Neo-Racism in the Age of Populism: The Immigrant Crisisin Europe

Popülizm Çağında Neo-Irkçılık: Avrupa'da Göçmen Krizi

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Abstract: In recent years, there has been a global increase in populist politics aimed at manipulating the public's feelings and gaining political interest. The tremendous developments in communication technology spread populist discourses more, and thus causes the perception that we live in an age of populism. This research article on the immigrant crisis in Europe focuses on the populist discourse that has a neo-racist tendency about anti-immigration. Within this framework, some populist discourses of European politicians are analysed, and secondary quantitative data related to this issue is used. Especially in situations of social, political and economic crisis, immigrants in European countries are stigmatised as the main culprits. This stigma, which is seen not only in the far right but also sometimes in left politics, is generally used for immigrants coming from non-Western countries, especially from Muslim countries. Muslims among immigrant groups in European countries are often criticised for not being integrated into the mainstream society, and the arguments related to this issue are often expressed in a populist and pragmatic way. The main argument of the study is that one of the main threats to national unity and solidarity in European countries is the populist, neo-racist and Islamophobic discourse used against immigrants.

Keywords: Sociology, International Migration, Migrant Crisis, Populism, Neo-racism, Islamophobia.

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Öz: Halkın duygularını manipüle etmeye ve bundan siyasi çıkar elde etmeye yönelik popülist politikalarda son senelerde küresel çapta bir artış görülmektedir. İletişim teknolojisi alanındaki muazzam gelişmeler, popülist söylemleri daha çok yaygınlaştırmakta ve böylece adeta bir popülizm çağında yaşadığımız algısına neden olmaktadır. Avrupa'daki göçmen krizi ile ilgili bu araştırma makalesi, göçmen karşıtlığı konusunda neo-ırkçı bir eğilim barındıran popülist söyleme odaklanmaktadır. Bu çerçevede Avrupalı siyasetçilerin bazı popülist söylemleri analiz edilmiş, ayrıca bu konu ile ilgili nicel ikincil verilerden de yararlanılmıştır. Özellikle toplumsal, politik ve ekonomik kriz dönemlerinde, Avrupa'daki göçmenler, yaşanan olumsuzlukların asıl suçlusu olarak damgalanmaktadırlar. Sadece aşırı sağda değil, bazen sol siyasette de görülen bu damgalama, genelde Batılı olmayan ülkelerden, özellikle de Müslüman ülkelerden gelen göçmenlere karşı kullanılmaktadır. Avrupa ülkelerindeki göçmen gruplar içerisinde Müslümanlar, ana topluma entegre olmadıkları yönünde daha sık eleştirilmekte ve bu konudaki ar-

gümanlar, genellikle popülist ve pragmatik bir şekilde dile getirilmektedir. Çalışmanın ana argümanı, Avrupa ülkelerindeki ulusal birlik ve dayanışma konusunda en temel tehditlerden birinin, göçmenlere karşı kullanılan popülist, neo-ırkçı ve İslamofobik söylem olduğudur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyoloji, Uluslararası Göç, Göçmen Krizi, Popülizm, Neo-ırkçılık, İslamofobi.

Introduction

The volume of international migration is smaller compared to internal migration within the borders of different countries. The effect of international migration is most profound on social, political, economic, religious, and cultural structures.[1] Current immigration rates in most European countries are not far behind classical immigration countries such as the USA, Canada, and Australia, and in some cases surpass them, even though they do not identify themselves as immigration countries. One of the main socio-cultural, socio-economic, and socio-political problems in Europe, which is one of the main arrival points for international migration, is asylum seekers, refugees, and (legal or illegal) immigrants from abroad. Media outlets, academic, and political circles in European countries have frequently voiced that the immigrants have not only disrupted Europe's demographic structure, but also damaged the continent's political, economic, social, and cultural structures, and thus have become a national security issue in these countries.

The wars in Europe before the 20th century and World War I & II in the 20th century caused mass demographic movements in Europe. After European colonies declared their independence, a new population movement emerged in the 20th century and a reverse migration movement began from the colonies to Europe.[2] Just after World War II, one of the

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[1] Most migration scholars prefer national or continental boundaries over local ones. This also explains the neglect of most internal migrations in Europe or other parts of the world. Leo Lucassen - Jan Lucassen, "Quantifying and Qualifying Cross-Cultural Migration in Europe since 1500: A Plea for a Broader View", *The History of Migration in Europe: Prospectives from Economics, Politics and Sociology,* ed. Francesca Fauri (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 15-16.

[2] The immigration movements from India to Britain, Angola and Mozambique to Portugal, Algeria and Tunisia to France, and Morocco to Spain and France caused significant population

main political priorities of European countries was to establish long-term peace and stability, another was economic recovery from the demolition of infrastructures. For the reconstruction of Europe, the USA made one of the largest economic recovery packages in modern world history. The Marshall Plan of 1947, formally named The European Recovery Program of 1947, played an important role in economic development and integration in Europe.[3] The post-World War II period, unlike previous population movements, was a period in which international labour migration came into the forefront in Europe. Labour migration to Western Europe played a vital role in economic recovery and development, but the presence of immigrants in Europe became a serious discussion point in the following periods. Immigrants who were stuck between the European labour market and deterritorialisation were used as scapegoats in economic, social and political crises.

International migration to the European continent tends to be approached as a contemporary issue in populist discourse. Evaluation of international migration, particularly the discourse of right-wing politicians in Europe, shows a lack of intellectual depth and contains xenophobia. With the impact of labour immigration in the post-World War II era, asylum-seeker or refugee migration, human smuggling, and different forms of illegal immigration to Europe, today's main discussions highlight the current and future positions of immigrants who are both the subject and object of these movements. Although scientific literature on this issue mostly revolves around actual problems, international migration is not a contem-

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increase from non-Western countries to European countries. W. Maas states that approximately 400,000 people migrated from Indonesia to the Netherlands between 1945-1968. Willem Maas, "The Netherlands: Consensus and Contention in a Migration State", *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective*, ed. James F. Hollifield et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 261. A. L. Smith points out that between 4 and 6 million people migrated to Europe during the decolonisation period and Europe, which previously exported populations, became a region that received a large number of immigrants in the 20th century. Andrea L. Smith, "Introduction: Europe's Invisible Migrants," in *Europe's Invisible Migrant,* ed. Andrea L. Smith. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003).

3 For more details about Marshall Plan, see Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan: America, Britain, and the Reconstruction of Western Europe*, *1947-1952* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

porary phenomenon or issue taking into consideration the history of the European continent. The migration movements from outside Europe, vice versa, and within the continent have given shape to the political, economic, demographic, social and cultural structures of European countries from the past to present times. Migration and immigrants are prominent issues in political, cultural, security, and economic crises throughout the history of Europe.

In recent years, the negative discussions on immigrants have come to the fore among the different circles in European countries, and thus populist discourses have become increasingly dominant on this issue. The tremendous developments in communication technology spread populist discourses more, and thus causes the perception that we live in an age of populism. Today, there has been a global increase in populist politics aimed at manipulating the public's feelings and gaining political interest. This trend also closely affects the attitude towards immigrants in Europe.

Populism regarding immigrants is often seen as a dangerous form of right-wing politics in the European intellectual community. However, today, populist discourse in Europe is increasingly becoming prominent not only in right-wing parties, but also in left-wing parties, and this rhetoric is gradually blurring the difference between these two groups. This concept seems to have captured the flavour of global politics in the 21st century.[4]

Populism against immigrants in Europe, especially in the far-right discourse has an increasingly neo-racist content.[5] One of the main features that distinguish neo-racism[6] from traditional racism is its discriminatory discourse against immigrants. This has been given a variety of labels such as cultural racism and the racism of cultural difference.[7] Like traditional

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[4] Éric Fassin, *Populisme: Le Grand Ressentiment* (Paris: Textuel, 2017); Benjamin Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017) and Benjamin Moffitt, *Populism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020).

[5] Peter Hervik, *The Annoying Difference: The Emergence of Danish Neonationalism, Neoracism, and Populism in the Post-1989 World* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011).

[6] This term was first used by M. Baker to analyse the new form of racism seen in British society. For more details about that see Peter Hervik, "Racism, Neo-Racism", *Recycling Hatred: Racism(s) in Europe Today* (Brussels: The European Network Against Racism aisbl (ENAR), 2013), 46.

[7] Etienne Balibar, "Is There a Neo-Racism?", *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, ed. Im-

racism, neo-racism is a purely ideological construction, but unlike it, neo-racism mainly emphasises the incompatibility of cultural differences rather than skin colour or physical characteristics. Neo-racist discourse is shaped around intolerance to cultural and religious differences, nationalism and fears against foreigners.

At the 547th Meeting of the Ministers' Deputies of the Council of Europe between 16-19 October 1995 in Strasbourg, it was pointed out that neo-racism was on the rise and so serious measures should be taken by the member states to prevent and combat it. Although a long time has passed since this warning, the reports published by the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)[8] and the current trends in the continent show that neo-racism has become an increasing phenomenon in European societies that requires renewed efforts to be overcome.

Anti-immigration movements in Europe are especially against immigrants from non-Western countries. Today, the biggest victims of anti-immigration discourse and actions in Europe are Muslims of immigrant background. Populist and manipulative discourse has provoked public reaction at the national and international level and consequently some massive actions have arisen, such as the Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident (PEGIDA) movement. Negative reactions to migration from different spheres mutually bias each other on this issue.

This research article focuses on the immigrant crisis in Europe in relation to neo-racism and populism. In this regard, populist discourses around anti-immigration topic in Europe are analysed, and secondary quantitative data related to this issue is used. Europe is a migration centre not only today, but also since ancient times. However, since the immigration crisis in Europe emerged after the immigration waves following the World War II, this period is focused and analysed in the study. In this context, the emergence and main characteristics of the immigrant crisis are identified and analysed. There is a generalisation about immigrants in the anti-

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manuel Wallerstein - Etienne Balibar (London: Verso, 1991), 20 and Ali Rattansi, *Racism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 95.

[8] See https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance

immigration movement in Europe, and in the populist discourse on this issue, it is claimed that immigrants destroy the national unity and solidarity in European countries. The main argument of this study is that anti-immigration, which has gradually turned into a neo-racist and exclusionary tendency in populist discourse is one of the biggest obstacles to national unity, harmony and solidarity in European countries.

1. The Immigration from Non-Western Countries and the Explosion of the Immigrant Crisis

In the first stage after World War II, the main strategy of large-scale businesses was to ensure production development by investing in developed regions within Europe including, (West) Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France, Belgium, Switzerland and Denmark. Foreign migrant labour forces were used to supply the increased demand within the Western European labour market. The initial labour migration took place within Europe and resulted a migration wave from southern European countries from the Mediterranean region to the developed countries that were in a rapid economic recovery and development phase. This labour migration was from less developed southern countries such as Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece, and the former Yugoslavia to the more developed countries in northwest Europe.

Labour migration from southern countries to economically developed countries slowed down due to both economic development projects and ageing populations. A reverse wave of migration occurred in the following period. Italy and Spain became destination countries because of their economic development programs. After bilateral agreements, Turkey and North Africa became the new source countries of labour immigration from outside of Europe. These bilateral agreements attempted to prevent irregular migration to Europe. When Western European countries accepted labour immigration from outside Europe, they did not see the incoming people as permanent citizens, but as guest workers that would return to their countries after a while. However, European countries' ageing populations and the inability to supply low-skilled labour left expectations in their

markets.[9] The beginning of a new period of family reunification paved the way for immigrants and their families to become permanent (transnational) citizens in destination countries.

The oil crisis in 1973 had global effects and caused an economic recession in Europe that continued until the 1980s.[10] Initially, the labour markets experienced employment stagnation, afterward there were layoffs that profoundly affected immigrant workers. With the rise of economic globalisation, large-scale manufacturing was transferred to countries where taxes, labour costs, and commodity production costs were lower. This resulted in a decrease in the employment curve in European countries. Negative reactions to immigrants started to emerge as the native population persuaded by far-right perspectives blamed the immigrants as the cause of unemployment and expected them to return to their homelands. In this populist and pragmatic perspective that is beyond a humanitarian and legal framework, immigrants were seen as a burden on socio-political and socio-economic systems that no longer needed them. The negative reactions to immigrants were not only limited to anti-immigration but in more radical trends lead to xenophobic and neo-racist tendencies.

One reason immigrants are subjected to negative reactions, in particular from the bien-pensant people, is their identity oriented cultural claims after they have settled permanently in destination countries in Europe. The initial policy towards immigrants in almost all European countries had an assimilationist perspective based on a homogeneous society approach that promotes a monist culture. After immigrants started to live in destination countries, they were expected to leave their cultural backgrounds and adapt to the native cultures in these countries.

One tendency of immigrants exposed to assimilationist policies was to live in the same social environment as those who have the same or close

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[9] Nermin Abadan-Unat, *Turks in Europe: From Guest Worker to Transnational Citizen* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011) and Ulrich Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 1880–1980: Seasonal Workers/Forced Laborers/Guest Workers* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1991).

[10] For a study on the reflections of this crisis and its effects on European identity, see Aurélie Elisa Gfeller, *Building a European Identity: France, the United States, and the Oil Shock, 1973–1974* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012).

cultural and religious background to protect their identity and not to be adversely affected by these policies. For instance, the residences of Turkish immigrants in Europe are generally concentrated in certain regions. This is not only true for Turkish immigrants. A small number of studies imply that ghettoisation[11] in European countries is a facilitating factor for immigrants' adaptation to the mainstream society they live in.[12] In the populist discourse, the parallel lives or ethnic segregation and ghettos in European countries are seen as an indicator of immigrants' desire not to integrate into the mainstream society.[13] In march 2021, the Danish minister of the interior, Kaare Dybvad Bek, said that too many non-Western immigrants in the same area "increases the risk of an emergence of religious and cultural parallel societies". He announced that the share of residents of non-Western origin in each neighbourhood be limited to a maximum of 30% within 10 years.[14]

Immigrants seek trust by sharing the same history, ethnicity, culture or religious background, and search for social cooperation, solidarity, overcoming the shock immigration, and cling to each other for support to survive in a foreign community. It is sociologically understandable that immigrants prefer to live in certain regions with people that have a common past. On the other hand, the average income of immigrants is generally lower than the native people and this also causes immigrants to reside in certain places where the native people generally do not prefer to live and the rental fees are lower.

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[11] The concept of ghetto came to the forefront in scientific literature in relation to settlements of Jewish people. Different examples of Jewish ghettos have appeared in the places they lived throughout history. Other indicators of ghettoisation are places known as 'Little Italy' or 'New Italy' where Italians mass migrated to Manhattan, Baltimore, San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Arkansas, Clerkenwell, Michoacán, Gothenburg, New South Wales, the locations known as 'Chinatown' where Chinese people settled after immigration to New York, Chicago, Vancouver and Sydney.

[12] In this regard, see Lale Yalcin-Heckmann - Horst Unbehaun, "Fransa ve Almanya'daki Göçmen Türk Toplulukları: İki Orta Büyüklükteki Şehirde Dernekleşme ve Cemaatleşme Süreçleri," *Toplum ve Bilim* 82 (1999).

[13] Jozefien de Bock, *Parallel Lives Revisited: Mediterranean Guest Workers and Their Families at Work and in the Neighbourhood 1960-1980* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2018).

[14] For details about that see https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/17/denmark-plans-to-limit-non-western-residents-in-disadvantaged-areas

When positive developments in the economy since the mid-1980s created the need for low and high skilled labour in European market, the trend towards employing immigrants came to the forefront again, even if not as high as before. After the Soviet Union went out of existence and the Eastern Bloc collapsed, Europe expanded its integration policy to cover Central and Eastern Europe. Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, and Ukraine came to the forefront as new source countries for Western Europe. This negatively affected immigration and immigrants from non-Western countries.

European countries' reactions towards the identity and cultural rights demands of immigrants differ from each other. Multicultural policies in countries such as Sweden, the Netherlands[15], and the UK, tend to grant cultural rights to immigrants on a large scale. In countries such as Austria, Italy, and France assimilation-based policies have existed in different ways. For instance, the main issue with immigrants in France is about 'being French enough or not'. At this point, it is much more difficult, and sometimes not possible, for non-Westerns to become French enough.

The Maastricht Treaty of February 7, 1992 drew attention to the importance of common security in Europe and aimed to apply loose border policies among European countries that signed the treaty. This approach applied strict border policies to countries outside the treaty. The European Union emphasises similarities or partnerships beyond differences and emphasises social, political, cultural, and economic Europeanness as a common supra-identity. Naturally, this supra-identity appeals to the native population of Europe. Immigrants from non-Western countries are mostly excluded from this formation. The EU Constitution's emphasis on cultural diversity does not go beyond cultures in the EU geography. However, in a geography where a large number of immigrants live, one of the main di-

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[15] The Netherlands initially adopted the multicultural approach as a state policy, but this policy was abandoned later. For detailed information about this, see Han Entzinger, "The Rise and Fall of Multiculturalism: The Case of the Netherlands", *Toward Assimilation and Citizenship: Immigrants in Liberals Nation-States*, ed. Christian Joppke et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) and Peter Scholten, "The Dutch Multicultural Myth", *Challenging Multiculturalism: European Models of Diversity*, ed. Raymond Taras (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

lemmas of the EU today is regional values that does not allow real cultural pluralism including immigrant groups from non-Western countries.[16] This highlights an understanding of European nationalism, in which immigrants from non-Western countries are mostly excluded.

The failure to send immigrants back, particularly those who came from non-Western countries, to their homelands, as well as the continuation of immigration from outside of Europe in the form of family reunification, asylum seeker and refugee migration, migrant smuggling and human trafficking, has been influential in increasing far-right political conceptions that put neo-racist and Islamophobic approaches at the centre of their populist politics. The global financial crisis in 2008 negatively affected the economies of European countries and played an important role in the rise of the anti-immigration and far-right politics in Europe.

In the early years of mass labour immigration to Europe, European politicians often cited that their country was implementing a humane, tolerant, hospitable, benevolent and generous policy for immigrants, and that their country was unique compared to other countries in this regard. In the last 40 years or so, a multicultural threat to Europe caused by immigrants has been frequently mentioned in populist discourses that sometimes include neo-racist tendencies. Although rejected by populist politicians, as Dijk's study shows, there are many different examples of neo-racism against immigrants in Europe.[17] M. Walzer states that those who oppress or assimilate need to justify themselves and do so by denying rather than defending their negative attitudes or practices.[18]

In recent years, populist politicians in Europe have often advocated anti-immigrant sentiments to cover up their policy failures, and so, they justified xenophobia. For instance, during the Brexit period, anti -immigrant populist discourse has frequently used in British politics, and immigrants are cited as the culprits of all problems such as low wages, increase

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[16] Mehmet Anık, *Kimlik ve Çokkültürcülük Sosyolojisi* (İstanbul: Açılım Kitap, 2012), 164-65.

[17] Teun A. van Dijk, *Elite Discourse and Racism* (California: Sage Publications, 1993).

[18] Michael Walzer, *On Toleration* (London: Yale University Press, 1999).

in poverty, insufficient housing, underfunded public services such as in the National Health Service and education.

Anti-immigration movements in Europe are against immigrants from non-Western countries, rather than (native) people from Western countries. A study on this issue reveals that the average level of perceived ethnic threat is higher in European countries with a higher proportion of non-Western immigrants.[19] Especially Muslim immigrants face serious problems and are exposed to discrimination, exclusion, and neo-racism in the communities in which they live. Lazaridis states that since 9/11, the Western media have stereotyped Muslims and thereby exacerbated racial prejudices,[20] but a research based on data collected between 1999-2000 from 30 European countries shows that Muslim immigrants were discriminated not only after the 9/11 but also before it and were the most affected people by anti-immigrant prejudices.[21] In another research's results in Germany, approximately half of the respondents think that Islam does not perfectly fit to the Western world.[22]

In the populist politics of the extreme right in Europe, Muslims with an immigrant background are often stigmatised with neo-racist rhetoric. In the Danish Parliament, the veil was compared to the swastika, the symbol of the Nazism, Muslims with an immigrant background in Denmark are compared to tumours in need of radiation, and Islam is called a plague that must be fought and destroyed like Nazism.[23] Despite of the fact that Nazism is an ideology that contains biological and cultural racism, Muslim immigrants are equated with Nazism and shown as the new source of all negativity in Europe. Neo-racist paradoxes in discursive violence against Muslims are normalised under the name of freedom of expression.

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[19] Silke L. Schneider, "Anti-Immigrant Attitudes in Europe: Outgroup Size and Perceived Ethnic Threat", *European Sociological Review* 24/1 (2008): 62-63.

[20] Gabriella Lazaridis, *International Migration to Europe: From Subjects to Abjects* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 74.

[21] Zan Strabac - Ola Listhaug, "Anti-Muslim Prejudice in Europe: A Multilevel Analysis of Survey Data from 30 Countries", *Social Science Research* 37/1 (2008).

[22] Regina Arant et al. *Zusammenhalt in Vielfalt: Das Vielfaltsbarometer 2019 der Robert Bosch Stiftung* (Stuttgart: Robert Bosch Stiftung, 2019), 38.

[23] Hervik, *The Annoying Difference: The Emergence of Danish Neonationalism, Neoracism, and Populism in the Post-1989 World*.

Islamophobia, a common theme of the extreme right-wing in Europe, contains a tendency toward violence. Muslim immigrants are identified with violence and accused of lacking rationality and modern reasoning, as well as disrupting national unification and integrity of European states and thus threatening the future of Europe. Politicians who advocate populist discourses for the sake of political ambitions, as well as exclusionary language that plants seeds of hate in written, visual, and social media embitters some parts of society against immigrants (particularly Muslims) from non-Western countries. For example, in the PEGIDA movement only about 300 people participated in its first action on October 20, 2014 in Dresden, Germany. The number of participants gradually increased in its protests after sloganing Islamophobic and anti-immigrant discourse. The number of protestors reached around 25 thousand in the protest organised by PEGIDA in 2015.

Immigrants in populist discourse are often seen as the cause of increasing crime rates and economic, social, cultural, and political crises.[24] In each economic and political crisis in Europe, immigrants are a target of extreme right-wing rhetoric and threatened with expulsion from the country in which they live despite acquiring citizenship rights. Immigrants from non-Western countries, who could not escape from being stigmatised as foreign rather than European native, are threatened by being sanctioned in extreme right-wing discourse.

Contemporary citizenship maintains that individuals living within the boundaries of a particular nation-state have freedom of thought and faith, and the same rights without class or social inequality, as well as equality under the law and thus must be treated equally regardless of their historical background or race. Discriminatory and exclusionary attitudes towards immigrants from non-Western countries, even if they have acquired citizenship rights, indicates that this is varying in practice. When a native citizen of France, Austria, the Netherlands, or Germany commits a crime

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[24] Anık, *Kimlik ve Çokkültürcülük Sosyolojisi*, 168-69 and Will Kymlicka, "Defending Diversity in an Era of Populism: Multiculturalism and Interculturalism Compared", *Multiculturalism and Interculturalism: Debating the Dividing Lines*, ed. Nasar Meer et al. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 173.

they are not threatened with revocation of citizenship or expulsion from the country and such an irrational reaction never comes to mind. On the contrary, if a citizen with an immigrant background is involved in a crime, the rhetoric that they should be expelled from citizenship and the country frequently emerges in the media and politics that have adopted the far-right perspective. This kind of populist discourse closely affects the native people's perspective on people with foreign background. Ahmadi and Palm's research (2018, p. 24) shows that 66% of Swedes aged 18-75 years agree about that statement "all people with foreign background who commit crime in Sweden should be forced to leave the country."[25]

The results of Ahmadi, Darvishpour and Palm's research show that there is an increase in negative attitudes towards immigrants specifically compared to previous years. Cultural and religious diversity, especially towards Islam is more negatively perceived.[26] Some other studies from the early 2000s show that a large majority of Europeans believe that their country has reached the limits of cultural diversity and ethnic minorities consisting of immigrants have started to be perceived as a 'collective ethnic threat' in Eastern and Western Europe.[27] All these show that cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity originating from immigrants is increasingly being perceived as a threat to local citizens in Europe. This situation feeds intolerance and discrimination against immigrants in different fields such as education, social and political life, judicial disputes with local people.

The studies on the press show that ethnic, racial or religious minority groups are often portrayed negatively or stereotypically as a problem to local citizens in Western countries, and this plays a prominent part in the reproduction of ethnic prejudices and neo-racism. At this point, Muslim

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[25] Fereshteh Ahmadi - Irving Palm, *Diversity Barometer 2018*. Retrieved January 17, 2021 from https://www.hig.se/download/18.6c77c68166435adf0b2cfa2/1541421091075/mångfald%20engelska-2.pdf

[26] Fereshteh Ahmadi - Mehrdad Darvishpour - Irving Palm, "Changes Regarding Attitudes Towards Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Sweden: The Diversity Barometer (2005-2018)", *International Journal of Social Science Studies* 8/5 (2020).

[27] Christina Schori Liang, "Europe for the Europeans: The Foreign and Security Policy of the Populist Radical Right", *Europe for the Europeans: The Foreign and Security Policy of the Populist Radical Right,* ed. Christina Schori Liang (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), 19.

immigrant identity is negatively conveyed around concepts such as crime, violence, terror, sexism, polygamy and disharmony with Western values and norms.[28]

With the effect of technological progress, a change and transformation has emerged in the field of communication, and as a result of this, cyber-racism has become one of the prominent forms of neo-racism. As a matter of fact, scientific studies based on data obtained from European countries and the US show that there is a dangerous increase in racial narcissism in common social media tools such as *Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube* and on some blogs, group/unaffiliated forums, chat rooms, commentary and gaming websites, and that cyber racist crimes against immigrants and refugees are becoming widespread.[29] Online crimes that turn into hate speech beyond being democratic freedom of expression and incite violence against immigrants or citizens of immigrant background in cyberspace undermine social cohesion, unity and solidarity in European countries. It is impossible to deal with hate crimes in cyberspace with classical methods. Online crimes need to be taken more seriously and tackled with a more effective and preventive strategy.

Some studies show that another indicator of exclusionary practices is that citizens with immigrant backgrounds are often exposed to institutional discrimination in job applications due to their names or photos indicating their ethnic origin or religious preferences.[30] Immigrants are discriminated

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[28] Teun A. van Dijk, *Racism and the Press* (London: Routledge, 1991); Fatima Khan and Gabe Mythen, "Culture, Media and Everyday Practices: Unveiling and Challenging Islamophobia", *Media, Crime and Racism,* ed. Monish Bhatia et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) and Gavan Titley, *Racism and Media* (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2019).

[29] Ana-Maria Bliuc et al., "Online Networks of Racial Hate: A Systematic Review of 10 Years of Research on Cyber-Racism", *Computers in Human Behavior* 87 (2018); Andrew Jakubowicz et al., *Cyber Racism and Community Resilience: Strategies for Combating Online Race Hate* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017) and Sevdalina Voynova et al., *Legal Framework, Societal Responses and Good Practises to Counter Online Hate Speech Against Migrants and Refugees: Comparative Report -Bulgaria, Crotia, Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Romania, UK* (Sofia: Rights, Equality and Citizenship/Justice Programme of the European Union, 2017).

[30] See Ibrahim Sirkeci et al, "Discriminatory Labour Market Experiences of A8 National High Skilled Workers in the UK", *Border Crossing* 4/1-2 (2014); Mehmet Anık, *Kimlik ve Çokkültür-cülük Sosyolojisi*, 247-249; Roger Zegers de Beijl, *Documenting Discrimination Against Migrant Workers in the Labour Market: A Comparative Study of Four European Countries* (Geneva: Inter-

against not only in hiring, but also in promotion. Even if they overcome institutional discrimination and start working in a workplace, they are exposed to discrimination in obtaining positions of senior management, like in the glass ceiling syndrome.

The negative attitudes toward immigrants in Europe are not only limited to the extreme right-wing, but also centre-right and even left politicians resort to populist discourses when faced with election worries. T. Sarrazin, a member of the Social Democratic Party of Germany, claims that Muslim immigrants in Germany and Europe have failed to integrate into Western communities, burden German society, and spend their lives exploiting the state's welfare opportunities without making a serious economic contribution. According to Sarrazin, there is a danger of Islamisation in the medium term both for Germany and Europe because of high fertility rates among Muslim immigrants.[31] Sarrazin uses over-generalised and exclusionary language about Muslim immigrants and underestimates their contributions to the German society and Europe. He often uses some issues and non-democratic events that occur in Muslim countries to stigmatise Muslim immigrants in Europe. Muslim immigrants often have nothing to do with these problems, thus this can be interpreted as neo-racist discourse. Such perspectives, which use exclusionary and well-hidden neo-racist language, complaining that immigrants are not integrated into the mainstream community are one of the biggest obstacles to integration. German Prime Minister, A. Merkel, pointed out that Sarrazin's ideas undermined immigrants' integration into German society.

Marginalisation in neo-racist and populist discourse damages the solidarity, social cohesion, mutual trust and respect between native citizens and citizens with foreign background in European countries. This situation limits the contact and interaction between native individuals and individu-

national Labour Office, 2000) and Doris Weichselbaumer, "Discrimination Against Migrant Job Applicants in Austria: An Experimental Study", *German Economic Review* 18/2 (2016).

[31] Thilo Sarrazin, *Deutschland Schafft Sich ab: Wie Wir Unser Land aufs Spiel Setzen* (Müchen: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2010) and Thilo Sarrazin, *Feindliche Übernahme: Wie der Islam den Fortschritt Behindert und die Gesselschaft Bedroht Spiel* (Müchen: FinanzBuch Verlag, 2018).

als with non-Western background. The cultural distance between native settlers and settlers with immigrant background in European countries is increasing gradually, and causing segregation. As can be seen in the figure below, the results of a research in Sweden show that there is an ethnic and cultural hierarchy between people of Western countries and non-Western countries, and this is far greater for those from Muslim countries.

Figure 1: Cultural Distance in Sweden[32]
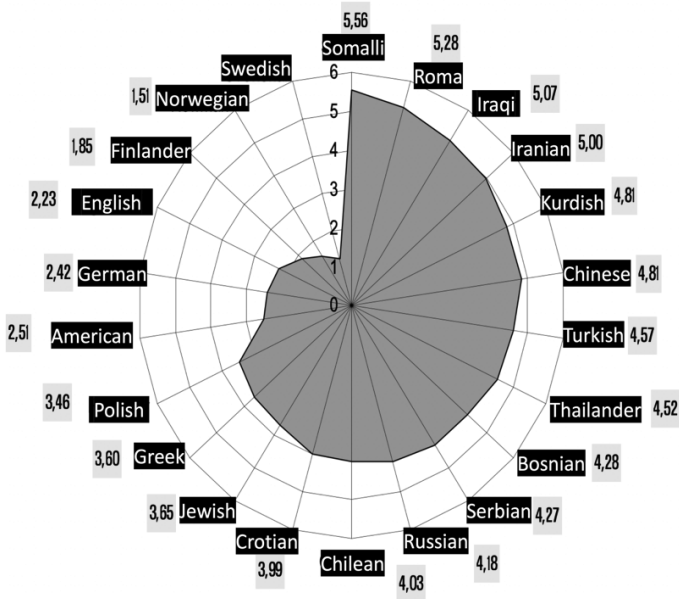
Neo-racism as an ideological construction refers to a process of inclusion and exclusion. A neo-racist approach in which anti-immigration comes to the fore is opposed to pluralism in a social, cultural and religious sense. A neo-racist adopts a monist national culture that does not allow multiculturalism and makes a sharp distinction between native culture and marginalised cultures, and emphasises the incompatibility and conflict between these cultures. A neo-racist bigotedly believes the superiority of national culture to others. Therefore, neo-racism contains a hostility towards non-

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[32] Orlando Mella - Irving Palm - Kristina Bromark, *Mångfaldsbarometern 2011* (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet Sociologiska Institutionen, 2011), 41.

Western immigrants and their cultures. In this sense, non-Western cultures are humiliated and excluded, and cultures originating from the countries in Asia, the Middle East and Africa are seen as the opponents of European cultures.

Neo-racist discourse based on national pride and self-glorification is subject-oriented rather than action-oriented. In this perspective, an accomplishment gained by one of his/her own nation is culturally and racially glorified and appreciated by a neo-racist, but if an individual in othered group does the same thing, it is usually ignored. It is possible to consider the opposite of this situation for a negative action. In such a situation, while negative generalization is not made for his/her own race, it can be easily made for the otherised group. At this point, a neo-racist approach does not assume that the individuals in the othered group may differ from each other and makes inclusive generalisations about those people. Therefore, a neo-racist approach has an ambivalent perspective and does not have a humanitarian aspect. Neo-racists advocate that immigrants should not be allowed to live in their country as they harm their national and cultural identity. For example, far-right parties in the United Kingdom (The British National Party), the Netherlands (Partij voor de Vrijheid), Germany (Alternative für Deutschland), Sweden (Sverigedemokraterna), Denmark (Dansk Folkeparti) and Norway (Framstegpartiet) bring to the forefront the political discourse that their country belongs only to their races and Europe is only for Europeans. This neo-racist and populist discourse is especially used against Muslims with immigrant background. Muslim immigrants are shown in this discourse as a greater security threat to Europe at cultural, societal, economic, demographic and institutional levels.

When a language of hate that marginalises Muslim immigrants is used in the far-right populist discourse, it is often stated that Islam cannot co-exist in harmony with Western values and democracy. Far-right Dutch politician Geert Wilders has defended that Islam and democracy are incompatible, due to fact that Islam infuses a "fascist body of thought, which threatens to destroy -Western- democracy".[33] Similar statements made by

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[33] Hans-Georg Betz, "Against the 'Green Totalitarianism': Anti-Islamic Nativism in Contempo-

Nick Griffin, the former leader of the British National Party, in an interview with Channel 4 News in 2009. He characterised Muslim immigrants in the UK and European countries as the main threat of Western societies and values. According to Griffin "Western values, freedom of speech, democracy and rights for women are incompatible with Islam" and so "no place in Europe for Islam". For him 'Islam is a cancer eating away Western freedoms, rights and democracy, and so a global chemotherapy is needed against Islam to save Western civilisation".[34]

In populist discourse, the terrorist attacks in Europe are used as a tool for anti-Muslim immigration. Although Muslim immigrants adopt a stance against these attacks, they cannot avoid being treated like the criminals of these attacks. In an interview in November 2020, Viktor Orbán, the Prime Minister of Hungary, stated that he did his best to warn Europeans about this matter. According to Orbán "for the future of Europe, migration is not the answer, but the source of the problem".[35] The modern migration wave to Europe is seen as Europe's biggest social problem.

When the superiority of Western norms and values is expressed in populist discourses in Europe, Muslims with immigrant background, their Islamic symbols and values are frequently humiliated. In such discourses, Islam and Muslim immigrants are presented as the main enemies of Western civilisation and Western nations. Islam and anti-immigrant hate speech are defended under the name of freedom of expression, but the same freedom is generally not seen as a basic right for Muslim immigrants. In the first week of November 2020, after the political pressure by the French government, Brussels-based *Politico Europe* and London-based *Financial Times* have removed articles questioning French secularism/laïcité and Macron's political attitude towards Islam and Muslim immigrants.

As the study edited by Hainsworth shows, in most countries in Europe,

rary Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe", *Europe for the Europeans: The Foreign and Security Policy of the Populist Radical Right*, ed. Christina Schori Liang (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), 43.

[34] For more details about that interview see https://www.channel4.com/news/articles/politics/domestic_politics/bnpaposs+griffin+islam+is+a+cancer/3257872.html

[35] For details about that interview see http://abouthungary.hu/blog/pm-orban-the-situation-is-serious-but-we-can-handle-it/

anti-immigrant far right parties have transformed from the margins to the mainstream for recent 30 years, and have gained a strong political position to influence the domestic and foreign policy of their countries.[36] Today, in many European countries, there is no such an integration policy aimed at integrating immigrants from non-Western countries into the mainstream society with their own cultural characteristics. The increase of neo-racist and populist discourses against immigrants prevents the implementation of such an integration policy aimed at transforming positive effects of ethnic and cultural diversity into a national wealth. C. Schott et al draw attention to the fact that immigrants who do not assimilate in France and many European countries are marginalised from labour market, education system and social life.[37]

According to xenophobic, and neo-racist perspectives in Europe, if you are a native person, you deserve respect and a humane treatment, but if you have an immigrant background from a non-Western country, you do not deserve respect and humane treatment. Even if the citizens of immigrant origin in Europe make serious contributions to the country they live in, when there is an adverse situation, their loyalty and patriotism to their country are easily questioned in a populist way. For example, Turkish-origin German footballer, Mesut Özil, who had a picture taken with Turkish President, R. T. Erdoğan, was denigrated when Germany failed to win the world cup in 2018. When he announced that he left the German National Team, the reproach sentences he used on his official Twitter account on July 22, 2018 are quite significant within the scope of this article. While his friends Lukas Podolski and Miroslav Klose have never referred to as German-Polish by the German media outlets, he criticised not being seen as a German and referring to his Turkish roots in all adverse situations:

"(…) German media outlets repeatedly blaming my dual heritage and a simple picture for a bad World Cup on behalf of an entire squad. (…) They

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[36] Paul Hainsworth, *The Politics of the Extreme Right: From the Margins to the Mainstream* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

[37] Christina Schott et al., "Lernen von den Melting Pots?", *Die Flüchtlingsrevolution: Wie die Neue Völkerwanderung die Ganze Welt Verändert*, ed. Marc Engelhardt (München: Pantheon Verlag, 2016).

didn't criticise my performances, they didn't criticise the team's performances, they just criticised my Turkish ancestry. (...) I am a German when we win, but I am an immigrant when we lose. This is because despite paying taxes in Germany, donating facilities to German schools and winning the World Cup with Germany in 2014. I am still not accepted into society. I am treated as being 'different'. I received the 'Bambi Award' in 2010 as an example of successful integration to German society, I received a 'Silver Laurel Leaf' in 2014 from the Federal Republic of Germany, and was a 'German Football Ambassador' in 2015. But clearly, I am not a German? Are there criteria for being fully German that I do not fit? (...) Is it because it is Turkey? Is it because I'm a Muslim? I think here lays an important issue. (...) I was born and educated in Germany, so why don't people accept that I am German? (...)"

Another immigrant focused crisis in Europe is asylum seekers and refugees, particularly from Syria and Africa. Asylum seeker migration to Europe sometimes causes to political conflicts in Europe. European countries generally refrain from fulfilling their obligations regarding asylum seekers under international human rights law (Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and UN legal arrangements (the Geneva Convention in 1951), and implement strict border controls to keep civilians fleeing from actual conflict zones and seeking asylum away from their own territory.

Despite the UN commitments, one of the main reasons put forward by European states for not accepting refugees is that those seeking asylum are mostly seen as people trying to emigrate for economical expectations.[38] Syrians who are victims of internal war in their homeland and seeking asylum refute this thesis. Today, concerns about national security, political, social, and economic structure have an adverse effect on refugee acceptance. Such concerns are understandable unless they are based on racist and populist discourses. With the example of Syrian asylum seekers, the dichotomy between providing humanitarian living conditions and security-

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[38] Stephen Castles et al., *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, 5th edition (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

based concerns is one of the most significant problems of modern society. This situation shows that new international regulations which are realistic, feasible, fair, and strong binding should be made in light of the current problems of asylum seekers and refugees.

Security-priority policies in the EU are based on the approach of stopping asylum seekers in transition countries and the evaluation of asylum applications in these countries, such as Libya and Turkey. Elective, elitist, and utilitarian attitudes come to the forefront and counteract the effort to obtain refugee status for an appropriate life with humane conditions. Asylum applicants with good economic status or a high educational level are accepted while other applicants are rejected and individuals are kept in camps (far from EU borders) with limited help.[39] Xenophobia in the media in recent years, particularly the populist discourse of right-wing politicians who bear hostility, increases emotional anger and hostile attitudes and behaviours toward immigrants and asylum seekers. Exclusionary and discriminatory discourse used against immigrants create a negative climate and cause institutional discrimination; psychological, physical, political, cultural and social violence, attacks on places of worship belonging to immigrants, and racist attacks causing deaths and injury to people in Norway (2011), Sweden (2015), Britain (2016), Italy (2018), New Zealand (2019), and Germany (2016, 2019 and 2020) etc.

Conclusion

Attitudes towards immigrants in Europe in a functional and pragmatic framework, generally is deprived of a humanitarian point of view. Immigrants are usually seen as objects to be used when needed and thrown out when not needed. Especially in times of economic and political crises immigrants are portrayed to be the main cause of adverse situations. Extreme right-leaning reactions to immigrants from non-Western countries can be summarised as "Europe is only for Europeans". This attitude indicates that the European continent is not a homeland for immigrants and that they

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[39] Rıdvan Şimşek - Mehmet Anık, "Asylum Seeker and Refugee Crisis as a Humanitarian Tragedy in the Contemporary World", *Afro Eurosian Studies* 7/2 (2018).

should return to their homeland. In response to these irrational, neo-racist, populist and xenophobic reactions it would not be wrong to say that Europe would collapse if all immigrants were evacuated from the continent.

Immigrants, particularly those from non-Western countries, are often criticised for failing to integrate with the mainstream society. As an extension of these criticisms, far right tendencies and reactions are increasing against immigrants. Even though they have acquired citizenship rights, immigrants are seen as a serious threat for national unity and integrity in the countries in which they live. However, this distinctive, marginalizing, stigmatizing, and exclusionary attitude and discourse stand out as the biggest obstacle to national unity, harmony, solidarity, and integration. From the perspective of immigrants; multicultural or intercultural socio-political structures and fair integration policies, that do not give their ethnic, cultural, or religious differences a reason for conflict, marginalisation, humiliation, and exclusion, would make them feel stronger in their sense of social trust, belonging, and commitment to mainstream society. Activities that will provide effective dialogue and interaction between native citizens and citizens with immigrant background will eliminate mutual prejudices, and increase harmony, unity, solidarity and mutual respect. The integration that European politicians have often stated has not been attained for immigrants from non-Western countries, would thus be fully actualised.

The expression of national identity, unity, and pride through anti-immigration in populist discourses in European countries causes an increase in neo-racist attitudes against immigrants. Anti-immigration attitudes in Europe often go beyond solely democratic reactions with discriminatory, pejorative, xenophobic, neo-racist, orientalist, anti-Asian, Afrophobic and Islamophobic tendencies. Although these attitudes emerged as anti-immigration and attempted rational reasoning, they are actually fed from an irrational, emotional, and reactive perspective and are mostly products of political opportunism. These attitudes lack realistic ground, therefore, the continuation of such reactions focused on a homogeneous understanding of nation will socio-politically divide rather than promote unity in the countries in Europe.

Europe's main test regarding immigrants has been in the face of those coming from non-Western countries. Immigrants from Muslim countries

are frequently exposed to Islamophobic and neo-racist reactions in Europe. Muslims accused of having illiberal and anti-democratic understandings are subject to treatment that does not match up with liberal and democratic values. This remains to be one of the main contradictions of Western societies both in terms of democratic and universal human values. Negative generalisations and hostile expressions about immigrants from non-Western societies in populist discourses, the persistent marginalisation of immigrants and citizens with immigrant background, bias native people against immigrants and neo-racist attacks on immigrants damage rather than strengthen national unity in European countries. It is necessary to confront and combat more effectively against neo-racism in the media, law, politics, education, economy and society.

With the impact of developments in transportation and communication technology, the consequences of armed conflicts and social issues in anywhere of the world, as seen in the case of asylum seekers and refugees, are no longer limited to the region in which they occur. The recent experiences and discussions about asylum seekers and refugees in Europe have some dimensions that cannot be confined only to this continent. Given the tragic events that have increased in humanitarian terms in recent years, it is clear that the world needs a stronger UN that does not resort to rhetoric used only to condemn. To protect vulnerable people seeking asylum, there is a need for stronger international humanitarian laws that includes strengthened sanctions and forces to intervention quickly when needed. Therefore, the current international regulations on this issue should be revised in the light of recent issues.

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