Pen's supporters marched on their traditional route to the Place de l'Opera; the mass of protesters marched through central Paris. The CFTC, a French trade union, chose to march between the two other groups on a much less central route symbolically underscoring the marginality of organized labor in contemporary French politics.5

The second crisis is social. De-industrialization signaled the breakdown of the post-war European social settlement in which labor and business supported some version of a national welfare state. This breakdown, coupled with increasing unemployment rates (France has some of the highest rates in Europe), has led to ghettoization and hopelessness among the urban working class. The housing projects outside of Paris, the banlieue, are cauldrons of class and racial conflict, as the hit French film L'Haine (Hate) depicts. According to Wieviorka's analysis, there is a paradox within the European welfare state. The public functions of the post-war state lead to inadvertent 'positive discrimination' because that state was designed to draw boundaries between insiders and outsiders. The European state heavily regulates and subsidizes many public functions that the United States leaves to the market sphere. The third crisis is cultural. Immigrants seem to pose a crisis of national identities. However, it is becoming increasingly apparent that long-term secular forces such as European integration and globalization are the source of these identity crises – and not the presence of immigrants.

American social science turned its attention to xenophobia in Europe as it was in the process of emerging. Pettigrew (1998) relied on Eurobarometer data coupled with a review of secondary literature to examine prejudice towards minorities in contemporary Europe. Using theory informed by social psychology, he developed an index of what he describes as 'subtle prejudice' and 'blatant prejudice'. Pettigrew reviewed polling data on attitudes towards the extension of citizenship rights to immigrants and the deportation of illegal foreign nationals. He found that the more 'blatant' your level of prejudice, the less likely you were to favor extension of rights to immigrants and the more elastic rights were with respect to legality the less likely you were to be willing to grant them.

Quillian (1995) focused on the evolution of prejudice in contemporary Europe and used Eurobarometer survey data to document that it is the perception of the threat (that is, of the out-group) to the group (that is, the in-group), not the absolute number of out-group members (that is, immigrants in a country) that accounts for prejudice and xenophobia in a country. This accounts for his finding that the perceived threat is higher in Ireland and Belgium, countries that are not particularly noted for their immigrant populations.

Given Quillian's logic, we would expect xenophobia to be strongest in ethnically cohesive
societies. The emergence of ethnic conflict in the Scandinavian countries supports his findings (Hervik 2004). Sweden provides a provocative example. Sweden has not had a war since 1814 and has a generous welfare state with an egalitarian vision. It also has had until recently an open immigration policy. Swedish citizenship initiation policies include language training and other mechanisms of social and cultural integration.

What is often overlooked in discussions of Sweden is that the renowned welfare state was about generosity among people who were ethnically and culturally the same. The Swedes have a history of being concerned about purifying the race that is often overlooked in discussions of social democracy. Alva Myrdal argued in *Nation and Family*, published in English in 1940, for a state population policy that weeded out undesirables (Spektorowski 2004). Given this history, anthropologist Alan Pred, in his study of racism entitled *Even in Sweden* (2000), should not express the surprise that his title suggests. The curious feature of Swedish openness to immigrants is that Sweden, a large, cold and dark country in the winter, with most of its population in the south and the big cities, makes them re-locate to the rural and frozen, less-populated North.

THE EUROPEAN RIGHT AND THE NEW NATIONALISM

As recently as 1988, when the journal *West European Politics* published a theme issue on 'Right Wing Extremism in Western Europe,' contributors appeared to dredge up the past rather than describe an emerging phenomenon. For example, the article on Italy (Caciagli 1988) analyzed the MSI, the right-wing party with direct links to the Italian Fascist party. By 1994, this party was disbanded and Gianfranco Fini founded the National Alliance. While immigrants were on the radar screen of contributors to this volume, European integration as a driving force in European politics was conspicuously absent—even four years before Maastricht. In his introduction to the volume, Von Beyme (1988: 5) identifies acts of anti-semitism as a measure of right-wing tendencies.

The political science literature, as well as the popular press, routinely attributes the resurgence of ultra-nationalism in the established nation-states of Europe to xenophobia. The electoral success of right-wing political parties in European nation-states (for a summary description of these parties see Hossay 2002) is one empirical indicator of the new nationalism. In the past ten years, political parties that analysts had viewed as fringe have become part intermittently of legally constituted national governing coalitions. In March 1994, Gianfranco Fini's 'post-fascist' National Alliance became part of the Italian government. In March 1998, Jean Marie Le Pen's National Front swept the French regional elections and in April 2002 Le Pen came in second in the first round of the French presidential election; in 2000, Jorg Haider's Freedom Party became part of the Austrian government. In addition, fringe parties have threatened to achieve significant parliamentary seats in Switzerland, Belgium and Denmark. In 1994, right-wing populist parties appeared to be fissures in their national political landscape. From the vantage point of 2004, they appear more as fixtures on the political scene. Jean Marie Le Pen's National Front in France was the first neo-nationalist party to break-through electorally, in 1983 in the city of Dreux (Schain 1987; Mitra 1988). Since that election, the National Front has served as the benchmark in discussion of the new right. The relation between xenophobia and immigration policy has dominated studies of the European right (for example, Schain 1996; Lafont 2001; Karapin 2002). Increased numbers of immigrants in the former Western Europe presents a social problem; there is no necessary reason why xenophobia has to be the response. Whether the emergence of the right is a cause or effect of xenophobic reactions to immigrants is empirically under-specified in the literature. From the early emergence of the right in France, analysts have been puzzled by the fact that the right is often strong in areas in which there are no immigrants (Schain et al. 2002: 11-12).
The literature on the right in Europe is voluminous and growing exponentially. In addition to immigration, social scientists have examined the logic of party coalitions and changes in the class structure of post-industrial society to structure explanations of the rise of the right (Betz 1994; Ignazi 1994; Kitschelt 1995). Among these studies, Kitschelt’s (1995) political economy model of right-wing success argues that the new occupational structure of post-industrial society has pushed traditional left/right parties towards an undifferentiated center and left an ideological void that ‘extremists’ fill. The social science literature in the main has not gone far beyond the initial focus on immigration despite the fact that immigration has been considerably fixed for at least ten years in Europe (Withol de Wenden 2004) and there was never a strong correlation between absolute numbers of immigrants in a given locale and support for the National Front.

In the years since 1983 and its initial breakthrough in Dreux, the fortunes of the National Front have risen and fallen and the issues that they have chosen to address have changed. By the early 1990s, the Front appeared to be a nuisance and an embarrassment to French politics and society. In the regional elections of March 1998, the front increased its presence to 15.27 per cent of the vote and held a bargaining position in 19 of France’s 22 regions. The Front’s ‘victory’ in 1998 stunned the French political and intellectual establishment (Perrineau and Reynie 1999). In 1999, the National Front split into two factions and suffered a defeat in the European Parliamentary elections.

The Front appeared to have lost political consequence in France. In April 2002, Jean Marie Le Pen finished second in the first round of the French presidential election. Although this ‘victory’ was due more to certain structural oddities in the French electoral system than to a genuine increase of support for the National Front, Le Pen’s second place did at least temporally end the political career of the Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin (Mayer 2003). The Front failed to achieve any major electoral gains in the regional elections of spring 2004. The trajectory of the French National Front is typical of the fortunes of other right-wing parties. Haider has been in and out of Austrian politics since spring 2000. Pim Fortuyn, the Dutch right-wing candidate, was assassinated before he could see his party achieve a victory in the April 2002 elections (Bruff 2003).

Anti-immigrant sentiment in contemporary Italy is the analytic focus of Snideman and his collaborators in The Outsider (2000). These authors rely on their own primary data collected from a carefully designed telephone survey of Italian households to support their conclusions. By combining insights garnered from social psychology as well as macrosociology, The Outsider, provides the foundation for a generalizable and non-reductionist account of contemporary European right-wing politics.

The Sniderman research team was interested in studying how race intensified prejudice. Despite a recent trend to analyze prejudice as a function of a human propensity to categorize drawn from the work of cognitive psychologist Henri Tajfel and others, Sniderman and his colleagues initially reasoned that race would be the most salient dimension of prejudice. Drawing upon their knowledge of the United States, they hypothesized that the color of a person’s skin, that is, darkness, would most likely make him or her the object of prejudice – even when tested cross-culturally.

Armed with this hypothesis, the researchers turned to Italy as the site of a ‘natural experiment’. Italy until just recently was a country of out-migration; and it had a legacy of internal prejudice – north vs. south, which Italians viewed in color terms, that is, white vs. black. Prejudice articulated in the color of one’s skin was a long-standing cultural idiom in Italy – even if that prejudice was directed against those who were nominally fellow Italians and by all modern classificatory schema white. Within the past 15 years, Italy has become a country of immigration with a corresponding increase in violent actions against immigrants and in anti-immigrant sentiment mobilized by the political right. The contemporary wave of immigration to Italy divides into two distinct groups – persons of color, mostly but not exclusively from sub-Saharan Africa, and ‘white’ refugees from the turmoil of the former Eastern Europe.
As a terrain new to immigration but not to color prejudice, Italy was the ideal research venue to develop an 'integrated' account of why groups become prejudiced against other groups. The results of their experiment surprised the researchers and forced them to re-think their analysis. Contrary to the researchers' expectations, race did not seem to matter in the Italian case. Bluntly put, Italians disliked Eastern Europeans more than blacks. The initial findings suggested prejudice was more a perception than a fact of difference. How could they account for this?

To interpret results that were at first puzzling, Sniderman and his collaborators developed what they label a 'Two Flavors Model' of prejudice. The first 'flavor' drew upon psychological accounts of prejudice that were long out of favor in studies of race and ethnicity. These accounts described prejudice as an individual response to difference generated by childhood socialization. The focus on social psychology, Sniderman argued, needed to be refined, rather than abandoned. This refinement required a 'second flavor' with a more rational taste. Prejudice would reflect an instrumental group struggle over scarce societal resources, that is, we dislike immigrants because they take our jobs. Both 'flavors' rely on categorization - who is like us and who is not - but with an important caveat. At any given historical moment there is more or less difference and more or less scarcity in a society.

The task before the researchers was to identify the social mechanism that triggered the propensity not only to view others as different but also to actively dislike them because of that difference. Identifying this mechanism would permit the researchers to develop a theory of prejudice that blended both flavors - the social psychological and the instrumental.

The 'Right Shock model' that incorporated politics in the study of prejudice was the result. The authors argue that difference of race, ethnicity, nationality, or whatever are always more or less present in a modern society. It is only under certain circumstances that the propensity to categorize others as different in negative ways emerges. Exogenous shocks to the social, economic and political system such as recessions or, as in the case of Italy in 1994, the collapse of the political party system, transform difference from a social fact to a social exacerbation. This transformation of the social weight of difference has the potential (as it has done in contemporary Europe) to contribute to the parliamentary success of right-wing parties that mobilize around it.

The 'Right Shock' model suggests a purely structural analysis. However, Sniderman's data allow more subtle and novel analyses. Due to the research team's interest in the 'two flavors' model, they constructed an 'authority' variable - that measured individual level commitment to discipline, stability and order. The data showed that ordinary constituents of the left and right parties may espouse different ideological positions but they share a common commitment to authority. When exogenous threats to the system occur, most people, independently of the ideological labels they espouse, are likely to retreat to 'authority', or more colloquially put, pleas for law and order. The political party that exploits that commitment, whether left or right, is likely to garner electoral support. This analysis suggests that the tendency to categorize others as different, as agents of disorder, is likely to increase, not decrease, in a contemporary Europe that is awash in exogenous shocks - the least of which is immigration.

REAFFIRMING NATIONHOOD

The variable fortunes of right-wing parties within European nation-states suggest that social scientists should look to long-term political developments and macro-structural change when trying to account for xenophobia and neo-nationalism in established nation-states. Much of what falls under the label of nationalism in discussions of xenophobia and ultra-nationalism is what students of nationalism have labeled ethnic nationalism - the notion of a community of memory based on primordial ties. The legacies of the nation-building activities of the nineteenth century in Western Europe suggest that ethnic
nationalism, particularly in France and Northern Europe, does not resonate with the political community. Nationhood, the basis of civic nationalism, does have resonating cultural, political and moral claims.\(^8\)

Much of the empirical evidence suggests that at the core of extremist politics is a reaffirmation of nationhood in the face of a range of external threats to the nation-state. For example, De Master and Le Ro (2000) demonstrated a positive relation between xenophobia and level of support for European integration within individual member states. Low support for continuing integration correlates with high feelings of xenophobia. This finding suggests: first, that immigration may pose a stronger threat than immigrants to European citizens; and second, that untangling the mechanisms through which xenophobia and European integration interact is a worthwhile enterprise. Recent empirical work on Europe and national identities suggests the reaffirmation of national identities among groups that are not particularly right-wing: for example, Lamont’s (2000) interviews with native and immigrant French working-class men which revealed that they framed their identities in terms of nation-ness and in a manner that was not particularly xenophobic. Both groups looked to Republicanism as a political practice and ideal that made the French nation-state a just society for all. If immigrants became French, then they became part of the normal body of the nation and were not a security threat. Diez-Medrano (2003) studied how ordinary Europeans conceive of Europe and how those conceptions influence their support for accelerating European integration. Diez-Medrano deployed an arsenal of qualitative and quantitative data in his study. His overriding conclusion was that citizens’ relation to their own national histories and identities was a strong predictor of how they would feel about increasing the pace of European integration.

The trajectory of political events suggests that the reaffirmation of nationhood, not ultra-nationalism, is on the rise. The aftermath of Le Pen’s successes in France, as well as his ideological compatriots in other nation-states, has been a shift towards a conservative nation-ness. Sniderman et al.’s (2000) data support this position, as does Chirac’s overriding victory in April 2002. Electoral politics, however, is not the only terrain on which this new nation-ness is affirming itself. Religion is emerging as the new area of contestation in the realm of nation-ness.

In the process of nation-state building, every European country came to institutional terms with the issue of religion (Marx 2003). While complicated and the result of long-term political processes, adjudicating the issue of religion was less fraught when Protestantism or Catholicism were the only candidates for official status. The recent influx of immigrants from Islamic countries to Europe, coupled with their requirements to build mosques and engage in religious practices, have once more made official religion an issue.

The recent ruling in France on the wearing of the headscarf by young Muslim women in public school is an example of this reaffirmation. The headscarf affair first emerged in France in 1989 when two young women were expelled from school for wearing the veil. France is committed to laïcité, the ideological position legalized in a 1905 law that requires that church and state be strictly separated. In 1989, after much public debate from all sides of the political spectrum, the issue was basically left unresolved and the young girls were allowed to return to school and wear their headscarves if they wished.\(^9\)

In the aftermath of 9/11 and the war in Iraq and the presence of a more radicalized Muslim community in France, the headscarf became an issue once more. This time, the French government convened an official commission, and in December 2003, the commission delivered its report. The Stassi commission suggested that a law be passed that would ban the wearing of religious symbols in all state institutions (that is, schools, military). The logic of the decision was that laïcité was the cornerstone of French Republicanism, which defined the French nation. Chirac accepted the commission’s recommendations and in February 2004 the French parliament passed the law with an overwhelming majority.
The foregoing analysis of xenophobia as both a formal category and historical entity suggests that it is a volatile political and social phenomenon. It tends to emerge as a response to challenges to territorially bounded geographical space. In the modern nation-state, immigration has posed one such challenge but arguably so has the accelerated process of European integration. The paradox of xenophobia might lie in the fact that while ultra-nationalism and a closing of borders may be the first response, the second and more pragmatic response is an affirmation of nationalism and an accommodation to the stranger. Affirmation and accommodation is occurring in France and arguably in the rest of Europe. Affirmation and accommodation underlies historical cycles of xenophobia and the cultural and political processes by which strangers become familiar.

NOTES

1. I wish to acknowledge the careful reading and helpful suggestions of Gerard Delanty, Krishan Kumar and Riva Kastoryano and the research assistance of Anna Karwowska.


8. Calhoun (1997: 6) provides an account of these distinctions.

9. There is a large scholarly discussion of the first headscarf affair. For succinct summaries in English, see Berriss (1990), Feldblum (1999) and Benhabib (2002).

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