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ILLIBERAL DEMOCRACY AND THE POLITICIZATION OF IMMIGRATION

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Introduction

Liberal democracy is widely viewed as being in crisis. More than a decade ago Ivan Krastev (2007, 23) argued in his famous essay "The Strange Death of the Liberal Consensus" on Central and Eastern Europe that populism is the new condition of the political, with elites becoming ever more suspicious of democracy and angry publics becoming ever more hostile to liberalism. The triumph of populist political strongmen, such as Donald Trump in the US, as well as the electoral trend in Europe, where more than one in four votes is cast for political parties that are outspoken against central tenets of liberal democracy (Timbro 2019) highlight that the rise of illiberalism is a broader development sweeping across liberal democracies.

Immigration and its politicization are at the very heart of the crisis of modern, liberal democracy (Chin 2021). This rising illiberal vision provides an alternative to liberal democracy by "rejecting multiculturalism and immigration," as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, one of illiberalism's political spearhead figures, has been vehemently emphasizing (*Reuters* 2018).

The rise of illiberalism in an era of global mobility, as will be elaborated in this chapter, is a manifestation of the inherent tension within liberal democracy. While liberalism protects individual and minority rights to prevent a "tyranny of the majority," democracy is essentially about the rule of the majority. Populist political entrepreneurs across Europe and beyond utilize this tension by putting an emphasis on majoritarianism and claiming that liberalism, including migrant rights go against "the will of the people."

Exploring the role immigration plays in the ongoing crisis of liberal democracy; this chapter will cover four sub-themes that build upon each other: (1) the liberal tendency in the immigration policy field before the contemporary "illiberal turn;" (2) the transformation of socio-political conflicts upon which this rise of illiberalism and the opposition to immigration are based; (3) the phenomenon of so-called "illiberal liberalism" targeting especially Muslim immigrants; and (4) the role of political trust and public opinion about immigration. The chapter underlines that the illiberal tide is not only a threat to liberalism or specifically to the rights of migrants but to democracy as such.

Democracy, Liberalism, and Immigration: Key Tensions

Liberal democracy is a balancing act and a constant recalibration between majority rule and the protection of individual and minority rights (Plattner 2010). The question of how extensive the scope of personal freedom and the rights aligned to it have to be before a democracy can be categorized as liberal, or at which point this freedom can be viewed as being impinged upon to an extent that a democracy can be classified as illiberal, are deeply normative and disputable questions. Illiberal democracies, i.e. democracies that do not exhibit a strong liberal component and are consequently falling short with regards to the protection of individual rights, however, are certainly on the rise (Freedom House 2021). According to the democracy watchdog Freedom House, a norm which has been especially "under siege" (Freedom House 2019) is the protection of the rights of migrants. Repressive measures that have been aimed towards curbing or preventing further migration have constructed or amplified the vulnerability of migrants worldwide.

But who exactly is a "migrant," and which rights do migrants have? An international migrant is usually defined as someone living outside their country of origin for a period of 12 months or more (IOM 2008, 2). Beneath the surface things get more complicated because the meanings associated with international migration vary greatly. International migration can come in many shapes and forms and be simultaneously viewed as a solution (e.g. to an ageing population), a problem (e.g. as a threat to national identity), or – perhaps more realistically – as a reality of an interdependent and globalized international system (Geddes, Hadj-Abdou, and Brumat 2020).

In 2019, 3.5 percent of the global population were international migrants (IOM 2020), a number that actually has been relatively constant over time. Thus, whilst we live in a hyper mobile world (Recchi, Deutschmann, and Vespe 2019), most people do not move to settle in another state on a permanent basis. A variety of (often, interrelated) factors impact on whether a person decides and is also able to migrate to another country. Migration drivers, including those for asylum-seeking migration, are often multi-faceted and are rarely mono-causal, ranging from social or economic drivers, to political, demographic, and environmental drivers. There are facilitating or intervening barriers such as restrictive migration regulations by states, or personal resources. One reason for the relative lack of international immigration is the various social, financial, and psychological costs of migrating to another country (Geddes, Hadj-Abdou, and Brumat 2020). The desire or the need to immigrate, as much as the limitations of the number of people who actually are capable to do so, is ultimately also an indicator of various persistent global inequalities, as well as inequalities within nation states.

The emergence of the concept of international migration, in turn, is deeply rooted in the establishment of nation states and modern nation state building. The regulation of access to state territory was integral to the establishment of state sovereignty in Western democracies. If there were no national borders, then there would be no international migration, as Aristide Zolberg (1989) has poignantly stated. The control of international mobility is thus often viewed as a matter of democratic self-determination by modern nation states, as an expression of their right to own their territory and to shape the composition of their own citizenries. The fact that immigration touches the very heart of nation states' self-definition as states is one of the key reasons why immigration is often highly contested (Geddes, Hadj-Abdou, and Brumat 2020).

Inherently linked to immigration control as a manifestation of state sovereignty, there is a legal asymmetry between the right to exit a country and to enter another one (Bauböck 2006). Whilst the freedom to emigrate is a universal human right, there is no corresponding right to immigrate and reside in another country (Touzenis and Cholewinski 2009, 1). In contrast, returning citizens do possess an unconditional right to be admitted. According to the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights, everyone is legally entitled to return to his or her country. The UN Human Rights Committee in General comment no. 27 has, moreover, clarified that this right does not only refer to citizens but also to long-term residents (including stateless persons) who have a claim to return to places where they have built their lives (Baubock 2019a). Moreover, once a migrant entered a state, irrespective of whether he/she did so regularly or irregularly, states have to uphold this person's basic rights, including protection from torture, degrading treatment, or forced labour (Touzenis and Cholewinski 2009, 1). Core human rights treaties, such as the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights, and on Economic Social, and Cultural Rights, with the exception of few rights, apply irrespectively of citizenship status (ibid.). Thus, whilst citizenship status continues to be the most crucial aspect for the access to rights, and a lack thereof constitutes a vulnerable legal status, this does not imply that states are free to curtail or deny the existing rights of foreign nationals or stateless persons.

There are a variety of further rights in international law, or enshrined in specific national legislation in immigration receiving states, that safeguard the rights of people on the move. The EU and its member states, for instance, have ratified and are therefore bound by the 1951 Geneva Convention to grant international refugee protection to a person who has:

> A well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or a stateless person, who, being outside of the country of former habitual residence for the same reasons as mentioned above, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it.
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> *Article 2, Directive 2011/95/EU*

The non-refoulment principle, moreover, prevents states from expelling a person, irrespective of nationality or status, to a place where he or she would be at risk of persecution, torture, or other serious human rights violations. Another example is the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which obliges states to ensure that children are not separated from their parents against their will, except if determined as being in the best interest of the child. This right is highly relevant for children in a migration context, and applies in admission, detention, and expulsion procedures (Council of Europe 2013).

The aim of this section, however, is not to provide an exhaustive overview of the rights of migrants; instead, it aims to underline that migrants have (some) rights, which states in line with the liberal principle ought to respect. If states are not fulfilling the international human rights standards they subscribed to, and are disregarding the fundamental principles of justice provided by their own laws and constitutions – which both in many instances protect migrants – they would thus classify as illiberal. Consequently, as liberal democratic nation states are constitutional states, they are bound to respect the law, which in important respects protects not only the rights of citizens but of persons irrespective of their status (Joppke 1998, 268).

Migration Politics before the Illiberal Turn: The Silent break-through of Liberal Norms

The fact that the universal norms to which modern liberal democracies have subscribed to can and have been invoked in immigration and asylum related disputes is challenging sovereign nation states in "their prerogative to define the boundaries of the national community," i.e. the demos (Benhabib 2002, 563). It is this major tension, inherent in modern liberal democracies,

that the current disputes against immigration – and consequently the phenomenon of illiberal democracy – are thriving on.

In 1992, the migration researcher Jim Hollifield (1992) described a "liberal paradox" in modern nation states of "open markets" and "closed political communities." Especially in globalized, post-Fordist economies, the demand for low as well as high-skilled labour migration has increased. Put differently, in advanced capitalist economies migrant labour has become a structural requirement of economic growth. In order to remain competitive, states thus have to be open as regards all three pillars of globalization: trade, investment, and international migration. The economic logic in modern nation states hence promotes openness and the inclusion of immigrants. What is more, liberal states are required to take civil and human rights into account; otherwise, liberal states undermine their own legitimacy, as Hollifield (2008, 97) emphasized. At the same time, the political logic based upon national citizenship is one of closure. Hollifield's "liberal paradox" is hence constituted by the fact that states have to cater to both logics: they have to be simultaneously open and closed.

In a similar vein, Hampshire (2013) speaks in his important work on the politics of immigration of the "Janus face" of the nation state regarding the regulation of immigration, outlining that democracy and nationhood pull towards a restrictive approach concerning immigration and immigrants, whereas capitalism and liberalism pull towards openness.

As a result of these contradictory forces and interests, policies in the field of immigration have been often quite inconsistent and ambiguous. Geddes, Hadj-Abdou, and Brumat (2020) have identified this often ambiguous and inconsistent nature of migration policy programs as a "deliberate malintegration" of opposing tendencies (liberal and illiberal) evident in the politics of migration. This deliberate malintegration, they argue, represents a useful strategy to manage conflictual demands, which otherwise cannot be reconciled.

In the mid-1990s, Gary Freeman (1995) already had introduced another key point into this debate. He argued that immigration politics had been shaped by a collective action dilemma. Freeman, observing a relatively expansive and inclusive trend in US immigration politics at the time, argued that this inclusive, liberal tendency could be understood as a result of the strong power of the beneficiaries of immigration. The benefits of immigration, such as the availability of a cheap labour force, he noted, are concentrated, while its costs are dispersed. The dispersion of costs and the concentration of benefits lead to a situation in which the easily mobilizable beneficiaries of concentrated benefits, such as employers, are likely to prevail over the difficult-to-mobilize bearers of diffused costs, the majority of the population. Second, he emphasized that liberal states are characterized by an "anti-populist norm." Political elites are refraining from approaching the issue of immigration as a problem. In effect, this anti-populist norm pushed elites towards consensual agreements on immigration and removed the issue from partisan politics.

Another key contribution in this realm was made by Christian Joppke (1998), who highlighted that Western national courts have played a vital role in protecting rights of immigrants. In his famous essay "Why Liberal States Accept Unwanted Immigration" Joppke (1998) stated that liberal democracies are compelled by their own legal and moral principles. Joppke argued that states coerce themselves through "self-limited sovereignty" and showed that the expansion of immigrants' rights in liberal Western democracies is pushed mostly by domestic courts, often against the wishes of their restriction-minded governments. This does not mean that liberal states did not pursue restrictive policies or that they were unable to exercise control over migration, but it does mean that they encountered limits. A prominent example for this "self-limitation of sovereignty" is Germany, a country which did not self-define itself as an immigration nation for most of its post–World War II history. Whilst West Germany was one of

the most important destinations for migrant guest workers in the post–war period, the expectation of the government was that the recruited labour migrants would eventually return to their countries of origin. Their stay was neither intended nor stipulated. The German government though, was obliged to acknowledge the rights of long-term residents through a series of Constitutional Court rulings in the 1970s and 1980s (Joppke 1998). Hence, as this and other examples show, the restrictive objectives of governments (or to be more precise, the executive branches of these governments) were severely constrained by court decisions that ruled to protect the rights of immigrants.

A similar argument has been made more recently about the role of the judiciary in the European Union, and the EU policy and institutional framework more broadly. EU policies and judicial decisions have extended not only the rights of EU migrants (i.e. EU citizens that migrate within the European Union due to freedom of movement), but also those of third country nationals (i.e. migrants from outside the European Union) considerably (Bonjour and Vink 2013). In comparison to other policy domains, national policy makers were hesitant to convey any powers in the field of immigration to the supranational EU level (Hadj-Abdou 2016). With the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997, however, for the first time, legal competences were transferred to the EU in the field of migration. Initially the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) had very little competences on migration related issues, and also the European Parliament and the European Commission, institutions which in comparison with national governments tended to be more prone to support migrant rights, were largely kept out of the game. The Lisbon Treaty, which entered into force in 2009, significantly increased the powers of EU institutions in that policy field. The transfer of competences in the policy field of migration and asylum from the national level to the EU has been increasingly constraining national governments in ways they did not anticipate (Bonjour and Vink 2013). In particular, rulings by the CJEU have repeatedly demonstrated the constraining impact of the EU legal framework on EU member states' capacity to restrict immigration, for instance, as regards family reunification rules, or as regards one of the most vulnerable and unwanted migrant groups by nation states, namely, irregular migrants (Acosta, Arcarazo, and Geddes 2013). These were unintended consequences of European integration.

Even immigration lawyers underestimated the wide-ranging effects EU law would have on national immigration law (Joppke 2011, 228). Once "sucked into the ambit of supranational actors within the EU," immigration became "infused with the liberal rights logic of free movement" (Joppke 2011, 225). Legal principles such as proportionality, effectiveness, and effective legal remedies have now been applied when evaluating policies and policy practices of EU member states, which ultimately helped to strengthen the rights of immigrants (ibid, 228). This does not imply that states were unable to restrict migration, but indeed they have been constrained to some extent in doing so. The Court of Justice also played a vital role in the domain of internal EU immigration, i.e. concerning the freedom of movement rights of EU citizens. It has consistently recognized the principle of freedom of movement of persons as one of the legal foundations of the European Union, and consequently has tended to interpret the provisions enshrining that principle in a broad and inclusive way. Measures by national governments discouraging free movement have been deemed by the Court to be discriminatory or in breach freedom of movement rights (Tomkin 2011, 3).

Enriching the insights on the role of the judiciary, Guiraudon (2000) in turn specified the importance of decisions made behind "gilded doors." She pointed out that venues and processes of decision making, such as courts, were "shielded" from open public debate and governed by judicial procedures and methods. This mode of decision making, Guiraudon noted, was capable of delivering more liberal migration policy outcomes that created some space for the protection

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of the right of immigrants, and created scope for an openness and expansiveness in migration policies that was not intended by national governments. More broadly, Guiraudon's work demonstrated that while a depoliticized setting produces more favourable responses to immigration and immigrants, a politicized setting triggers restrictive (policy) reactions to immigration.

The Transformation of Socio-Political Conflicts: Immigration and New Political Cleavages

The fact that immigration is one of the most contested and salient issues in politics today is a widely repeated truth. Conflicts over immigration have, since the 1990s, been a major issue in national election campaigns and referenda, and they have decisively shaped political agendas of governments (Grande, Schwarzbözl, and Fatke 2019).

In the past decades, anti-immigrant political entrepreneurs have turned from the pariah into the mainstream: for instance, in 1999 when the anti-immigrant, populist radical right Freedom Party (FPÖ) entered national government in Austria, this was widely seen as threatening the values the EU was based upon. Coordinated measures by the other EU member states were put in place against Austria. The EU states jointly decided to have no bilateral official contacts at the political level with the new government, Austrian ambassadors in EU capitals would be received exclusively at a technical level and Austrian candidates for positions in international organizations would receive no support (Merlingen, Mudde, and Sedelmeier 2001, 60). The participation of the anti-immigrant party FPÖ in government was also decisive for advancing far-reaching liberal, anti-discrimination legislation at the EU level. At the time, the participation of a radical outspoken anti-immigrant party such as the Austrian Freedom Party was widely viewed as something unacceptable or at least highly deplorable, and as such, it allowed to further strengthen liberal norms in Europe. In the meantime, we have seen across the EU a growth in political parties that have successfully turned against immigration to mobilize their electorate and have also supported or participated in national office. The proposal of measures such as the one established against Austria in 1999 would be more than unlikely today.

The world which migration scholars observed in the 1980s and 1990s, then, has clearly changed. The parties that migration scholar Freeman (1995, 885) described as "failing right-wing fringe" actors, have in the past decades proven to be influential forces in mobilizing the anti-immigrant sentiment. They have been successfully pushing for restrictive policy change in the domain of immigration across many Western immigration countries, whilst the power of collective economic interests has been decreasing. The previously "gilded doors" which Guiraudon (2000) described are now wide open, as immigration is heavily contested in the parliamentary arena and it has become a policy field in the centre of public attention. In addition, Courts, upholding migrant rights, including the European Court of Human Rights, are facing increasing pressures in the domain of asylum and migration (Riemer 2019). It is these kinds of processes and the dynamics of the politicization of immigration, which we will look at more closely in the following. What are the underlying causes and drivers of this development?

Important recent work on the transformation of socio-political conflicts and grievances in Europe and North America have alerted us that the current contestation of immigration is closely related to the formation of new political cleavages (Hooghe and Marks 2018; Strijbis et al. 2018; Hutter and Kriesi 2019). According to this strand of research, a new cleavage structure has started to emerge in the Global North in the 1980s as a result of globalization. As opportunities and threats associated with globalization are unevenly distributed among society, it brought about the restructuring of socio-political conflict. This conflict is rendered meaningful by two opposing ideologies, cosmopolitanism versus communitarianism (Strijbis,

Helmer, and de Wilde 2018). On the one side, there are those advocating for open borders to facilitate the flow of capital, services, goods, persons, and international cooperation; and on the other side are those who advocate for closed national borders, national sovereignty, and independence, i.e. calling for a return to a closed nation state system. Attitudes to immigration are at the centre of this cleavage, and opposition or support to immigration has driven political behaviour and new forms of political mobilization (Hutter and Kriesi 2019). Continuous support by significant segments of the electorate of Donald Trump, the former president of the US – whose leadership was characterized by a strong opposition to multilateralism and global institutions, economic protectionism, as well as fierce attacks on immigrants – is paradigmatic of this restructured socio-political conflict. This new cleavage shapes cultural but also economic preferences, significantly deviating from previous left-right cleavages.

Brexit is another paradigmatic manifestation of this socio-political change. As the political party scholar Bale (2021) put it: "Only a fool would argue that Brexit had one cause and one cause only. But only a fool would argue that immigration had nothing to do with it" (see also Dennison and Geddes 2018). Brexit symbolized a "political revolt of immobile against mobile Europeans" (Bauböck 2019b, 126). Immigration, and more generally mobility within the EU, had come to signify the fluidity of relations between the nation, the people and the state (Anderson 2017, 1532). And as such, it has turned into a symbol of a "troubled" post-national, global world.

The current contestations about migration are hence fundamentally about what has been once a privilege of the nation state, namely the ability to control (unwanted) migration, or to quote the former UK Prime Minister David Cameron, who put it very openly in a speech on Britain's relation to the EU:

> People have understandably become frustrated. It boils down to one word: *control*. People want Government to have control over the numbers of people coming here and the circumstances in which they come, both from around the world and from within the European Union. They want control over who has the right to receive benefits and what is expected of them in return.
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> *Cameron 2014, emphasis added*

The conservative Home Secretary Priti Patel of Prime Minister Boris Johnson's cabinet, which was re-elected at the end of 2019, was similarly clear in emphasizing that the UK government will "end freedom of movement once and for all" emphasizing that the government is acting "*for the people*" against the "*metropolitan liberal elites*" (*The Guardian* 2019, emphasis added).

Populist entrepreneurs have been successful, since they speak to and mobilize people along the new conflict lines beyond left and right. Most importantly, populist parties were able to use the inherent tensions of liberal democracy for their ends, as a matter of the constraints liberalism puts on the "will of the people." Populism divides society into two homogenous and antagonistic groups: the "pure people" and the "corrupt (or liberal) elites." Populism pledges that politics should be an expression of the will of the people, and populist parties argue that they represent and defend the true voice of "the" people against the "liberal" elites (Mudde 2016).

Among populist parties, radical right ones also fundamentally rely on authoritarianism, emphasizing the necessity of a strictly ordered society, in which infringements of this order are to be severely punished. A core ideology of the populist radical right, eventually, is nativism, which claims that states ought to be inhabited exclusively by natives, and that the nation is threatened by aliens. It is this nativist ideology that renders these parties anti-immigration. The populist radical right has been able to mobilize opposition to immigration by highlighting that

"ordinary people" have been sold out by an out of touch liberal, political elite promoting immigration (Geddes, Hadj-Abdou, and Brumat 2020).

In sum, as Pappas has rightly argued, the populist radical right is the anti–pole to political liberalism (cit. after Moffitt 2017, 114). Whilst liberalism is defined by multiple political cleavages, populism is based upon a single cleavage, of "the people" versus "the elite." Liberalism seeks moderation through consensual politics, whereas populism is characterized by adversarial politics. Eventually, whilst liberalism is guided by constitutionalism, populism emphasizes majoritarianism. While most populism research underlines that populists are not anti-democratic but illiberal, Jan-Werner Müller (2016) contradicts this viewpoint with a powerful argument: he claims that as populists question the status of those citizens who do not support them and their political agenda as belonging to the "people," populism also contains an anti-democratic moment. Hence, if we look closely, populists contest the democratic majority rule, Müller suggests. They are invoking feelings of "who the people are," i.e. they are differentiating between – for them irrelevant – "counting majorities" (the democratic majoritarian principle) and legitimate feeling majorities (the populist majority principle of "we the people").

Much of the politicization of immigration we see today has been driven not only by the populist radical right, but also by the so called mainstream political parties, many of which are adapting nativist, anti-immigrant positions of the radical right. Lines between centre parties and radical right anti-immigrant parties have become partly blurred (Hadj-Abdou, Bale, and Geddes 2021). In an 2018 interview with the radical right media platform Breitbart, Trump's ambassador to Germany, Richard Grenell, for instance, when emphasizing that "consistent conservative policies on migration" is a winning formula at the ballot box, referred to the Austrian prime minister Sebastian Kurz, the leader of the centre-right People's party, tellingly as a "rock star" (Tomlinson 2018).

Transnational terrorism has also been increasingly linked in public debate to migration, reinforcing ideas of migration as a security problem (Helbing and Meierrieks 2020; McNeill-Willson 2021). Migration crises, most notably the 2015 crisis, have further increased the politicization of immigration, i.e. they have increased the salience and polarization between political parties on the issue of immigration. Importantly, in the EU, this politicization of migration is not anymore exclusively about immigration as a national concern (i.e. a series of national debates), but about immigration as a European concern. Expectations about what the EU could or should do were significantly raised as a result of this politicization. These expectations, however, cannot be met because of the conflicting demands and interests. This has plunged the EU's credibility into a severe crisis. Previous strategies of "deliberate malintegration" (Geddes, Hadj-Abdou, and Brumat 2020) to address contradictory goals in the field of migration policy are thus not viable anymore.

The increase in the salience and politicization of immigration in the wake of the 2015 migration crisis has also manifested itself powerfully in the opposition to the 2018 UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM). The GCM, which emerged in the wake of the 2015 migration crisis, sets out a common approach to international migration, aiming to strengthen international cooperation between states to regulate migration. The Compact ignited noteworthy protests across the globe and a substantive number of governments, among them several governments of EU member states (including, among others, that of Hungary, Austria, and Slovakia) did not endorse the Compact. Notwithstanding the fact that the GCM is a non-binding document, the Belgian government of the time even broke up amongst controversies over the GCM (Vera Espinoza, Hadj-Abdou, and Brumat 2018). The Compact did touch upon the core conflict lines of the new political cleavage of communitarianism versus cosmopolitanism, as: (a) it was about immigration; (b) it promoted international

cooperation between states; and (c) it contained components on the protection of human rights of migrants (in addition to regulating immigration and constraining irregular migration). The Hungarian government (2018) under Viktor Orbán, who was one of the harshest opponents of the GCM noted in an official letter to UN bodies that "migration should be stopped, not organized," and underlined that applying a "human rights approach to border control measures" is "an extremely dangerous approach." For those that endorse illiberal democracy, a policy framework that includes human rights of migrants, such as the GCM, is somewhat unsurprisingly unacceptable.

Illiberal Liberalism

Anti-immigrant parties and movements thrive because they are able to use the inherent tensions of liberal democracy instrumentally for their own electoral gains, and because they tap into the existing socio-political conflicts that emerged in the wake of globalization. By doing that, they also seem to be touching upon a bigger existential point in this globalized world: the lack of purpose, and of a sense of belonging. The successful rhetoric of the leader of the anti-immigrant Dutch Forum of Democracy, Thierry Baudet, illustrates this point well. Baudet is a rising political star in the Netherlands, and a staunch admirer of Viktor Orbán, and self-declared savior of the "Boreal (northern) world." He defines liberalism as a movement aiming for the "complete emancipation of the individual" (Baudet 2019). The vision of liberalism that "every individual enjoys certain 'inalienable rights,' which by definition eclipse all other claims, and to which all other ties, loyalties, and connections must ultimately be subordinated," is called out by him as being the root of the problem of contemporary Western societies. Institutions that humans require to build up a meaningful existence, such as "a family and a connection to generations past and future, a nation, a tradition, perhaps a church," he argues, are disappearing because of the liberalism's emphasis on individual freedom. Having lost connections that these institutions offered, people witness a crisis, and "we end up depressed" Baudet notes. "Thus, the freest people who have ever lived have also come to live the least meaningful lives," he concludes. The bold promise anti-immigrant actors convey is hence much more than "keeping immigrants out," it is the re-establishment of meaning and belonging in an increasingly complex world.

So far, we have discussed the inherent contradictions of liberal democracy, the "liberal paradox" of migration politics and the rise of illiberalism. Another paradox is that some of the driving actors of illiberal democracy also explicitly rely on liberal values to push through their political, anti-immigrant agenda. This phenomenon has been called by political theorists "illiberal liberalism" (Adamson, Triadafilopoulos, and Zolberg 2011). Illiberal liberalism is centred on the idea that some (immigrant) "cultures" and/or practices contradict liberal, universal values and thus have to be excluded (Hadj-Abdou 2017).

We certainly have to distinguish cases in which illiberal liberalism is supporting trends of illiberal democracy, and cases in which liberal states and actors apply illiberal means with the intention to actually protect liberal values. Whilst the first can be classified as a symbolic form of illiberal liberalism, we can label the second substantive illiberal liberalism, as it is driven by the substantive aim of safeguarding liberal values as opposed to mere symbolic reference to liberal values. In many cases, illiberal liberalism has been of a symbolic character (Akkerman 2015). In its symbolic variant, liberalism is employed selectively and instrumentally, emphasizing that (certain) immigrants do not share liberal values, in order to legitimize exclusionary measures towards immigrant residents and restrictive asylum, and immigration control policies (Hadj-Abdou 2017; 2018). If we look beyond the rhetoric of liberalism by some of its fiercest

defenders, i.e. anti-immigrant parties and movements, we see that the commitment to liberal values is often inconsistent with these actors' substantive policy agendas.

Manifested in policy measures, illiberal liberalism, has been a way for restrictive minded governments to respond to the expansion of migrants' rights discussed in the section above on migration politics before the illiberal turn in this chapter. So, whilst rights of migrants actually did in many instances expand, the access to these rights has been increasingly restricted. Some governments have started to use mandatory integration requirements with an illiberal spin (Joppke 2017) to either prevent (specific) immigrants from coming in the first place, or to restrict their rights after they have arrived. Not meeting requirements set up in integration tests, which have been established in countries such as the UK, Netherlands, or Austria, is penalized by the state by sanctions including the potential loss of social benefits, loss of legal residence status, or prevention of immigration in the case of pre-entry integration tests (Joppke 2017, 1155).

The liberal value of gender equality has been central in debates employing an illiberal liberal perspective. Examples include heated debates over forced marriage or female Muslim headscarves (Rosenberger and Sauer 2012), but also physical violence by immigrants against women. It is predominantly Muslim immigrants, that have been focused on in accounts of illiberal liberalism. Especially in regard to violence against women, the point I have made elsewhere (Hadj-Abdou 2017 and 2018) is not that (gender based) violence is not condemnable, it absolutely is, but that these phenomena have been often discussed in a way in which they have irrevocably perpetuated the idea of a "Muslim" threat based on a monolithic understanding of "Muslimness." Muslims have tended to be essentialized and viewed as radical and radically different "foreigners" when, in fact, there is huge diversity including people from many different countries and backgrounds plus long-standing, settled populations of Muslim faith in many EU member states (Geddes, Hadj-Abdou, and Brumat 2020). Thus, a group of diverse people is defined in their relationship to the societies in which they live in only in terms of their "Muslimness."

Public Opinion and Trust in Political Establishments

Do the developments we have discussed imply that "the people" have become fiercely anti-immigrant? It might seem counter-intuitive, but actually, the answer to this question is anything but a straightforward yes.

Public opinion research suggests that it is not the case that people are becoming more anti-immigrant. Indeed research (More in Common 2018) suggests that people in liberal democracies are no hardliners when it comes to immigration, but they occupy middle positions, i.e. they split into different middle segments. Moreover, for instance in Europe we see that in some countries attitudes towards immigrants are even becoming more positive (Dennison and Dražanová 2018). A key dynamic driving opposition to immigration is, that latent concerns some sections of the population hold, do get activated through the growing prominence of the issue of migration (i.e. salience) in public and political debates. This helps to explain why, at an aggregate level, attitudes can become more favourable, but among more specific sections of the electorate can become more hostile (Geddes, Hadj-Abdou, and Brumat 2020).

It is important to note that conflicts over immigration follow predominantly a "political logic." This means, that political conflicts over immigration are not caused by socio-economic factors, such as high numbers of immigration or rising levels of unemployment; it is rather political party competition that drives the politicization of immigration (Grande, Schwarzbözl, and Fatke 2019). Put differently, concerns about immigration need to be activated and mobilized.

A good example for this political dynamic is Hungary, a country where immigration numbers are relatively low with a foreign population share of 5.5 percent, of which 3.3 percent are EU citizens, and the remaining 2.2 percent are nationals from non-EU member countries (Eurostat 2018). In order to secure and consolidate its electoral strength, the governing Fidesz party has been running a permanent anti-migration campaign in a government-controlled media space (International Press Institute 2019). In the past years, it has launched national consultations on immigration, and conducted a referendum on the EU's refugee quota mechanism. It erected a border fence on Hungary's southern border. The government also adopted policies that made it *de facto* impossible to lodge a claim for refugee protection, it impeded the work of the NGOs that deal with refugees and migration, and it has been repeatedly targeting actors that took a different approach to immigration issues than itself (Bíró-Nagy 2021). In 2018, the year of national parliament elections, Hungary was the country in which the greatest number of people thought of immigration as a paramount problem among all the EU member states. The Hungarian population, moreover, has become far more hostile to immigration than the rest of the EU population. As Bíró-Nagy demonstrates these dynamics are closely related to the successful efforts of the government to mobilize on the issue.

Research has also highlighted a correlation between opposition to immigration and trust in politics. Particularly, people who affiliate and engage in anti-migrant movements are "more dissatisfied with politics, more distrustful of institutions and more likely to think that the political system has serious faults that need addressing" (Goodwin 2013).

Hence, in some sense illiberal, radical right parties, can be viewed as "good news" for democracy. Addressing and tapping into the new socio-political conflict lines, they might be able to engage people "who otherwise have lost faith in politics or who disengaged from political participation, by reinvigorating a new sense of identity politics and meaningful choice during elections" (Zürn and de Wilde 2016). However, at the same time these developments can be also viewed as utterly bad news for democracy. As populist political entrepreneurs have pitched "us" (the people) versus "them" (elites, immigrants, etc.), we have seen rising levels of polarization that make democracies extremely vulnerable, with social cohesion and political stability diminishing (McCoy 2018).

In today's polarized climate, political issues tend to be reduced to antagonistic partisan politics. The public sphere that is crucial for the functioning of democracy is more and more cut down to a series of "echo chambers." These echo chambers confirm beliefs people already hold (concerning immigration, but also in relation to other topics) rather than facilitating exchange and deliberation of different viewpoints, which are critical to a well-functioning democracy.

Moreover as Müller (2016) reminds us, when populists, i.e. those who are the main forces of illiberal democracy, have sufficiently large majorities in parliament, "they try to build regimes that might still look like democracies," but are actually designed to perpetuate their power (as they see themselves as the only authentic representatives of the people) (Müller 2016). Hence, the ongoing illiberal wave might be in the end not only of concern for pro-immigrant "liberals," but for "democrats" after all.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the role migration and its politicization plays in the rise of illiberal democracy. It has shown that whilst we have seen initially an expansion of liberal rights in the policy field of migration, these rights have become increasingly contested. Migration has become a highly divisive, polarizing issue, reflecting a growing opposition to a post-national, globalized world, and growing demands to restore national sovereignty (Hadj-Abdou 2020).

Populist political entrepreneurs across the globe have been skillful in mobilizing opposition to migration and advocating an illiberal vision of democracy as an alternative to liberal democracy by claiming that they represent "the will of the people." This claim of representing the people as this chapter has suggested is, however, not straightforward. Public opinion on migration is much more nuanced than commonly assumed. People in liberal democracies are no hardliners when it comes to migration. Moreover, populist movements contain an anti-democratic component by excluding those citizens who do not agree with their political vision from "us" the "people" (Müller 2016). The consequent growing polarization of societies makes democracies vulnerable. Considering these developments, we cannot take for granted that democracy is inviolable.

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