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Liberal Multiculturalism, Post-Racism, and Islamophobia: A Žižekian Interpretation of Said's Orientalism

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Abstract
White liberals like to claim that they live in a post-racial society. Furthermore, they believe that most people do not sympathize with the far-right. However, it is not racism fueling right-wing extremism in North America and Western Europe but the dominant ideology, liberalism. Consequently, Slavoj Žižek argues that racism is a problem concerning "objective violence," which he further breaks down into "symbolic violence" and "systemic violence." These primarily target minority groups. Thus, "objective violence" best explains the West's problematic views of Muslims and Islam since it supports what Edward Said refers to as "Orientalism" and reproduces racist depictions of racialized communities. These are incredibly harmful since the West still perceives the Orient and its residents as violent, strange, and backward. These Orientalist attitudes ultimately lead to discrimination against Muslims and Arabs. Furthermore, this ideology naturalizes and legitimizes capitalist social relations while concealing racialization processes.

Keywords
Liberal Multiculturalism, Ideology, Orientalism, Slavoj Žižek, Edward Said

Introduction

Many white liberals in North America and Western Europe claim to live in a post-racial society. Instead, for the time being, at least, this "colour-blind, raceless society" remains little more than a pipe dream. This ideological position severely warps the public's perception of race and racism. In the West, the far-right, once again, confirmed its commitment to intolerance in its unfettered display of anti-Semitism, racism, opposition to immigration, and Islamophobia. The target of their hatred was mainly minority groups, such as Jews, African Americans, illegal aliens, and Muslims, whom they consider too powerful, too influential, and, of course, responsible for most of society's social and economic misfortunes. For example, the thousands of right-wing extremists at the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, were not the exception to a post-racial world (Zalloua 2020: 1-2).

Nevertheless, white liberal Americans want to see the tiki torch-carrying white nationalists and alt-right protesters in Charlottesville as just a few bad apples. However, unfortunately, data suggest that it is not just a tiny fringe group supporting far-right ideas and beliefs. For example, a 2017 Washington Post-ABC News poll concluded that approximately 10 percent of respondents supported the alt-right (Hawley 2018). White liberal Americans believe most mainstream Americans do not think like the right-wing extremists who marched through Charlottesville. They are presumably correct. However, white nationalists and the alt-right do not have a monopoly on bigotry. They are merely much more straightforward about their hateful attitudes towards minority groups, such as Jews, African Americans, illegal aliens, and Muslims (Zalloua 2020: 2).

Zahi Zalloua (2020: 2-3) says that this assumption either grossly misrepresents the reality of racism or, even worse, supports and promotes "everyday racism." Slavoj Žižek refers to this as "civil racism." Civil racism lurks behind polite manners and proper etiquette. Nevertheless, this is not some deviation. It is racism adjusted for the so-called post-racial era. Therefore, it does not hold cross-burning ceremonies or believe that certain racial groups are superior to others. Instead, the West maintains that it supports tolerance, diversity, and alternative lifestyles but does nothing to uphold them. Most North Americans and Western Europeans reject fundamentalism, authoritarianism, and

hate speech. They claim to uphold equality and inclusivity but pretend to support, respect, and encourage multiculturalism. However, what white liberals want from the "Other" is "measured exposure, docility, conformity, and a taste of difference from a comfortable distance." Therefore, it is not the far-right fueling violence and racism but, on the contrary, liberal multiculturalism fuelling the global rise of the far-right. This essay examines Žižek's Lacanian and Hegelian theories concerning race and violence and Edward Said's concept of Orientalism to critique liberal racism and multiculturalism since they promote racial stereotypes and encourage violence against minority groups that do not conform with its ideas and beliefs. Unfortunately, this fuels anti-Arabism and Islamophobia.

Consequently, white liberals can talk about tolerance and respect until they are "blue in the face." However, they will never overcome racism and xenophobia in Western society if they do not address the inequalities brought about by racial capitalism and neoliberal globalization. Not surprisingly, liberal multiculturalism and Fascism draw attention away from class conflict. However, if white liberals ignore capitalism's systemic violence, right-wing extremists will continue to make headway. Therefore, their refusal to tackle social and economic inequality only worsens life for minority groups, such as Arabs and Muslims.

Žižek's Hegelianism and Lacano-Marxism vs. Said's Foucauldianism and Gramscianism

Žižek is a Marxist, albeit an unorthodox one considering that he views himself as more of a Hegelian. Accordingly, he argues that exploitation supersedes other forms of oppression, such as racial patriarchy or white supremacy. Therefore, the idea that the base determines the superstructure only "in the last instance" exercises significant influence over his theoretical work. However, this is not a new idea since it dominated critical theory until the 1970s. Nevertheless, the idea that "domination is plural" has gradually become the dominant ideology. There are several reasons for that. First, numerous "secondary fronts" challenged the significance and interrelatedness of class

struggle during this time, i.e., the struggle between capital and labour (Keucheyan 2013: 187).

Moreover, various social and technological developments downplayed the importance of economics at the expense of culture. For example, sociologists, such as Pierre Bourdieu, maintained that the "social world" consists of various, somewhat independent "social fields," none being more influential than the other. Žižek does not deny that "domination is plural." However, he argues that the capitalist mode of production is unique because capital accumulation pervades all kinds of domination. Although many scholars and intellectuals undoubtedly recognize the importance of economic exploitation, many merely consider it one kind of oppression like racism or sexism. Žižek considers this view wrong and argues that exploitation is the logic concealed in all kinds of oppression. As a result, he is critical of many liberal ideas and beliefs because it is simply a distraction. Thus, Žižek argues that liberal multiculturalism is an ideology because it reorients subjects (Keucheyan 2013: 187). Therefore, his arguments for returning to certain basic Marxist tenets, such as the importance of the base, are some of the most exciting developments in contemporary social theory. In addition, however, his ideology critique has significantly impacted psychoanalysis. Consequently, his use of Marx and Lacan has contributed to his analysis of Anti-Arabism, Islamophobia, and other types of domination in North America and Western Europe (Beshara 2021: 34).

Whereas Žižek uses the term "ideology," Said prefers the Gramscian concept of "cultural hegemony," in which people consent to the dominant social class's ideas and beliefs. Nevertheless, the constant fear of violence looms over subjects (Beshara 2021:114). Moreover, Said brings together the theories of Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci to question Western ideas and beliefs about and power over the Orient. Influenced by Foucault, Said examined a range of writings across Europe and their impact on the Orient. He considered these writings a discourse. Said argues that European culture produced the "Orient." These European writings attempted to understand the "Other" and control and exploit non-Europeans (Said, Bayoumi, and Rubin 2019: 64).

Consequently, Foucault provided Said with a tool, i.e., discourse analysis, for describing the connection between knowledge and power and its impact on the "Orient." On the other hand, Gramsci's notion of hegemony described how many long-lasting ideas and beliefs regarding the East endured. He says that specific ruling class ideas and beliefs are adopted willingly and dominate in liberal democratic societies. As a result, they become common sense. Therefore, Said argues that hegemony was how Orientalism became and remained an unwavering "cultural and political force in the Western media's representations of Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims" (Said, Bayoumi, and Rubin 2019: 64-65).

By bringing together Žižek and Said, we can reveal how Orientalism persists in an allegedly post-racial and post-ideological society. For example, Žižek's ideas concerning "symbolic violence" and "systemic violence" help make sense of the racism under the guise of "liberal multiculturalism" in North America and Western Europe. Nevertheless, Orientalism's symbolic violence, i.e., virtual violence, is commonplace in the mass media. If anything, it is widely accepted. However, racialized communities, such as Arabs and Muslims, experience systemic violence. Consequently, the "Other" often encounters physical violence, verbal abuse, and discrimination (Beshara 2021: ix).

The "Other" in a post-racial society

The expression "Other" has multiple meanings and surfaces in different contexts to define gender, nationality, race, or religion, to name a few. North American and Western European writers and scholars typically use these terms to tell the difference between people from the West, mainly but not limited to white Christian males from non-white Christian males. Unfortunately, the latter tend to view the former as "Others." Historically, though, this social categorization has had catastrophic results for entire social groups since white Christian males have treated the "Other" as naturally or culturally inferior (Kapuściński 2018: 8-13).

However, the West's relationship with the "Other" has changed. For over 500 years, a handful of European nations controlled the entire globe, not just politically and economically but also culturally. They forced indigenous and local populations to adopt

their religion, laws, values, and languages. As a result, the West's relationship with the "Other" was problematic early on. Nonetheless, decolonization of Africa and Asia occurred, and, in an instant, entire populations gained their freedom, if in name only. Soon, they turned to their local customs and traditions and began to highlight their cultures' importance (Kapuściński 2018: 39-40).

North Americans and Western Europeans did not pay attention to these developments or preferred to look the other way. Simultaneously, the Cold War ended, and globalization and free-market-oriented reforms reshaped the world economy. As a result, people were facing one another for the first time. Moreover, the poor and vulnerable were trying to improve their lot by migrating to the West (Kapuściński 2018: 40-42).

Under these conditions, the number of interpersonal encounters increased rapidly. Furthermore, more frequent contacts with the "Other" determine the many different relationships that develop along the way. As a result, the quality of experiences determines if this leads to conflicts. However, an increasing number of people begin to feel insecure. They believe that they cannot define their own identity or determine their own social or cultural affiliation. As a result, these individuals are more receptive to the opinions of white nationalists and other racists, who urge them to consider the "Other" as a potential threat and the root of all their social and economic problems and concerns (Kapuściński 2018: 42-43). However, this often depends on multiple factors, such as social class. For example, French literary theorist Roland Barthes says that the petit-bourgeoisie, or the members of the lower middle class, is "unable to imagine the 'Other.'" Therefore, the "Other" poses a threat to its very existence. As a result, two relatively contrasting approaches appear to deal with this "threat" (Barthes 2013: 265-266).

On the one hand, "otherness is reduced to sameness." Thus, Barthes says that they ignore the differences. However, now and then, they cannot be disregarded. Therefore, on the other hand, the "Other" is often transformed into an exotic object, a "pure object, a spectacle, a clown" (Barthes 2013: 265-266). For example, the mass media and popular culture regularly portray Islam and Arabs as strange and exotic.

Nevertheless, the “Other” is still intimidating. What is more, Barthes argues that the lower-middle-class members, unlike the members of the dominant social class and groups, are neither tolerant nor liberal. As a result, they produce far-right ideas and beliefs. However, it is worth pointing out that Fascism has proven very helpful to the ruling social class, so it often supports it (Barthes 2013: 266).

Žižek on violence

Civilization is inherently violent. Almost all civilizations suffer from self-admiration, and the more influential the civilization, the more likely this will be. As a result, people clash over culture, triggering their pride and hunger for power. This clash regularly breeds hatred for the “Other.” Unfortunately, this situation often leads to violence (Kapuściński 2018: 44). Racism is always violent. However, violence is often hidden and mystified and shaped by cultural discourses. What has typically been labelled violence is what Žižek refers to as “subjective violence.” Evil people, authoritarian regimes, and angry mobs perform this sort of violence, which is usually considered a deviation from normal, peaceful behaviour (Zalloua 2020: 4-5). He says liberals appear fixated on opposing subjective violence, such as physical and ideological violence (Žižek 2008, 10).

Consequently, he introduces a second category, “objective violence,” which he further breaks down into “symbolic violence” and “systemic violence.” Zalloua explains that the first relates to “language as the hegemonic imposition of a given universe of meaning.” The second describes “the violence done by capitalism” (Zalloua 2020: 5). Finally, Žižek says that “subjective violence is just the most visible of the three” (Žižek 2008: 11).

Therefore, objective violence establishes the conditions under which any act of subjective violence looks as if it is out of the ordinary. As a result, a more beneficial description of violence would critique subjective violence and simultaneously explain how liberals’ obsession with it supports this more complex and deceptive category (Zalloua 2020: 5).

The concept of objective violence developed alongside capitalism. Karl Marx maintains that it is not living, breathing human beings who determine the social reality of

social relations but capital in a market economy. Consequently, Žižek argues that “the self-propelling metaphysical dance of capital runs the show.” Moreover, he says this “provides the key to real-life developments and catastrophes” (Žižek 2008: 12). It also describes the violence inherent in capitalism. This type of violence is a more subtle form of coercion that supports domination and exploitation. In addition, it includes the threat of physical violence. More importantly, Žižek says that “this violence is no longer attributable to concrete individuals and their ‘evil’ intentions, but is purely ‘objective,’ systemic, anonymous” (Žižek 2008: 12-13).

Capitalist atrocities, such as colonialism, imperialism, and even globalization, result from an “objective” process. No one is to blame for the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, the colonization of indigenous people in North America, or even the impact of imperialism in the Middle East. There is no philosopher or political theorist to hold accountable (Žižek 2008: 14).

Subjective violence clearly describes racism. For instance, the Unite the Right rally perfectly illustrated subjective violence and the appeal of its explanatory power after clashes broke out between white nationalists and members of the alt-right on the one hand and the peaceful counter-protesters on the other. Furthermore, it allowed white liberal Americans to identify and distinguish themselves from the extreme right. For example, the news coverage of the events in Charlottesville portrayed racism as a disruption of our nonviolent post-racial society, identifying racism solely with the white nationalists and members of the alt-right and their supporters. Therefore, it is not hard to tell the “good guys” from the “bad guys.” As a result, the mainstream media often views racism simply as a problem regarding subjective violence. Racism, however, involves objective violence in its symbolic and systemic modes. Moreover, this sort of violence primarily targets minority groups, which is usually catastrophic (Zalloua 2020: 5).

Racism develops from “systemic violence” when black, indigenous, and other people of colour are marginalized and silenced while white Christians can easily express their pain and suffering. Consequently, on the one hand, the Global North experiences violence as a brief disturbance. On the other, the Global South supposedly endures violence regularly. As a result, North Americans and Western Europeans

consider it natural. Moreover, systemic violence is a regular part of life for less privileged groups. Therefore, Zalloua argues that “in this racial capitalism, globalization’s constitutive ‘Others’ experience ‘uninterrupted terror and brutality,’ absent any ready international expression of solidarity” (Zalloua 2020: 6-7). The media coverage of terrorist incidents from different parts of the world demonstrates this. For example, the November 2015 Paris attacks’ responses, as opposed to the Beirut and Ankara bombings, illustrate this lack of solidarity. American philosopher Judith Butler points to the meagre news coverage in the mainstream media. She says that “the nearly 50 dead in Beirut from the day before are barely mentioned, and neither are the 111 in Palestine killed in the last weeks alone, or the scores in Ankara” (Zalloua 2020: 7).

Ideology Critique and Anti-Racist Thinking

So, how does Žižek conceptualize racism in North America and Western Europe? He draws attention to the function of fantasy in ideology. As a result, Žižekian theory questions Western society’s delusional claim on post-raciality and misguided faith in the post-political. Simultaneously, it attempts to find ways to overcome this fantasy. Žižek demonstrates that ideology is not simply false consciousness or distorted views. It is much more complex. Therefore, we cannot have confidence in cognitive reasoning to assess racist ideas and behaviours. Zalloua says that “ideology critique or anti-racist thinking is not simply about determining the truth or falsity of a given matter but also about evaluating its framing, packaging, or staging for comprehension.” As a result, he argues that “ideology critique must not settle for discerning the truth or falsehood of facts.” Therefore, in a “post-truth” world, focusing on facts and figures is not enough (Zalloua 2020: 7).

Consequently, Lee C. McIntyre (2018: 13) argues that “post-truth amounts to a form of ideological supremacy, whereby its practitioners are trying to compel someone to believe in something whether there is good evidence for it or not.” He says that “this is a recipe for political domination.” Moreover, like all ideologies, this effort can happen at both a conscious and unconscious level (McIntyre 2018: 13).

Racist fantasies work to convince us that people naturally belong to distinct racial groups. This division sustains Orientalism and racist views. As a result, he argues that people become stuck in their unconscious thoughts and attitudes, assuring an ongoing toxic relationship with the “Other.” What is more, people learn that minority groups stand in the way of their enjoyment. Therefore, Žižekian theory maintains that people are not born racist but unconsciously learn or want to become racist. However, ideology also supports capitalism. As a result, Zalloua says that “ideology naturalizes and legitimizes as it conceals processes of racialization and capitalist relations of power and domination” (Zalloua 2020: 10).

What is more, the subject’s views are considered ideological, but so is the subject. As a result, people become subjects who can act autonomously and make their own decisions. However, this depends on the subject’s capacity to recognize themselves when another subject hails them. Therefore, “ideology through interpellation humanizes the social world.” Consequently, “ideology reveals a meaningful world in which there is a place for you, where you count, where you have rights, and where your voice matters” (Zalloua 2020: 11).

However, interpellation is intended for the privileged few since liberal discourse primarily targets white Christian males. Furthermore, this process frequently reinforces black, indigenous, and other people of colour’s sense of alienation (Zalloua 2020: 11). Consequently, for minority groups, ideology reveals that life has no deep meaning or value. It gives them the sense that there is no place for them in the world, they do not count, have little to no rights, and their voice falls on deaf ears. French West Indian psychiatrist Franz Fanon believes that being hailed in a racist society negatively influences the bodies, cultures, and psyches of minority groups. Thus, interpellation can be a profoundly traumatic experience. It is worth noting that Chyatat Supachalasai says that “trauma is a social condition that the victimized subjects are pressurized into.” What is more, “trauma is constituted in the socio-economic situation, and its victims cannot escape from its precariousness” (Supachalasai 2016: 5).

Because of this, xenophobia and racism are not the results of the rise of the far-right. Instead, they are both the outcome of liberal ideology. Consequently, anger and

hostilities break out between white blue-collar workers and immigrants and members of minority groups. Žižek refers to this as “a struggle for domination between us and them, those who cause antagonistic imbalance” (Zalloua 2020: 17). Therefore, the “Other” is held liable for the increasing decline of the quality of life, not the dominant social class that has implemented the neoliberal policies that have hurt the working class (Zalloua 2020: 17).

Thus, white liberals consider racism only a problem affecting individuals, ignoring the connection between racism and class oppression in fetishizing Fascism. As a result, Žižek argues that right-wing extremists have become a “new political fetish.” He says this is “a fascinating image whose function is to obfuscate the true antagonism” (Zalloua 2020: 17). For example, the Unite the Right rally and the subsequent events had no impact on white liberal Americans’ commitment to the free market. If anything, they only proved that capitalism ought to become more tolerant, grant more rights, and become more charitable. However, all this will have no bearing on the systemic violence which promotes racist ideas and beliefs (Zalloua 2020: 17).

The West, Orientalism, and the “Other”

Terrorists may threaten North America and Western Europe, but their attacks in Africa and Asia are usually worse. For instance, in 2015, the same year that buildings around the globe were illuminated in the colours of the French flag to show solidarity, the most ferocious terrorist attacks happened in Cameroon, Egypt, Iraq, Kenya, Nigeria, Syria, and Yemen. Notwithstanding that these terrorist attacks led to severe casualties, some observers noticed that the press reported the different public reactions to attacks in France and Turkey. Aldo Zammit Borda (2016) argues that the “nature and prominence of the way the media covers terrorist attacks is a good way to judge the public’s reaction.” For instance, he asks: “Is the story on the front page, or is it hidden away on page 13?” Concerning the different public reactions to terrorist attacks worldwide, numerous factors can be partially responsible, including the availability or not of foreign correspondents. However, other scholars and writers believe that a “fundamentally

racist narrative is at play" (Zammit Borda 2016). For example, in an opinion piece in the British online newspaper *The Independent*, Will Gore (2016) argues that "we value white European lives more than those of dark-skinned people beyond Europe's borders."

However, this media attention also reveals a higher level of fear and anxiety. For example, the disproportionate news coverage of the Paris terror attacks instead of the Beirut bombings is not about race or religion but fear. People in North America and Western Europe are shocked by terror attacks in Africa and Asia but are terrified when they see a big city in the West get attacked. It hits close to home. They immediately think that "if it can happen there, it can happen here." A terrorist attack in a Western European capital is considered more shocking than a bombing in a Middle Eastern capital. For people in the West, a bloody attack in Ankara, Baghdad, or Cairo almost seems normal compared to a bombing in London, New York City, or Paris. As a result, Gore argues that the increased press reporting is for "rational reasons." Nonetheless, he does not rule out that some people are motivated by racism. This lack of press coverage may not result from fear of a terrorist attack but a lack of interest in the "Other" (Gore 2016).

This approach is related to "Orientalism." Said argues that North Americans and Western Europeans perceive the "Orient as an exotic and strange place and describe it in stereotypical and mythical ways, which serve to accentuate and reinforce the Orient's difference from the West" (Gore 2016). Therefore, despite its proximity to Europe, the Orient is the source of the most well-known images of the "Other." Moreover, the Orient is a vital part of Western "material civilization and culture" (Said 1979: 1-2).

Orientalism refers to three distinct yet interrelated things. First, the most well-known classification for Orientalism is a field of study. Thus, writers and scholars who teach, research, or write about the East do Orientalism (Said 1979: 2). Although it claims to be an objective academic discipline, Orientalism serves political aims. So, for example, the academic community justified the European conquest of Africa and Asia (Windschuttle 1999). Second, Orientalism refers to a way of thinking that depends on an ontological and epistemological distinction between East and West (Said 1979: 2).

Experts further preserve this dualistic worldview (Said 1979: 2-3). This development helped shape the West's self-perception, considering that identity formation requires constructing "Others." Said argues that every culture requires "the existence of another different and competing alter ego." As a result, he says that the West considers Islamic culture as "eternal, uniform, and incapable of defining itself" (Windschuttle 1999). This attitude provides North Americans and Western Europeans with a sense of cultural and intellectual superiority. As a result, the West requires an opposite to consider "itself a dynamic, innovative, expanding culture" (Windschuttle 1999). Third, Said says Orientalism is a Western means of power and control. He defines it as a "style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (1979: 2-3).

Orientalism produced a misleading representation of Arabs and Islamic culture. This outcome results from the idea that it was feasible to describe the essential or inherent features of Arabs and Islamic culture. These features are usually negative, with little to no redeeming qualities. As a result, the Orient is considered an oppressive, strange, and backward region. Nonetheless, this approach is entirely inaccurate. Said argues that there is no such thing as an Arab mind, an Islamic society, or an Oriental psyche. Moreover, he rightfully points out that today, no one would ever dare describe other minority groups, such as Africans or Jews. Ultimately, Orientalism calls attention to the "subtle and persistent Eurocentric prejudice against Arabo-Islamic peoples and their culture" (Windschuttle 1999).

Orientalism stems from the discriminatory language of experts. Michel Foucault argues that academic fields of study generate knowledge but power. His theories demonstrate how Orientalism sustains Western imperialism. Said also used the concept of "discourse," the ideological framework wherein academic learning occurs. As a result, language, culture, institutions, organizations, and social and political conditions corrupt all representations within a discourse (Windschuttle 1999).

Consequently, writers and scholars are not immune to these constraints (Windschuttle 1999). Said believes that "no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by

Orientalism." Therefore, he argues that "the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action" (Said 1979: 3).

It is "hegemony" that sustains Orientalism. Orientalism is a divisive concept since it pits Europe, or the entire West, against non-Europeans. Moreover, he argues that European society being superior to non-European societies is a significant part of Western civilization. This view helped make North American and Western European peoples and cultures hegemonic. These ideas and beliefs emphasize Western superiority and progress over Oriental inferiority and backwardness. This mode of thought typically reduces people to passive thinkers. As a result, it rules against the possibility that an independent thinker might have different opinions on the Orient. Therefore, Orientalism allows the West to develop a sense of superiority to justify its actions and attitude towards the "Other" (Said 1979: 7). These actions and attitudes are usually in the service of economic exploitation.

Consequently, North Americans and Western Europeans respond differently to people's misfortunes outside of the West. Not surprising, institutions, such as public and private schools, the press, and Churches, are quick to emphasize their "Otherness," and, as a result, the West regards the hardships of those people as natural. Therefore, in North America and Western Europe, terrorist attacks in the West, like those in New York City and Paris, are "shocking and unthinkable." However, from a Western perspective, bombings in Middle Eastern cities, such as Ankara and Beirut, are "sadly, a fact of life" (Zammit Borda 2016).

The West forgets its involvement in this suffering. For the most part, North Americans and Western Europeans refuse to accept responsibility for the social, political, and economic problems afflicting the Middle East and North Africa today. Anna M. Agathangelou and L.H.M. Ling argue that this helps bring about the conditions that trigger deadly terrorist attacks. However, unfortunately, Western imperialists make matters much worse. They intervene in foreign affairs and, at the same time, promote "globalization" or back "regime change." As a result, they reduce the "Other" to mere "servants or acolytes if not cheap labour or sex slaves" (Agathangelou and Ling 2005: 831-832).

Multiple examples characterize the West's treatment of the "Other." For example, the West supposedly wants to protect Muslim women from men. However, black, indigenous, and other people of colour still face racism and sexism in North America and Western Europe. On the one hand, the West ignores borders when doing business with foreign governments or invading and occupying foreign lands. On the other, it erects walls to keep out people who leave their country and seek legal protection from violence. Often, the West condemns the torture of suspects and prisoners but overlooks it when it is responsible. Finally, North American and Western European countries heavily invest in the military despite soaring youth unemployment and poverty. It is worth pointing out that rising military expenditures advance corporate interests, promote hawkish imperialist policies, and rationalize Western hegemony in the Middle East and North Africa. As a result, the West conveniently ignores its history with the "Other" (Agathangelou and Ling 2005: 832-832).

This enduring ignorance goes hand-in-hand with the hostility towards Islam, Muslims, and the Orient, resulting from institutions like schools and, mainly, the mass media ignoring or distorting the truth and supporting the dominant ideology. Thus, for instance, the West's educational system has been instrumental in shaping countless students' negative attitudes toward the Orient (Said 1997: 6). Historically, it is worth noting that schools teach students much more than reading, writing, and adding. They teach them the rules of the established order, in other words, the dominant ideology (Leitch 2018: 1485). Today, however, the mass media is more influential than schools. News bulletins, comic books, television series, movies, and cartoons promote the same long-established stereotypes of Islam and Muslims those students learn about in the classroom. Hence, the various caricatures of Muslims as oil producers, terrorists, angry mobs, and, lately, immigrants and refugees endure (Said 1997: 6-7).

It is worth noting that these caricatures or, preferably, "stereotypes" are cognitive schemas that allow people to organize and process information concerning other social groups. They include assumptions about the social group's characteristics and qualities and provide information about their social roles. In addition, people formulate preconceived opinions about the members of other social groups (Sutkutė 2020: 29).

Liberal Multiculturalism, Anti-Racism, and Anti-Capitalism

Liberal multiculturalism is an insufficient answer to the iniquities of the unregulated free market. Instead, it tries to resist the far-right violence spurred by the shortcomings of capitalism by supporting diversity and inclusion and instilling an understanding of cultural relativism and an appreciation of most cultures in modern Western societies. Furthermore, it perceives the bigoted working-class white Christian male subject disturbed by globalization as its rival (Zalloua 2020: 21).

However, a Žižekian theory holds that it falls somewhat short since it fails to conceptualize the free market's destructive influence. Liberal multiculturalism's loyalty to capitalism merely conceals its systemic violence, and, as a result, its solution to racism fans the flames of hate by mystifying the situation. So, its anticapitalism is superficial since it supports a "capitalism with a human face." Consequently, white liberals merely want a free market that is more tolerant of different cultures (Zalloua 2020: 22). This type of capitalism is also known as "progressive neoliberalism."

Therefore, identity politics emerge as a defence of different lifestyles and their structural incorporation. However, identity politics avoids any meaningful discussion concerning capitalism, such as the market economy and social class (Zalloua 2020: 22). As a result, Jonathan D. Hill and Thomas M. Wilson argue that "identity politics" usually describes "the 'top down' processes whereby various political, economic, and other social entities attempt to mould collective identities based on ethnicity, race, language, and place, into relatively fixed and 'naturalized' frames for understanding political action and the body politic" (Hill and Wilson 2003: 2).

However, albeit somewhat related, it is worth noting that "identity politics" is not the same as the "politics of identity." Instead, Hill and Wilson say that the latter relates "to a more 'bottom-up' process through which local people challenge, subvert, or negotiate culture and identity and contest structures of power and wealth that constrain their social lives" (Hill and Wilson 2003: 2). Consequently, "identity politics" maintain the status quo, whereas the "politics of identity" tries to critique and subvert the hegemony of the dominant social class.

Therefore, Žižekian theory maintains that to “give a voice to the voiceless,” such as minority groups and immigrants, liberal multiculturalism reduces the importance of social class. As a result, the real enemy is hidden. Consequently, liberal multiculturalism can work as a smokescreen and identity politics can mask economic exploitation and political strife. It is worth noting that Žižek is not opposed to “multiculturalism.” On the contrary, he considers it essential to struggle against ethnocentrism and xenophobia. However, he rejects “the idea that it constitutes the fundamental struggle of today” (Zalloua 2020: 22).

Islamophobia and the Racialization of Muslims

The debate regarding multiculturalism in North America and Western Europe has turned into a debate on Islam and Muslims. Consequently, multiculturalism is not without its controversies. Many critics hold it responsible for the rapid growth of Islam in the West. Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor notes that the debate concerning Islam and Muslims has produced a “crisis of multiculturalism.” As a result, Islam may affect the future of multiculturalism (Esposito and Kalin 2011: 3).

Kalin believes that the rise of anti-Muslim sentiment, or, as it is widely known, Islamophobia, supports the negative correlation between Islam and multiculturalism. “Islamophobia” regularly refers to “acts of intolerance, discrimination, unfounded fear, and racism against Islam and Muslims” (Esposito and Kalin 2011: 4). Islamophobia is an ideology in the vein of racism. As a result, these ideas and beliefs maintain negative views about Islam and Muslims today, much as they have in the past. They strongly influence human behaviour, shaping people’s opinions and attitudes. Furthermore, this ideology contributes to the development of Islam and Muslims as the “Other.”

What is more, Islamophobia is related to “power and domination.” Therefore, Muslims encounter subjective and objective violence and discrimination. However, this kind of prejudice requires a perceived “Islamic” or “Muslim” component, whether religious, cultural, or racial, to name a few (Allen 2010: 190).

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kind of prejudice requires a perceived “Islamic” or “Muslim” component, whether religious, cultural, or racial, to name a few (Allen 2010: 190). Despite a historical connection, contemporary anti-Muslim sentiment is a comparatively new type of prejudice or at least as far as the broader public is concerned (Zempi 2019: 11).

Anti-Muslim sentiment in North America and Western Europe does not simply single out the religion or culture but the people, regardless of their religiosity and cultural background. As a result, most Muslims who experienced discrimination described that they did so more when they looked “Muslim.” For example, following the September 11 attacks and the July 7, 2005, London bombings, Muslims faced heightened verbal and physical abuse because of their appearance. However, this abuse extended to non-Muslim racial and ethnic groups as well. Other people, such as Sikhs and individuals with supposed Middle Eastern characteristics, were brutally attacked and murdered. Consequently, this results in the racialization of Islam and Muslims (Zempi and Awan 2019: 20).

For Robert Miles, the term racialization is synonymous with the concept of “racial categorization.” He says that racialization is “a process of delineation of group boundaries and allocation of persons within those boundaries by primary reference to (supposedly) inherent and/or biological (usually phenotypical) characteristics” (Miles and Brown 2004: 100). Racialization structures social relations between individuals based on different biological features in such a manner that defines and constructs different social collectivities. However, these features have changed throughout history, and while they usually concern physical characteristics, other biological characteristics, both imagined and real, have also been signified. Consequently, racialization has to do with “a process of categorization, a representational process of defining an ‘Other,’ usually, but not exclusively, somatically.” What is more, Miles, along with Malcolm Brown, says that “racialization is a dialectical process of signification.” Therefore, “ascribing real or imagined biological characteristics with meaning to define the ‘Other’ necessarily entails defining ‘Self’ by the same criteria” (Miles and Brown 2004: 101).

Therefore, skin colour and other physical characteristics are not the only reasons for racism. Miles, for example, explains how discourse and public policies racialize

Jewish people. Karim Murji and John Solomos argue that racialization also applies to ideological practices and beliefs where race is essential for cultural or political issues and affairs. Race seemingly provides an answer or solution to a problem. Moreover, they argue that this approach is the reason behind a more general conception of racialization that reveals how social structures and ideologies become tinged with "racial" meanings. As a result, Murji and Solomos say that social and political issues are conceived beforehand along racial lines (Murji and Solomos 2005: 11).

Non-white, non-Christian religious minorities, such as Muslims, can go through racialization processes in North America and Western Europe. Muslims' "Otherness" is related to their cultural and racial differences, real or imagined, linked to the West's past and present attitudes towards people they do not consider white Christians. Therefore, modern perceptions of Islam and Muslims relate to how European colonial empires viewed and treated their ancestors. Hence, Orientalism still shapes modern attitudes and beliefs. Although North Americans' and Western Europeans' opinions of Muslims are undoubtedly related to religion and culture, a phenotypical element is also involved. Nevertheless, Muslim was initially not a biological category like "European," "Chinese," or "Arab," but neither was "Jew" (Zempi and Awan 2019: 22).

Historically, Muslims and Jews have been victims of systemic racism, social exclusion, and state violence in the West. Thus, not surprisingly, both minority groups share several supposed characteristics. For instance, racist tropes consider them to be at the same time violent and weak (Werbner 2013: 463). However, the similarities stop there. On the one hand, anti-Semitism appeared in the late nineteenth century and peaked during the mid-nineteen-forties with the Holocaust and the senseless death of six million Jews. However, on the other hand, Islamophobia is a somewhat recent phenomenon. Furthermore, the dominant social class created anti-Semitism to support establishing a racially pure nation-state. In contrast, today, it seemingly uses Islamophobia to protect Western civilization from refugees and migrants from the Middle East and North Africa (Bunzl 2005: 506).

Instead, Humayun Ansari and Farid Hafez claim that a better analogy is between contemporary Islamophobia and late nineteenth and early twentieth-century anti-

Semitism. In both cases, racists branded both Jews and Muslims as being treacherous. As a result, they say that they are the ultimate “Other.” For example, all social classes and groups hate religious communities, and political opportunists use anti-Semitic and Islamophobic stereotypes (Ansari and Hafez 2012: 22).

However, the most significant similarity between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia is their transformation from religion to race. The shift from Jew-hatred to anti-Semitism in the late nineteenth century is a watershed moment. Matti Bunzl says that “it was understood both by contemporaries and later observers as marking a momentous transformation, characterized by the rise of an organized political movement and a shift in alterity from religion to race” (Zempi and Awan 2019: 22). Likewise, today, Muslims have changed from a group of worshipers to a racial group. For example, Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood argue that “Bosnian Muslims were ‘ethnically cleansed’ because they came to be identified as a ‘racial’ group by people who were phenotypically, linguistically, and culturally the same as themselves” (Zempi and Awan 2019: 22).

It is worth pointing out that media coverage influences public opinion. For example, Rita Nassar says that positive reporting of refugees and migrants ordinarily results in far less concern on the issue. In contrast, negative news coverage, unfortunately, leads to negative stereotypes and opposition to immigration. Other studies reveal that negative media representation of black, indigenous, and other people of colour and non-Western minority groups affects stereotypes and attitudes, notably among White people. Furthermore, research confirms that television can reshape viewers’ ideas to reflect what is on. Thus, for example, constructs depicted on television are more likely to influence people who watch several hours of television a day. In addition, other studies have proved that frequent exposure to negative racial stereotypes affects the audience’s attitudes (Nassar 2020: 595-607).

Nevertheless, not all television networks portray Muslim and Arab asylum seekers and migrants as invaders. For example, the conservative Fox News highlights threats more regularly in its news coverage than the liberal MSNBC and CNN (Nassar 2020: 595-607). Nevertheless, it is a relatively common trope in the mainstream media.

It is worth noting that the mass media often questions Muslims' willingness to assimilate into Western society. However, this is no longer the case with Jews since few people doubt their loyalty. Today, they are an essential part of Western social and political life. As a result, many North American and Western European politicians will stand up for the rights of the Jewish community and, very often, even Israel. However, hardly any will stand behind the Muslim community. Moreover, no mainstream political party, including right-wing populist parties, advocates anti-Semitism as part of their official platform. On the contrary, however, many brazenly support anti-Muslim discrimination, such as outlawing the burka and other face-coverings in public or banning people from Muslim-majority countries (Ansari and Hafez 2012: 22-23).

Conclusion

The West's views of Muslims and Islam are problematic. However, compared to other forms of xenophobia and prejudice, anti-Muslim sentiment cannot be examined separately from the current social and political issues in North American and Western European societies. Moreover, it is worth noting that Islamophobia did not appear out of thin air after the September 11 attacks. On the contrary, it stretches back much further. Although liberal multiculturalism may have embraced numerous new cultural and religious identities in Western societies today, it appears not to know how to tackle Islam and Muslims (Esposito and Ibrahim 2011: 4-5).

Consequently, white liberals refuse to grant them the same acceptance and respect as other cultures and religions. Kalin believes that the Enlightenment's secular and liberal ideas and beliefs shape the discussion. Furthermore, he believes that the West is wary of Islam because white liberals regard the separation of Church and state as the sole emancipatory force in the modern world and refuse to consider any other possibilities (Esposito and Ibrahim 2011: 5). Though white liberals often raise the question of the compatibility of Islam and "Western values," such as democracy and secularism. However, this is not uncommon. For example, Anne Philips says Western societies depict black, indigenous, and other people of colour and non-Western minority groups as docile and greatly influenced by their religion and culture. As a result, she

argues that “culture is now widely employed in a discourse that denies human agency, defining individuals through their culture, and treating culture as the explanation for virtually everything they say or do” (Phillips 2009: 8-9). At times, this results in multicultural policies or results in concessions. However, it ends in discriminatory policies and practices meant to end unwanted cultural influence (Phillips 2009: 9).

Orientalist attitudes lead to cultural racism and discrimination against Islam and Muslims. Consequently, Kalin says that “cultural racism arises out of monolithic notions of religious, ethnic, and cultural groups that are seen as united by a central value system with virtually no room for diversity or human agency” (Esposito and Ibrahim 2011: 6). As a result, “Western culture” is considered “modern, civic, civilized, liberating, and rational,” whereas “Muslim culture” is “retro, violent, bigoted, irrational, and obscurantist” (Esposito and Ibrahim 2011: 6-7).

White liberals like to believe most people are tolerant and understanding. However, many North Americans and Western Europeans with conservative and liberal views claim that “Muslim culture” is incompatible with Western society (Esposito and Ibrahim 2011: 6-7). The far-right does not retain the exclusivity of intolerance. On the contrary, it is just more outspoken about its views. Unfortunately, though, white liberals want minority groups to conform to the dominant cultural norms just as much (Zalloua 2020: 2-5). The pressure to conform is often violent and, at times, aggressive. However, white liberals do not see things the way they are. Instead, they merely oppose “subjective violence,” essentially any deviation from socially accepted behaviour, such as physical violence (Žižek 2008: 10). As a result, Žižek proposes a new category, “objective violence,” which he divides into “symbolic violence” and “systemic violence.” The first describes “language as the hegemonic imposition of a given universe of meaning,” and the second “the violence done by capitalism, which becomes a naturalized, smooth-functioning background force, masking its oppressive exacerbation of inequalities” (Zalloua 2020, 5). Hence, “subjective violence” is simply the most obvious. “Objective violence,” however, developed alongside capitalism. Therefore, it describes the violence inherent in a market economy. This ideological violence is a covert form of coercion that sustains domination and exploitation (Žižek 2008: 11-13).

Racism involves both symbolic and systemic violence. This kind of violence primarily targets minority groups, such as Muslims and Arabs. Racism originates from "systemic violence" when minority groups, or the "Other," are marginalized and racialized, whereas the "Self" openly addresses its pain and suffering. Consequently, the "Other" endures violence systematically to the point where it is considered normal. Thus, for example, violence is viewed as usual in the Orient. As a result, the West often ignores tragedies in the Middle East and North Africa (Zalloua 2020: 5-7). This objective violence supports "Orientalism" and reproduces racist portrayals of Islam and Muslims. These are incredibly harmful. In time, the West sees the Orient and its residents as violent, strange, and backward (Windschuttle 1999). These Orientalist attitudes discriminate against Muslims and Arabs (Esposito and Ibrahim 2011: 7).

Racism causes people to believe that they naturally belong to distinct racial groups. Unfortunately, this leads to a toxic relationship with the "Other." They begin to believe minority groups threaten their happiness. As a result, Žižek says that people are not born racist but unconsciously learn or become racist. This ideology naturalizes and legitimizes capitalist social relations while concealing racialization processes (Zalloua 2020: 7-10).

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