

## **Xenophobia in Central Eastern Europe**

**Workshop organized by Central European University, Center for Policy Studies**

*Budapest, June 21-22, 2002*

### **Many Faces of the Monster**

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#### **Summary**

The paper presents a practitioners' insight and is aimed at contributing to exploration of the nature of xenophobia and of different forms of its manifestation in modern Europe.

Acknowledging that explanation of xenophobia as a response to growing competition for scarce economic and social resources cannot be satisfactory, the authors suggest two models to analyse its roots. The first is the "bottom-up" approach based on the presumption that xenophobic tendencies, which spontaneously occur in the society as the reaction to globalization, find their reflection in the rhetoric of political leaders. The second is the "top-down" approach, which emphasizes the role of the elites in shaping the civil society's perceptions of and attitudes to diversity. To illustrate, the case of Latvia as a state of ethnic democracy is used as an example, showing how xenophobia can be mobilized for the sake of political legitimization

The authors assume that both the fragmentation of the anti-xenophobic paradigm and departure of the "derivative" concepts from its original core idea, create fertile soil for the legitimization of xenophobia, and consider three particular areas: the concept of anti-racism and non-discrimination, the rights of minorities, and migration control.

Envisaging xenophobia as non-acceptance of "otherness", it is stated that the place of the xenophobia concept in the modern society is to be defined within the "triangle of basic values": stability – democracy – diversity, emphasizing the need to perceive diversity as a value itself and not as an inevitable evil or a "bypass product" of democracy.

## **Introduction**

The problem of xenophobia has since lately become a central element of highly topical discourse among political scientists and human rights defenders. Moreover, xenophobia is rising higher also on the agenda of policy-makers. Both the nature of the discourse and the language used to address the issue vary greatly and change rapidly. This paper reflects the practitioners' view and aims at overviewing and comparing different forms of manifestation of the xenophobic trends in modern Europe, analyzing (in)effectiveness of the responses to the rise of xenophobia, suggesting some explanations for these trends, as well as possible methods to oppose and overcome them.

### **The nature of the phenomenon of xenophobia**

Xenophobia is usually understood as non-acceptance of diversity, rejection of and hostile attitude towards "otherness" and "others" ("others" being immigrants, ethnic or national minorities, indigenous peoples, clergies of different faith, etc). "Pure" xenophobia is a relatively rare phenomenon. As a rule, xenophobic sentiments are disguised under certain "objective" reasoning. Adherents of explicitly or implicitly xenophobic views claim they feel insecure about their future because of threats of some kind posed by "the others".

Often these perceived threats are based on stereotypes related to economic issues ("immigrants occupy all jobs", "Roma do not wish to work and only consume social funds, the more so because of the big number of children in their families", etc.).

One could assume that the more difficult the economic situation is, the higher the level of intolerance and xenophobia must be. However, the facts reveal that no correlation between economic prosperity and level of xenophobia can be established. Xenophobia is not a disease of exclusively post-communist states with transitional economy. Liberal and economically well-developed states with strong historical tradition of democracy and tolerance appear to have no immunity against this virus. Successful exploitation of

xenophobic slogans in recent electoral campaigns in Austria, Italy, Denmark, the Netherlands, are good illustration of that kind. After in France, which was perceived as a “trendsetter” of high standards of political culture and equality, the significant support to Le Pen was demonstrated in the first round of presidential elections, it has become evident that the scale of the phenomenon was underestimated.

Thus, simplistic explanations of xenophobia as a response to growing competition for scarce economic and social resources can hardly be satisfactory.

Xenophobia is an underlying concept of non-acceptance of “otherness”. It can be manifested differently; also the targets depend heavily on which element of one’s identity is regarded as determinant or vital in a given society. For instance, hostile feelings towards those practicing other religion are expected to be more intensive if belief is declared one of the most important elements of one’s identity. In turn, if the society’s division goes along the linguistic lines, than exactly linguistic minorities become most vulnerable.

The growth of xenophobia makes a question about its roots more topical than ever before. Two explanations are possible.

The first is the “bottom-up” approach based on the presumption that xenophobic tendencies existing in the society find their reflection in the rhetoric of political leaders. Thus, the xenophobic discourse in designing and implementing policies is a reaction of political elites to spontaneous processes in the society, and mainly pursues the goal of maintaining the elites’ legitimacy.

The second is the “top-down” approach, which emphasizes the role of the elites in shaping the civil society’s perceptions of and attitudes to ethnocultural and religious diversity. In particular, this concept might explain why the level of intolerance and xenophobia often varies greatly in neighboring countries, without resorting to the

primordialist ideas of inherent mental differences between nations (so called mentalities, a term particularly broadly exploited in former Soviet countries).

In our view, however, the both factors have certain impact, moreover, the both are closely interrelated.

### **Xenophobia as a spontaneous phenomenon**

The first approach is based on the presumption that growing demand for “firm, reliable and unchanging” values is a natural and inherent response to the trends of the modern world: increasing communication and mobility, mass migration, economic and cultural globalization. These trends cause a phenomenon of “dissolution” of historically emerged identities (some commentators speak about the “identity crisis”, what, in our view, is somewhat misleading – the key issue is rather connected with re-consideration and expansion of the very concept of identity, appearance of its new facets and proliferation of multiple identities). Thus, xenophobia represents a sort of defensive reaction on the part of the sectors of the societies that tend to stick to “traditional” cultural and ethnic values. In turn, this reaction heavily, though sometimes unexpectedly, affects the political agenda. In other words, xenophobia as the denial of diversity becomes a concept of how “to save the nation” from melting down in the pot of globalization.

This trend well fits to and reinforces “classical” concept of ethnic nationalism: while globalization is perceived as a threat to ethno-nation rather than to civic nation, in the meantime, xenophobic rhetoric is based on the notions like “national security” or “national interests”. Obviously, security and interests of a certain ethnic community, presumed to be a “proprietor” of a certain state, are meant.

Manifestation of these trends in the post-communist states is exacerbated by the “vacuum of values” following the collapse of official communist ideology. Domination of liberal values can be easily declared, but can hardly be introduced by a law or a decree. Xenophobic ethno-nationalist concepts easily replaced the communist ideology, since the

both have much in common: the both are based on the presumption of the supremacy of a group over an individual, neglect human dignity as the basic value and justify violence towards the individual in pursuit of the interests of the “right” group. As an astute Polish commentator mentioned, switch from communist values to liberal ones requires change of both grammar rules and vocabulary, while switch from communism to nationalism demands only change of vocabulary, while the grammar remains the same.

However, as W.Kymlicka rightly points out, liberal political thought also fails to offer a clear answer on how to handle ethnocultural diversity in the society. Traditional concept of neutrality of a liberal democratic state (fully applicable to e.g. the case of multi-confessional society where democratic state must be neutral in religious sense, i.e. secular) appears not relevant when applied to ethnoculturally diverse societies. A state simply cannot be neutral in ethnocultural and linguistic sense, first of all, because certain language(s) must be designated for official use in legislature, public administration, judiciary, etc. As Rasma Karklins puts it, “The dilemma is that the members of the dominating (linguistic) group deny their specificity, thinking that they represent the norm to which minorities should want to assimilate”. It appears that the liberal philosophy cannot suggest guidelines, expressed in non-ethnic terms, based on non-ethnic values, and competitive to a spontaneous backlash of xenophobia, on how to cope with the dissolution of identity.

### **The “top-down” approach**

Exploitation of xenophobic sentiments as a sort of political manipulation is similar to other populist electoral technologies and hardly deserves separate serious consideration. The methods are more or less similar in different countries, and explicit or hidden hate-speech is the leading among them.

It is of much more interest to explore what factors – if any, besides the growth of “spontaneous xenophobia” considered above, make xenophobic strategies so rewarding

for political leaders and ensure easy capitalizing on them. In this view, it is essential to analyze the essence of a series of concepts and paradigms that until very recently were considered universally recognized and accepted.

One of the aspects is to be paid special attention. After the World War 2, the idea of acceptance and celebration of diversity – in fact, the “anti-xenophobia” idea - has become a universally recognized basic value in liberal political thought, and as such has been made a foundation for a ramified framework of political concepts and international legal instruments. In the meantime, this framework is split to different and practically not overlapping areas. Not rarely the further development in this or that particular area gradually deviates from the original paradigm, and thus undermines its original anti-xenophobic core. Thus, both the fragmentation of the “anti-xenophobic paradigm” and gradual departure of the “derivative” concepts from its original core set of ideas, create fertile soil for the return and legitimization of xenophobia.

To illustrate the thesis above, we will consider three different areas: the concept of anti-racism and non-discrimination, the rights of minorities, and migration control.

### **Anti-racism and non-discrimination**

The concept of anti-racism has long history. However, only after WW2 has it been transformed into the universal principle of equality of all human beings. After adoption of the basic UN documents, racial discrimination is understood not only as discrimination on the basis of race, but in a much broader meaning: the Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination defines discrimination as any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Adoption of this universal interpretation has become a major breakthrough, since before it happened the concept of non-discrimination and equality had always been limited (in

different countries and situations women, black people, persons with low income, or other groups were excluded).

However, gradually the main focus of the non-discrimination principle shifted. As a matter of fact, the consistent application of the anti-racist approach has been replaced with the concept of “political correctness”. Although this approach appeared very constructive at some point, however, articulate and exaggerated imposition of political correctness entailed gradual change of public attitudes – the norms of political correctness were perceived as annoying formal prescriptions, not substantiated with any genuine philosophy. As a result, today violation of the “dogmas” of political correctness appears to bring enormous political benefits for those who dare to ignore these rules. In fact, neglect of political correctness was the key to recent success of xenophobic populist parties in Austria, Italy, Denmark, the Netherlands, and also the accomplishment of Le Pen in France.

It was exactly the gap between the formal rules of political correctness, on one hand, and the ideas of universal equality and discrimination, on the other, to ensure achievements of these xenophobic parties. Not only those who indeed share their political agenda voted for them, so did also electors who liked the very idea - perceived as innovative and courageous - of breaking the imposed rules.

One more, probably even more dangerous, feature of modern anti-racism should be mentioned. Anti-racism is nowadays often interpreted in the context of victimization, understood as an advocacy for the rights of certain groups, which have traditionally been the most disadvantaged. Adherents of this approach, as a matter of fact, depart from the universal paradigm of non-discrimination, and interpret anti-racism as particularistic concept of protection of certain groups which must have special rights because of historic oppression. Any difference, whatever the reasons are, is perceived as discriminatory and “racist”. This way the principle of anti-racism is transformed into purely social concept, class approach, close to the communist ideology: the paradigm of equality in dignity is

transformed into equality in property and income. This trend was clearly manifested, in particular, at the recent World Conference against Racism in Durban in 2001.

A.Ossipov, prominent Russian human rights activist and participant of the Durban NGO conference, wrote: “A specific philosophy called 'anti-racism' has emerged within the recent 30 or more years. The entire Durban conference was merely a set of its various manifestations. The term 'anti-racism' should be seen here as a conditional one. The people involved in minority or indigenous advocacy employ the similar ideas and language. Briefly, the philosophy rests on several assumptions and notions. Society and the entire humankind are perceived as composed of ethnic and racial groups. These groups are divided into 'weak', 'vulnerable', 'targeted' or 'suppressed', on the one hand, and 'strong', 'dominant' or 'suppressor', on the other. Ethnic or racial dimension of social inequalities is interpreted as a product of relations - 'domination', 'subjection' or 'exploitation' - between two types of groups. On the contrary, 'racism' and 'discrimination' are determined not only as concrete and legally defined deeds but also as any social disparity along ethnic or racial lines regardless of its nature. Therefore, since social inequalities are inevitable, it is concluded that 'weak' groups or 'minorities' require special regime and special treatment - from reverse discrimination and resource redistribution to a specific 'politically correct' language. In the course of this, promotion of the people belonging to 'subordinate' groups and restrictions against 'dominant' groups should not be determined as racism or discrimination against. Rather, it must be viewed as a search for 'justice'.”

Not surprisingly, some commentators who recently analyzed attentively modern anti-racists' rhetoric, pointed out that in fact it tends to reproduce the same xenophobic approach in combating the problem of xenophobia. Thus, a certain part of today's anti-racism – and, supposedly, anti-xenophobia - movement somewhat paradoxically, rather contributes into the general xenophobic discourse.

However, certain encouraging developments in the field should be pointed out, too. In particular, the content of the so called EU Race Directive adopted in 2001, adequately



reflects the initial universal idea of non-discrimination in a generous and broad interpretation (such aspects as shifting the burden of proof, as well as introduction of the notion of indirect discrimination, are particularly revealing).

### **Minority rights**

Historically, the minority protection appeared much earlier than the principle of non-discrimination. The first minority treaty is dated back to 1606 – the Vienna treaty between the King of Hungary and the Prince of Transylvania contained a clause about the right of Protestants in Transylvania to freely profess their faith. Ancient treaties of the kind dealt with the religious minorities, as the very concept of national and ethnic minorities appeared much later.

“Old” bilateral and multilateral treaties on minority protection were based on the same concept: minority rights were considered a sort of special privileges granted to some groups which, due to some historical, religious or political reasons, were particularly dear to contracting parties. As a matter of fact, recognition of minority rights reflected, first of all, relative military strength of the contracting parties. Thus, in no way were minority rights universal.

The system of minority treaties under the League of Nations is the best evidence for this: obligations in the field of minority protection were imposed on the states which lost the World War 1, on those states which obtained independence as a result of the post-war treaties, as well on those who gained some territories as a result of re-drawing the map of Europe. In the meantime, WW1 victors did not undertake any obligations in this respect.

Probably, the situation of Roma who never had “their own” state to take care of them is the most convincing evidence: until recently, practically nothing was done to fight widespread discrimination against Roma.

Thus, the minority issue between the wars was exclusively a foreign policy issue. Nevertheless, this system of minority treaties appeared incapable of preventing the WW2. Moreover, the minority issue was abused by Hitler to justify his aggression. Thus, not only the League of Nations approach to minority protection was discredited, but so was also the very concept of minority rights. This is why the UN was hesitant to include any provisions on minority rights in its first basic documents, and stressed the concept of non-discrimination instead. Minority rights, understood in the League of Nations' sense, were perceived as possible impediment to this new concept of universal equality, this is why the UN was reluctant to deal with them. Only in 1966 the first modest clause, Art.27 appeared in the text of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The modern concept of minority rights – reflected, in particular, in the philosophy of the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National minorities – recognizes minority rights as an integral part of fundamental human rights, is based on the non-discrimination approach, but is complementary to it. While the “classical” principle of non-discrimination does not go beyond the requirement of equal treatment, the objective of the concept of minority rights is *full and effective equality*. To achieve this goal, sometimes equal treatment only is not sufficient, different treatment is needed, taking into account cultural peculiarities and differences.

The two approaches are complementary, since, simplistically speaking, the non-discrimination aims at ensuring equality, while minority rights provide the right to preserving diversity.

However, in practice, particularly in political discourse, a bizarre mixture of the “League of Nations” approach and modern, human rights-based approach is dominating. Several states (e.g. France) which otherwise are recognized as fully democratic, simply deny the existence of minorities within their territories.

A number of pseudo-scientific concepts introducing artificial definitions of “historical”, “traditional”, and other types of minorities pursue, as a rule, purely political goals and are often used to justify explicitly xenophobic agendas. Division between “national” and

“immigrant” minorities is particularly effective in this respect. Application of the criteria adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is completely arbitrary – each state is free to decide whether this or that particular ethnic group has sufficiently “firm and longstanding ties” with this state.

Ratification and implementation of the Framework Convention has been made a mandatory precondition for the accession of the new member states to the Council of Europe, however, a number of the “old” members are not obliged to ratify it.

As to the EU enlargement, probably the most powerful incentive for the post-communist European countries, the Copenhagen accession criteria do envisage respect for minority rights – however, no clear guideline for evaluation of meeting these criteria have been established. Moreover, the EU itself has neither legally binding instruments, nor procedures, nor specialized institutions or experts to evaluate the minority situations. Thus, the current situation can be described as co-existence of persistent rhetoric of minority protection with the absence of really binding legal framework and rigorous procedures of monitoring and/or consideration of individual complaints.

Thus, the minority issue remains, in practice, to a substantial extent a foreign policy issue, and xenophobic patterns contribute also into shaping international relations. Denial of diversity within a given society leads to preempted strong association of minorities with their kin-states (what could be the case and could be not). Such association allows to elaborate sophisticated policies aimed at augmentation of control over minorities as a “foreign, alien element” and to keep their rights within certain limits. It also makes them an easy target for “legitimate” discrimination, as they are perceived to share the values of their state of origin, not always friendly to “us”, and not of “our state”. This approach puts minorities’ loyalty to the state under question. This, in turn, entails treating them as a threat to stability and development, which, again, ends up in equating security of a nation to its security from ethno-cultural diversity.

It is worth mentioning that even human rights defenders and political scientists exploit these stereotypes when addressing minority issues, thus departing from formally accepted definition of minority rights as an integral part of universal human rights.

As a result, despite substantial (and even somewhat unexpected) progress in the field of minority protection, connected, first of all, with the development of the machinery of the Framework Convention in the Council of Europe, widespread obsolete understanding of minority rights crucially contributes into the strengthening of the xenophobic agenda.

### **Migration and migration control**

One cannot but recognize the fundamental contradiction in the modern global community. Economic globalization brings about free movement of capitals, goods and services. This trend is not at all limited to the “elite club” of the European Union. Moreover, the phenomenon goes beyond formal rules established, for example, by the World Trade Organization, or any other special regulatory mechanisms. Global market simply reflects the intrinsic nature of modern economy.

However, one exception from this general globalization trend persists: no universal freedom of movement for labor, for people has been ever recognized. Freedom of movement as human right is limited. Basic international instruments declare that every person has the right to leave any state, but to enter only his own country. Practically all states perform strict monitoring of the persons crossing their borders, and restrict admission onto their territories.

This situation creates the double standards in evaluation of socially acceptably behavior. Such features as high mobility, activity, readiness to move in order to find better job, to earn more, are highly encouraged within the societies of the economically developed and democratic countries. In the meantime, when foreigners coming from the “third world” follow exactly the same patterns of social behavior, they are condemned and punished,

and often their striving to enter and settle in a different country is criminalized (the concept of “illegal migration”, “clandestine migrants”, etc.).

Apparently, this is inevitable in a modern state-based world. However, it is indeed difficult to explain to the public at large how these anti-migration policies can go along with the generally declared universal principles of equality and acceptance of diversity. For “common people”, affiliation with another state and different citizenship are not the crucial factors – claimants for immigration are perceived rather as “others” in cultural and linguistic sense. Rhetoric of “migration control”, “combating illegal migration”, etc., present these “others” as a threat to the society, counteract and undermine lofty ideals of universal equality. In fact, the concept of “Fortress Europe” cannot but be perceived as the strategy of prevention of diversity, evidently opposing the paradigm of the acceptance of diversity.

The situation is aggravated because of the recent trend: anti-immigration policies are more often presented as necessary in order to contribute to the protection of the states against terrorism – although there is no evidence to support any ties between terrorism and immigration. The reasoning goes that democracy must have instruments to protect itself, because imposing less control on the civil society, it becomes more vulnerable to external threats than non-democratic regimes. Yet, the difference between adequate measures aimed at protection of democracy and turning to undemocratic means seems to be very ambiguous.

Of course, this trend co-exists with some others. Most of the developed states recognize that they cannot survive without immigration because of purely demographic reasons, adopt and enforce anti-discrimination legislation, develop programs aimed at promotion of tolerance and inter-cultural cooperation. Nevertheless, the hurdles put before those who desire to join this society, division to “ours” and “aliens”, rejection of “aliens”, “others” remain significant factors shaping the modern public attitudes towards “otherness”.

## **The case of Latvia**

Latvia as a state of ethnic democracy (concept developed by S.Smootha and Y.Peled and applied to the Baltic states by G.Smith, V.Pettai, P.Jarve and other researchers) can be a good example of how xenophobia can be promoted using the “top-down” approach, i.e. how xenophobia can be mobilized for the sake of political legitimization.

First of all, the domination of so called “core-nation”, or titular ethnic group, is established in the legislation. It is performed both at the declarative level (e.g. through delimitating ethnic Latvians as the only “native” group, as does the preamble to the 1991 Law on Unrestricted Development of Ethnic and National Groups and the Right to Cultural Autonomy), and indirectly, in particular, through defining languages spoken by Latvia’s linguistic minorities as “foreign languages” in the State Language law, or through mandatory record of a person’s ethnicity determined “by blood” in the Registry of Residents and personal IDs).

Second, the ethnic hierarchy is maintained and its principles are reproduced regularly in the political discourse. It is stated that “Latvia is the land of ethnic Latvians and their ancestors” (quotation from the President of Latvia Vaira Vike-Freiberga, June 2002) thus providing for a division of inhabitants into at least two categories: hosts/masters and “guests”.

As the basis for such “legitimized xenophobia” (i.e. implicit ethnic inequalities enshrined in the legal framework) is the “historical experience” of the Latvian people. So the claims for the special rights for ethnic Latvians in comparison with the persons belonging to other ethnic groups are based exactly on the victimization complex. This is a moderate and “civilized” manifestation of the trend A.Ossipov highlights: “The reverse side of the victimization complex is the 'everything permitted' syndrome”.

Typically for the post-communist countries in transition, this approach eclectically co-exists with the constitutional provisions that declare full equality of all citizens of Latvia, and prohibit discrimination on any ground.

It is worth mentioning, that according to the research “On the way to civil society” (1998), 83% of ethnic non-Latvians expressed the wish to have ethnic Latvians as friends or members of the family, while only 36% of ethnic Latvians would support such relations with non-Latvians.

In the meantime, practically no cases of racially or ethnically motivated violence have been ever recorded in Latvia since the very beginning of perestroika and the drive for independence. Besides, contrary to thy sociological data mentioned above, the level of ethnically mixed marriages remains high (approximately 20%). Simplistically speaking, in the public perception, ethnic Russians can be accepted as neighbors but not as co-citizens.

This attitude well corresponds to the concept of citizenship adopted in Latvia and Estonia. These are the only two former USSR republics to reject the so called “zero option”. Not all persons who were permanent residents of the republics at the moment of the restoration of independence, but only those who were citizens before the Soviet annexation in 1940, and there direct descendants, were recognized as “initial” citizens of newly independent Estonia and Latvia. All others were supposed to obtain citizenship through rather stringent naturalization procedures.

The “restored citizenship” concept was formally based on historical and legalistic arguments: since the annexation of the Baltic states by the USSR in 1940 was illegal, de jure these independent states continued to exist, and so did the entity of their citizens. However, in practice this approach was aimed at ensuring political domination of the titular group. 99% of ethnic Latvians were registered as citizens on the basis of the criteria mentioned above (later an amendment was introduced into the Citizenship law stipulating that all ethnic Latvians can obtain citizenship by request – i.e. the ethnic

criteria was explicitly incorporated into the citizenship law). Meanwhile, only 42% of ethnic Russians could “automatically” claim Latvian citizenship. Thus, the share of predominantly Russian-speaking minorities in the citizenry was reduced from approx. 48% (the share of the ethnic non-Latvians in the entire population, according to the 1989 census), to less than 20%.

This approach allowed to ensure ethnic domination without resorting to physical violence, and predetermined development of legislation to strengthen this domination (the language legislation, laws on elections and education, refusal to ratify the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, etc.). Thus, nationalistic sentiments, in a sense, have been channeled along legalistic lines. However, this concept also created serious long-term problems in and obstacles to the democratic development.

Legitimacy of the nowadays political elite of Latvia is, to a considerable extent, based on instrumentalization and politicization of ethnicity. Once the value of “Latvianness” decreases, the state has to take measures to enhance it artificially and to legitimize the need for such protectionism. Consequently, as the crucial element of the Latvian identity is the Latvian language, other languages (thus, linguistic groups) are perceived as a threat and the need for their containment is recognized.

This is a fundamental contradiction of the political developments in modern Latvia. International community expects Latvia to gradually depart from the ethnically-based strategy: to facilitate integration of the society, to ratify the instruments on minority rights, to speed up naturalization of the permanent resident non-citizens. In the meantime, “de-ethnicization” would crucially undermine the legitimacy of the current political elite.

Thus, the case of Latvia offers a pattern of xenophobic trends manifested without physical violence, with the legislative framework that apparently has substantial deficiencies but basically meets the formal criteria of democracy, and xenophobic ethno-



nationalistic discourse eclectically co-existing with liberal political rhetoric, and well-elaborated policies of implicit ethnic protectionism.

## **Conclusion**

The problem of xenophobia in a modern world is, in fact, the issue about the basic values. Historically, stability was the basic value, and methods very distant from the modern understanding of democracy were considered permissible to ensure stability. At a later stage, democracy – both as a tool to ensure justice and human dignity, and to achieve stability – has come to the forefront. Initially, cultural diversity emerged as a phenomenon necessarily accompanying democracy; however, in a modern globalizing world diversity is becoming a value itself.

In fact, the place of the concept of xenophobia in a modern society is to be defined within this “triangle of basic values”: stability – democracy - diversity. The main dilemma is whether diversity is perceived as a value itself, or as an inevitable evil, a “bypass product” of democracy we have to tolerate to a certain extent, but should keep within certain limits for the sake of stability – understood as preservation of certain ethnocultural values of “our ancestors”, the “historical masters” of a certain piece of land.

This dilemma increasingly predetermines re-consideration of traditional dividing lines between right-wing and left-wing political parties. Indeed, disagreements on basic economic issues are not as sharp as they used to be several decades ago. Nowadays only very marginal political parties deny private property, or, vice-versa, reject the idea that the state must intervene into and regulate the market economy. Economic views of modern socialists (e.g. “the New Labor” in the UK) are closer to ones of the liberals and conservatives several decades ago. Visible convergence between leftist and rightist parties is evident in virtually all “old democracies”.

Major disagreement today is rather about the attitude towards cultural diversity. Certain overlapping with historical left/right dichotomy can be observed – as a rule, conservative

and Christian-democratic parties are more inclined to defend “traditional values of our ancestors” and are more susceptible to xenophobic trends, while socialists usually advocate more openness and inclusiveness. This is why xenophobic parties used to be described “as radical right-wing hardliners”, although their economic positions often tend to be rather socialist and even close to communist (like it was the historical case with Italian fascists or German national-socialists).

As to the post-communist states, the left-right division is, as a rule, even more vague and nebulous. Overtly nationalistic and xenophobic concepts are often presented to the public as the “reformist”, “market” programs. As a result, the political struggle in the post-communist countries of transition is not rarely reduced to confusing dichotomy between communists and nationalists, the latter having vague and eclectic economic concepts.

Thus, the problem of acceptance of diversity in the modern society increasingly comes to the forefront of the political agenda and becomes a central point of the political debate. In this respect, the “spread-thin” approach in combating xenophobia appears hardly effective. There is an urgent need to integrate different aspects of recognition and promotion of diversity, both at the level of political discourse and international legal framework. In particular, such areas as anti-racism and non-discrimination, minority rights, and migration, can and must be integrated.

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