

RACISM AND THE CRISES OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC – FROM ITS CONSTITUTION TO THE TRUMP PHENOMENON

Abstract. The article addresses and critically interrogates the role of racism in the present and past crises of American democratic political representation since the American republic was constituted. By rethinking democratic political representation as a continuous ontological practice of re-creating the American body politic in the form of a delimited American nation and by rethinking racism as a structural constitutive feature and phenomenon of the American republic, it demonstrates the exclusionary nature of American democratic political representation. In this context, it reflects on the central transformations of American democratic political representation, including the most recent one related to the Trump phenomenon.

Keywords: political representation, racism, biopolitics, Donald Trump, American nation

Introduction

Donald Trump's success in the 2015–2016 American presidential campaign, after first obtaining the Republican Party's nomination and later winning the election by utilising explicitly far-right racist, misogynistic and right-wing populist neo-fascist discourses, was and is generally perceived as a symptom of the crisis of American democratic political representation. According to various scholars (see Colin Crouch, 2004; Gilens and Page, 2014), this crisis stems from the growing discontent of a substantial share of the population with the dominant socio-economic and political arrangements in the country that are perceived as disproportionately favouring the well-off, gradually destroying the middle class and increasing general inequality, and being unresponsive to common people's needs and interests. In other words, the existing democratic political institutions are ever more seen as not representing the general population's interests. This perceived

* *Blaž Vrečko Ilc, PhD, teaching assistant and researcher, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana.*

crisis can be observed in the majority of Western democratic capitalist nation states and manifests itself in various events, movements and election or referendum (e.g. Brexit) results that are contrary to the expectations and wishes of the political and socio-economic elites. Most of these manifestations have a right-wing populist nature and, as such, are accompanied, rationalised and legitimised by their supporters through explicitly racist, xenophobic and nativist discourses (Lentin and Titley, 2011). Consequently, these manifestations are perceived by the socio-political, economic and media elites as opposed to the anti-racist fundamentals of and inevitable historical progress made in liberal democratic capitalistic nation states that have supposedly consolidated their anti-racist character (via anti-racist policies and policies of equal opportunities) and established a post-racial political and socio-economic reality (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). The growing popularity and success of right-wing populist movements and politicians such as Trump is perceived as a general attack by the unenlightened, irrational, pre-modern, illiberal, ignorant, less-educated and racist fringes of liberal-democratic societies on the perceived teleological development of liberal democracies and their political representation towards a post-racial society of equal opportunities. Consequently, the dominant understandings of the present situation paint quite a simple picture of the crisis of American democratic political representation as a clash between the progressive, inclusive, post-racial, liberal forces of the status quo and the somehow still surviving racist, ignorant, illiberal, reactionary, backward fringes of society that do not represent the 'true' nature of the American Republic and nation. Meanwhile, the prevalent critical understandings perceive the American political representation's current crisis as originating from the unrepresentative character of the existing political establishment that only caters to the interests of corporations and socio-economic elites (see C. Crouch, 2012). It depicts the modern-day crisis as the uprising of the un-represented American masses against the establishment that has taken two main forms, namely racist right-wing and progressive left-wing populism, basically repeating the clear division between socio-political alternatives (racist vs progressive) found in mainstream understandings. These two clear forms are constituted, organised and legitimised by perceivably two fundamentally opposing imaginings or political representations of the American body politic, that is, an anti-racist, progressive, all-inclusive one and a white supremacist or racist one.

We argue there are fundamental flaws in the predominant mainstream and critical understandings of American political representation's current crisis, the notion of fundamentally opposite alternative political representations, and the nature and relationship between racism and the development and functioning of the American liberal-democratic capitalist nation state. They rest on a reductionist understanding of racism that perceives racism

as a historical and static set of ideas regarding the superiority of one/certain races and the natural inferiority of other races. These are then understood as being held by the unenlightened, undemocratic, non-modern part of the society, groups and individuals who utilise these ideas in discourses and practices targeting specific minorities to improve their self-worth or regain their privileged status and superiority. Racism is understood as an individualised, static, non-modern and irrational companion to modernity irrelevant to the constitution and functioning of a modern capitalistic representative democratic nation state. This understanding thus enables a simple division between the racist and anti-racist populations, and between reactionary racist political forces and progressive liberal forces. In the present American socio-political context that is perceived as colour-blind and post-racial, this understanding of racism absolves the self-perceived liberal forces (the Democratic Party) and the majority of the population from being in any way involved in the perpetuation of racist practices and discourses (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Guillaumin, 1995; McWhorter, 2009). But even a brief look at statistics regarding the overall life chances, education attained, wealth, income, quality of employment, rate of incarceration, poverty, unemployment, or indebtedness of specific designated American racial categories reveals the great disparity between the so-called white racial category and the Afro-American and Latino-American racial categories. This racial disparity cannot be comprehensively understood without a systemic or structural understanding of racism (Doane and Bonilla-Silva, 2013). Therefore, racism is a structural and systemic phenomenon. Further, it is a highly adaptable, dynamic and heterogeneous ever-changing set of discourses, practices, institutions, and general socio-political and economic structures. The dynamic and adaptable nature that is manifested in continuous additions to racist discourses and novel racist practices is inextricably connected with the historically changing specific strategic functions racism performs in the American republic, ranging from preventing solidarity between the lower strata of society while establishing perceived solidarity between the rich and poor whites at the beginning of the Republic to legitimising specific housing policies (suburbanisation of white, middle-class populations) and migration policies and foreign interventions. Racism was and is fundamental to how the American republic functions in the sense of simultaneously re-drawing borders and hierarchies between the 'proper' American population and its 'improper' parts and foreign enemies while legitimising specific more or less brutal internal, military, medical and other policies and practices (McWhorter, 2009). It was and is fundamental for re-establishing solidarity and cohesion in times of radical socio-political and economic destabilisations. But, despite its dynamic and adaptable nature observable in the disappearance and creation, expansion and contraction of specific racial categories, one can also identify a

historical continuity regarding the racial categories (and part of the population designated as its members) established as the privileged norm (the white race) and the discriminated anti-norm (African-Americans) of the system. One can also observe the continuing societal presence and popularity of supposedly totally discredited, explicitly racist discourses (Glenn, 2002). The historical continuity can be directly linked to racism's next crucial characteristic, namely its constitutive role in establishing and consolidating the American republic and its democratic political representation.

The constitutive relationship between American democratic political representation and racism is a crucial lacuna of the existing critical understandings in need of addressing to achieve a more nuanced understanding of the perceived current destabilisation and the crisis related to the Trump phenomenon and the rising popularity of right-wing populist movements.

We will argue that political representation's perceived present crisis is not a crisis of the fundamentals of the American republic and its democratic political representation, but a crisis arising from reconfiguring American political representation and the eminent transformation of the previously hegemonic legitimate socio-political alternatives and imaginings of the American body politic. In this context, we will argue the actual and perpetual crises of American political representation are inherently linked to the constitutive and structurally central role racism has played and plays in the American republic and its democratic political representations of the body politic. However, in order to grasp the fundamental perpetual crisis of American political representation and the various historically successive crises of legitimate racist democratic political representations of the body politic, the initial structural/systemic understanding of racism must be interlinked with a critical reframing of democratic political representation.

Consequently, to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of today's crisis and specifically the Trump phenomenon and comprehend the perpetual crisis of American democratic political representation, we will first reconceive the American nation's democratic political representation as being ontologically creative and constitutively interlinked with racism. Second, we will conduct a brief historical analysis of the constitution of the American republic focusing on the dimension of political representation and its major historical transformations and the role racism played in re-imagining and representing the American nation and republic. We will specifically focus on the establishment, consolidation, destabilisation and crucial transformations of successive co-existing pairs of legitimate alternative imaginings and representations of the American body politic and interrogate their fundamentally racist character, despite the substantial differences. This will enable us to problematise the dominant teleological notions regarding the American republic's unstoppable march of progress that,

among others, includes the notion of the ever-expanding inclusion of once discriminated and excluded groups. In the final part, we will critically examine the Trump phenomenon, the dominant political representation that it seems to fundamentally destabilise and the alternative political representation of the body politic that it strives to establish and legitimise.

Rethinking democratic political representation

Democratic political representation is a central feature of the new socio-economic and political arrangement that replaced the monarchical feudal order, its sources of legitimacy, its relations of servitude and subjection to the monarch or a sovereign. It is conceptualised as being inextricably linked and mutually dependent on other perceived central characteristics of modern Western states such as political equality, tolerance, personal freedom, personal rights and, specifically, political rights and popular sovereignty (Pitkin, 1967). The conventional idea of democratic political representation presupposes the existence of autonomous, rational, tolerant, equal individuals who are carriers of inalienable rights and initially possess the right to participate in democratic political processes as either voters or candidates (Glenn, 2002). Individuals as citizens are imagined as crucial for securing the legitimacy of the representative political institutions. On the other hand, the dominant understanding of political representation also presupposes popular sovereignty, in the sense of the sovereignty of a pre-existing collective subject, a demos that resides in a supposedly clearly defined territory and whose interests are represented by the representative political institutions (Dormal, 2012).

Democratic political representation was considered to make large democratic republics possible and as a means to regulate dangerous social conflicts. Federalists imagined representative political institutions as a single forum in to which all of the central social conflict would be brought. This would enable their control and render them harmless as they would be balanced against other issues and interests (see Bibič, 1992; Middlekauff and Woodward, 2005). The public good would emerge from the process of balancing the interests of various constituents as represented by elected officials. However, the public good could only be secured if the representative institutions truly mirrored the body politic. The Federalists along with other modern political thinkers imagined the representative political institutions as a perfect image of the true political sovereign, a perfect image of the actual (imperfect) people (Grinde, 1991). The representative political institutions were imagined as reflecting the true and noble essence of the whole body politic and elections were perceived as the ideal and central mechanism of ennoblement.

Elections along with other mechanisms, institutions and actors that comprise democratic representation are namely the co-creators of the body politic (Lombardo and Meier, 2014). This notion is crucial as it focuses on a central presupposition of not only democratic representation but also its conventional critiques, which is that a clearly defined, naturally delimited, already established demos or body politic pre-existed democratic representation that mirrors or portrays it. As Ankersmit (2002) argues, political reality is not first given to us and subsequently represented. Political reality only comes into being after and due to representation. There is no such thing as a pre-existing identity of 'the people' against which an instance of democratic representation can be measured.

But for a representative relation to function, it requires a shared ground (a delimited body politic) (Dormal, 2012). The shared common ground is always-already a product of political power and does not exist prior to political processes and institutions. Modern individual subjectivities and collective identities are co-constructed by political representation. Democratic political representation helps create the subjectivity of an autonomous, rational individual who possess inalienable rights and is fundamentally free in his/her choices. On the other hand, it contributes to the creation of a collective identity, a 'we' that is crucial for establishing the notion and perception of unity among the citizens as rational, autonomous individuals. Various authors argue (Anderson, 1991; Gellner, 2006; Marx, 2003) that the 'we' that was and is co-established through democratic political representation is the nation.

As Greenfeld (1992) claims, nationalism and democracy were inherently linked and their genesis cannot be understood separately. Modern representative democracy appeared in the form of nationalism, whereby nation was imagined as a territorially bound population with a shared history and a common destiny of self-determination in the form of an independent nation state. Nations were perceived as achieving their true realisation only through democratic self-determination in a nation state. The success of a nation's collective identity can be attributed to its general usefulness for establishing internal cohesion by legitimising the novel reorganisation of the socio-economic and political order by masking, re-focusing and generally de-radicalising the multiple social boundaries, stratifications and hierarchisation characterising modern capitalistic democratic nation states. Hahn and Bohn (2002) claim the nation established a particular epistemological framework for imagining the interrelationships and hierarchy of socio-political categories. It enabled the representation of all other social hierarchies and cleavages as superficial compared to the nation seen as the sovereign, fundamental entity of the modern state. The nation is imagined not only through discourses of unity and discourses of the Other(s), the outside of

the nation. The notion of the nation also enables the internal division of a nation to be legitimised by creating shared political forms of experiencing and imagining internal divisions. As a result, selected internal cleavages (left and right political forces) are represented as legitimate in modern democratic nation states. They are imagined as forming part of the same totality (Urbinati, 2006). Yet this does not mean that, once established and consolidated, the collective identity of a nation and its legitimate internal (political) divisions are set in stone. They are always-already situated in the continuous process of re-construction, re-articulation and re-organisation.

According to Meier (2014), political representation not only has a constitutive function but also the functions of legitimisation and recognition of specific social groups and legitimising political control of these groups. Although declaratively establishing other socio-political stratifications and boundaries as superficial, the actual establishment of a characteristic of a specific national identity was suffused by values, beliefs and ascribed characteristics of a specific part of the population residing in a specific territory (Bracey, 2014; McWhorter, 2009). Through the process of establishing the national identity, including democratic representation, these were generalised, objectified and naturalised as the norm and essence of the nation. Consequently, the white male members of the bourgeois, of a specific religion (e.g. in the USA protestants, in France Catholics) and who were mentally and physically 'normal' were co-established through democratic representation as an explicit norm of the Western, modern nation state. The social group thus co-created was legitimated by democratic representation as the particular that represents the whole. For a long period, they were the only group with the possibility to vote and be elected. When the suffrage was expanded, they retained their dominant position as candidates and elected officials in Western democracies. Modern democracy was not only linked to nationalism but jointly inherently linked with racism and patriarchy such that modern nation states are therefore also racial and sexist/patriarchal states (Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991; Goldberg, 2002; Hooks, 2000).

The political field served as the primary context in which the struggle was and is carried out regarding how the nation will be internally and externally represented and who will be included in the demos (Feagin, 2012). Various parts of the population were included in a more or less hierarchical way into the body politic, while specific parts were established and delegitimised as non-members, as internal outsiders and thus excluded from the body politic (Lombardo and Meier, 2014). Racism played a central role in the sense of legitimising the continuous exclusion or partial always-already limited hierarchical inclusion of members of racial categories established as the anti-norm of the particular modern nation state (Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991; McWhorter, 2009). Meanwhile, democratic representation structured

through racism in a dialectical manner contributed to racial groups' hierarchisation as it confined individuals qua members of specific social groups to particular roles in the political system. Consequently, as democratic political representation legitimised and legitimises specific groups and their ascribed characteristics as normative and normal, it contributed and contributes to socio-political control, surveillance of (parts of) the population and self-regulation, and disciplining of individuals and groups concerning their projected proper socio-political roles.

Racism in the constitution of the American republic and its political representation(s)

The American nation was forged similarly to how other modern nations were created, that is, marked by an initial internal division of the population and the exclusion of specific parts of it (e.g. the French – Huguenots and the English – Catholics) and the a posteriori silencing of this epistemological and ontological violence (T. B. Allen, 2010; Brunsman and Silverman, 2014; Marx, 2003). In imagining the American body politic, as the founding fathers of the American republic the patriot elites were drawing on, mixing and utilising various epistemological frameworks, including a liberal and a racist/racial framework (Feagin, 2001, 2010; Horsman, 1981; McWhorter, 2009). At first glance, they seem to be completely incompatible but, as we will demonstrate, they are inextricably linked. The liberal conception is perceivably based on the notions of consensus, democracy, liberty, equality of opportunities, and individual achievement that are central to determining one's inclusion in the American nation, the American body politic (Citrin, Reingold and Green, 1990). The racist/racial representation posits an ascriptive Americanism in the sense of Americans being inherently exceptional people endowed with superior moral, intellectual, physical traits associated with ascriptive traits such as race, gender or religion (Smith, 1988). It presupposes the inclusion of only part of the American population within the boundaries of the American nation; namely, only those ascribed membership in the superior racial category and embodying the established subject norm.

In the context of representing the American nation, a specific dialectical political representation process took place. The Patriots who represented the 13 former colonies upon the signing of the Declaration of Independence were namely selected as representatives based on the inherent norm of the previous colonial socio-political order since only white, wealthy and protestant men were chosen. However, by representing themselves as the Founding Fathers of the Republic they were fundamental to re-establishing this norm as the constitutive norm of the new American republic. They

established themselves as the essence of the American nation, thereby contributing to the legitimisation of their superior socio-economic and political position they had retained or attained (Feagin, 2010; McWhorter, 2009).

The political discourses of the constitutive period represented the subject norm of the American nation and republic in a way that proved to be persistent. They represented him as a free, diligent, self-controlled, self-governing, enterprising, adventurous individual who is also pious but can enjoy a secular life, possesses private property, is a protestant, and rational, unjealous, civilised, clean, cultivated and in control of his sexual lust. These characteristics were race- and gender-coded by being established as inherent to the wealthy male members of the white racial category, while also providing recognition and establishing aspiration (the 'American Dream') for the less-well off whites (Glenn, 2002). Along with the subject norm, the revolutionary period of the American nation and republic was marked by re-establishing the anti-norms that had consolidated in the colonial period and served a similar strategic purpose of legitimising existing and/or re-established relations of domination, exploitation, marginalisation and re-establishing racial solidarity (Feagin, 2001, 2012).

Political representation played a central role as specific socio-political groups ascribed to particular racial categories were either fully or partially represented or totally excluded from the body politic. The Native Americans were the only racial group the Founding Fathers explicitly excluded from the American body politic in the Declaration of Independence through an explicit discourse of inferiorisation. On the other hand, they were used as a set of representations in the self-imagining and representation of the American nation in the revolutionary period to establish their difference and distance from the British through their closeness to the Indians as free and autochthonous inhabitants of North American continent (Grinde, 1991). The Blacks played a less ambivalent role in American political representation. The self-imagining and representation of the American revolutionaries was discursively established by distancing themselves from the Black racial category, whose members were established as being 'natural' slaves and servants. The Patriots simultaneously decried their metaphorical slavery to the British king who had perceivably curtailed them their freedom and rights and either silenced the fact of the actual chattel slavery of Black Africans and their descendants, or legitimised and rationalised it in the sense of either a 'natural' destiny or being a product of the policies of the colonial metropole. Although Blacks were not explicitly excluded, both the Declaration and the Constitution re-imagined their inferiority and re-established them as the anti-norm of the novel socio-economic and political arrangement. The Blacks represent the central anti-norm of the American racist dispositif as they were the primary targets of most of the delimiting,

discriminating, exploitative and marginalising discourses and practices that were later used to inferiorise other racial groups (Feagin, 2001; McWhorter, 2009; Mendieta, 2004).

The constitutive exclusion of Blacks from the American body politic was strategically important. Epistemologically, their exclusion was performed by re-articulating the inferiorisation discourses developed in the colonial period that gradually naturalised the relationship of superiority-inferiority and freedom-slavery between the White and Black populations (Jordan, 1968). This enabled the articulation of universal natural rights to freedom and self-determination, while rationalising the exclusion of a large share of the population and the institution of slavery. Ontologically, the American political economy in its constitutive period either directly (the Southern states) or indirectly (the Northern states) depended on the chattel slavery of Blacks and its profits (Baptist, 2014). Consequently, chattel slavery was strengthened in the American republic's foundational documents, above all in the Constitution. Chattel slavery was never explicitly mentioned in the Constitution, which was the result of the societal popularity of abolitionist ideas especially in the Northern states that had argued for and later implemented the abolition of slavery, but not racial equality because racial wealth and power disparities were retained and strengthened (D. B. Davis, 2014). The Constitution can be seen as an unequal compromise between two alternative legitimate political representations of the body politic. While representing and framing the American republic as a system based on individual freedom and inalienable rights of individuals, it simultaneously firmly protected slavery (Bracey, 2014). The famous 3/5 clause that was a core provision of the Constitution enabled the slave-owing elites of the Southern states to dominate the federal political institutions, thereby ensuring the persistence of slavery (Berlin, 2010; Blackburn, 1997). Despite this inherent tension, both positions on slavery or free labour were regarded at the general societal level as legitimate, allowing the establishment and consolidation of the common ground, namely the American nation that according to either alternative shared a racist delimitation (see Feagin, 2012).

The major historical crises and reconstitutions of American political representation

The American civil war brought about the American republic's most fundamental reconstruction following its inception. It was the only radical destabilisation given that it almost led to the destruction of the unified American nation and republic. Simultaneously, it established the possibility for re-imagining the representation of the American body politic that substantially determines the present (Goldfield, 2011). It pitted two alternative

representations of the American body politic against each other in an existential fight that could not be resolved by a new consensus but required one of the alternatives' destruction. Leading to the Civil War, the two central political representations were gradually differentiated to the level of complete incompatibility and outright hostility. The North, which abolished slavery, imagined the American nation and the republic as being defined by free labour, social mobility, a dynamic entrepreneurial society, and as a society focused on the future and progress. Meanwhile, the South was imagined as a backward, slavery-based society that was preventing the American republic from reaching its destined heights (Foner, 1974; Goodheart, 2011). The South imagined its slavery-based system as an expression of the 'true' America, the undeniable heritage of the Founding Fathers, thereby imagining the Northern society as subverting the intentions of the Founders and as a clear and present danger to the survival of slavery (Goldfield, 2011).

The total victory of the North meant the Southern alternative, along with the once legitimate cleavage of the American body politic and the institution of slavery, were destroyed. With the notion and reality of a unified American body politic having been radically destabilised, this precipitated a general re-imagining of the American nation and republic. Although this political representation relied on the Northern alternative, it was adapted, transformed and extended to first re-integrate the Southern white population and second to gradually integrate the novel *biopolitical* imagining of the American nation that had appeared during the Civil War (McWhorter, 2009). These processes depended on the re-articulation and re-inscription of the fundamental subject norm (the white, male, wealthy individual) and the population norm (the ascribed members of the white race) (Glenn, 2002). However, in the context of the defeated Southern states the general socio-economic and political destabilisation was radical. Not only was the former hegemonic political representation and imagining of the body politic destroyed, but so too was its central socio-economic and political institution. Slavery was fundamental for establishing, regulating and managing cohesion and securing order in the Southern states, while legitimating hierarchies, racial and wealth disparities and relations of domination and exploitation (Foner, 1988). Although slavery had been abolished, the former slaves' socio-economic position saw no substantially change as they were denied material reparation for their service and thus forced into poverty and gradually materially and symbolically forced to accept their inferior position within the 'natural' racial order. The latter was violently re-established through a novel system of formal racial segregation that re-inscribed the subject norm and the population norm in the Southern societies. The formal racial segregation re-established past hierarchies while re-articulating them as a 'natural order' dividing superior and inferior races whose

mixing was deemed unnatural. Due to the 14th Amendment¹ along with the re-articulation of explicit racist language a novel, coded racist language was developed that was *prima facie* neutral such as the general motto of the segregation “separate but equal” (R. L. Davis, 2003).

This Southern reimagining of the body politic and the subject norm was closely connected with the general American re-imagining of the body politic, which enabled it to be recognised as a legitimate alternative by the Northern White populations and elites. A novel legitimate socio-political cleavage was thereby established. A *biopolitical* (cf. Foucault, 1975–76/2003b) imagining of the American body politic emerged as a shared ground of American political representation which re-inscribed racial categories, their ‘natural’ hierarchies and relative positions and the subject norm/population norm in an unprecedentedly penetrating way. A *biopolitical* political imagining of the body politic refers to an imagining that started in the second half of the 19th century where progress, health and security of the population were established as central issues of government and wider socio-economic and political processes. When these issues became central, a continuous direct and indirect governmental intervention was established as necessary for regulating, preventing and removing threats to the population, which is itself imagined as a bio-social homogenous phenomenon with its pertinent natural processes (mortality, longevity, birth rate etc.). The continuous intervention is framed as the continuous identification and regulation of interior threats present in the body politic and exterior dangers threatening the body politic. *Biopolitical* imagining of the nation explicitly or implicitly utilises a modern medical understanding of illness (as something internal, but expressing itself in visual symptoms), ideas of hereditary and notions of degeneration, while normal/abnormal and normality/abnormality represent the primary organising concept that connects the mentioned notions (McWhorter, 2009). Consequently, the *biopolitical* imagining of a nation differentiates the normal or the healthy, non-deficient and non-degenerate (parts of the) population and the abnormal, ill, deficient, degenerate and dangerous (part of) populations. The normal and the abnormal do not represent a static binary but a continuum along which specific parts of the population and foreign (parts of) populations are dynamically situated. The more ‘normal’ they are classified and perceived, the more they are imagined as the part of the population that has to be secured, kept healthy, developed, nurtured and defended. The more ‘abnormal’ they are classified and perceived, the more they are imagined as in need of being surveilled, controlled, rigorously disciplined and ultimately killed in order to prevent

¹ The amendment forbids states from denying any person “life, liberty or property, without due process of law” or denying “any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws”.

them from endangering and infecting the 'normal' population (Nadesan, 2008). Although the *biopolitical* imagining of the body politic is established as being fundamentally dependent on the continuous operation of the identification and classification of abnormal populations and their level of risk according to specific objective, natural and statistically generated criteria, it fundamentally depends on pre-existing divisions and hierarchies. It requires a preconceived notion of the normal population and the abnormal population in order to have the coordinates for managing, regulating, nurturing or disciplining, excluding and *biopolitically* killing the dangers. The existing hierarchical racial matrix provided and provides the explicit or implicit general coordinates for situating specific populations along the normality-abnormality continuum and subject norm (white, Anglo-Saxon, wealthy, protestant) of this matrix provides the coordinates for defining the normal population. Despite the matrix providing general coordinates, the specific historical positioning of certain populations is dynamic in the sense of the perceived danger they pose to the normal population, which is more historically static because it is foundational for the socio-economic and political arrangement (Lee, 2003). Although being more static, the imagining of the normal population can historically change by adding specific formerly excluded or hierarchically included (parts of) populations (e.g. the Irish) (T. Allen, 2012).

While the matrix provided the coordinates, the notions of illness, heredity and degeneration were explicitly or implicitly legitimising and rationalising the unprecedented aggressiveness of the *biopolitical* imagining and representing of the body politic and the policies based on this representation. These notions namely imagined the regulation, disciplining, exclusion and killing of the abnormal population as crucial for the survival, evolutionary development and material progress of the body politic, and imagined non-regulation as catastrophic as it precipitates the spread of illnesses and degeneration of the normal population (Mendieta, 2004). As this ultimately rested on the notion of unambiguous, natural and objective boundaries between the normal and the abnormal, it becomes clear why the always-already ambiguous, dynamic and un-natural boundaries between specific racial categories were even more rigorously re-inscribed and policed to prevent the 'un-natural' and 'impossible' mixing. The *biopolitical modus operandi* can be identified in all modern state policies.

The Trump phenomenon and the destabilisation of contemporary dominant political representation(s)

Donald Trump's success in the American presidential campaign and elections in 2016 is widely perceived as one of the central manifestations of the

crisis of the American republic's political representation. Trump was elected president of the USA by utilising explicitly racist, misogynistic and supposedly fascist discourse and populist discourses that targeted the ruling elites. He defeated other candidates with a discourse and proposed policies that *prima facie* represented a subversion of the shared ground of the dominant political representation of the American republic. His success came as a surprise because his discourse was perceived to be popular only on the fringes of the American polity (Gökariksel and Smith, 2016). Moreover, his success was represented as an anomaly in the American republic's historical development. Within this teleological framework, Barack Obama's election as the first Black president and the nomination and expected electoral victory of Hillary Clinton as the first women candidate of a major party were conceived as a normal development of the American republic and an expression and materialisation of its present all-inclusive nature (see Bonilla-Silva, 2010). Both Obama and Hilary Clinton can be considered as the personalisation of the culmination of the American republic's dominant representation that began to acquire its form after the late 1950s. This representation re-articulated the American republic as a specific middle-class society in which each member has the possibility to succeed and be upwardly mobile in the context of a fair competition. It was therefore a meritocratic society where one succeeds based on his/her individual merits, while also failing due to his individual abilities. Further, it was a competitive society where individuals prosper if they make the optimal individual choices. Consequently, socio-economic issues were recoded as problems of individuals' non-optimal choices. In addition, it was imagined as a pluralist democracy in which every socially relevant interest finds its expression and the competition between interests guarantees the best possible outputs not only in politics but also in the marketplace. The unfretted and unregulated market was imagined as the foundation of a prosperous economic model. Moreover, it was represented as a society that enables its citizens their self-fulfilment and self-realisation, thereby also achieving racial and gender equality. It was consequently imagined as a colour-blind society in which racism is limited to the fringes of the American polity where it would gradually fade away. All formerly excluded groups were supposedly equally included in the body politic. Finally, it was re-imagined as exceptional, an example to follow for the whole world, while being represented as a benevolent force for good whose interventions were in the best interests of populations of the world (see Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Harvey, 2005; Murji and Solomos, 2015).

Both central political alternatives of the dominant cleavage, namely the neoconservative (the Republican Party) and the liberal multicultural (the Democratic Party) subscribed to this representation. They both shared an unquestioned belief in the tenets of neoliberalism (competitive markets,

deregulation, privatisation, retrenchment of the state, entrepreneurial rational individual), while also sharing the *biopolitical* reimagining of the American body politic. Each reimagined the body politic along the lines of cultural difference as explicitly referring to race was established as politically incorrect and inadmissible (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). They both presupposed a specific national culture. The neoconservative imagining established, re-articulated and renewed cultural patterns and values that were historically tied to dominant traditions and social groups and rendered them neutral, natural and essential to the American nation as a whole. It re-established the notion of a permanent threat to the normal (part) of the American population by internal and external abnormal cultures and developed a novel discourse that hid the explicit historical legacies of discrimination, exploitation and exclusion no longer socio-politically permissible in the post-civil rights era, while retaining its referential power (Brown, 2006).

On the other hand, the liberal multiculturalist alternative imagined society as consisting of discrete, easily definable, delimited groups and presupposes the existence of clearly established borders among societies that are equated with a specific culture. Each national population is implicitly imagined as possessing a historically unchangeable cultural essence reproduced through time and space. Hence, the mixing of various cultural patterns and values and their various forms of assimilation and hybridity are seen as simultaneously impossible and unwanted (Lentin and Titley, 2011). The integration of excluded groups consequently proceeds via their normalisation on the basis of the subject norm (e.g. gay marriage), not its subversion and deconstruction. It positions American culture imagined as implicitly tolerant, individualistic, competitive, meritocratic, colour-blind and post-gender as a universal norm to follow and emulate and to spread to other geopolitical contexts (Duffield, 2007).

Up until the great economic crisis of 2008, this cleavage and its constitutive alternatives seemed unassailable, stable and holding legitimacy among the general American population. However, when combined with the specific federal policies that saved the banks and bankers as the central architects of the crisis and most brutally demonstrated to the majority of the American population that wealthy individuals and corporations control the democratic political process, the economic crisis destabilised the present dominant representations and order. Nevertheless, the economic crisis was just one of the central facilitators of the Trump phenomenon. It can also be considered as a culmination of trends that began with the genesis of the neoliberal restructuring of the economy, society and politics in the mid-1970s. These established the conditions for the ever growing wealth inequality between the rich and the rest of society, the worsening economic situation of most of the American population and individualising socio-political

issues of poverty, disease and exclusion. However, the Trump phenomenon is also a culmination of specific political trends such as the intensification of exclusionary, nativist and covertly racist discourses that, although having their roots in the Civil Rights era, became politically legitimate with the rise of the Tea Party movement (see Bonilla-Silva, 2010). Further, the critical interrogation of racist discourses employed during the Trump presidential campaign and policies as well as the critical interrogation of how it represents the American body politic demonstrates that the Trump phenomenon simultaneously represents a continuity and a crucial break from the hitherto predominant political representations. For instance, Trump became infamous for proposing to build a border wall with Mexico to prevent the “rapist, criminal Mexicans” from entering the USA. This ludicrous-sounding idea can be considered a caricature of the already massive border enforcement and incarceration regime in place along the US-Mexico border ever since the 9/11 attacks (see Dow, 2004). Along with the wall, Trump proclaimed he would create a massive deportation force able to deport 11 million illegal immigrants. This proposal is again a caricature of the already existing ‘deportation force’, namely the Homeland Security Investigations, which has more than 10,000 employees. Moreover, existing mainstream discourses targeting (illegal) immigrants are only cosmetically less extreme than Trump’s position (see Gerber, 2011). He also specifically targeted Muslims when proposing to ban all Muslims from entering the USA in order to prevent terrorist attacks, thereby conceiving all Muslims as potential terrorists. However, his discourses present a caricature of the existing anti-terror policies. These included military interventions in Muslim countries with indiscriminate bombings of populations, drone killings of presumed Muslim terrorists, torture of Muslim prisoners, imprisonment of Muslim fighters without a fair trial, through to ‘random’ security checks disproportionately targeting Muslims and general formal and informal surveillance of the Muslim part of the American population. In addition, the discourses utilised in the media, by politicians and present in the general population are only slightly less extreme, as demonstrated in the mainstream reporting and analyses of every terrorist attack since 9/11 perpetrated by Muslims (see Engle, 2004; Kundnani, 2014). Consequently, the crucial paradox regarding Trump’s explicit racist discourse and policies is that they only *prima facie* substantially differ from the existing governmental policies and practices and their implicit biopolitical representation of the American body politic. A body politic that is implicitly represented as a white homogenous population always-already under threat by internal and external threats ranging from the terrorism, drugs, illnesses, criminality and sexual deviation that inherently characterise specific internal and external foreign populations. This implicit representation rationalises and legitimises continuous brutal

and benign domestic and foreign interventions in order to preserve the normal population and regulate, discipline, exclude or ultimately dispose of abnormal (parts of) populations.

On the other hand, the discourses constituting, fuelling and driving the Trump phenomenon that were explicitly racist may be perceived as representing and contributing to the destabilisation and potential demise and replacement of the current predominant political representations of the American republic jointly inscribing a specific imagining of the American body politic as fundamentally meritocratic, post-racial, colour-blind and all-inclusive. These political representations of the American republic and its body politic encompassing both legitimate alternatives were prior to the Trump phenomenon carefully maintained by the dominant socio-economic, political, media and intellectual elites supported by the so-called professional classes. However, given the general destabilisation of the American socio-political arrangements the explicitly racist discourses Trump utilised resonated extremely well with substantial strata of the white American population whose living standards were being eroded and whose livelihood was being endangered. Consequently, they resonated well with the strata of American society disillusioned with the existing political representation and especially following the initial success and ultimate failure of the modern Tea Party movement that yearned for an alternative political representation of the body politic. The Trump phenomenon builds on the already growing backlash against the 'political correctness' of the dominant American political representation that, through the discourses of various American right-wing and far-right movements, was more and more established as one of the crucial barriers for re-invigorating the 'golden' American past. However, the Trump campaign not only built upon existing destabilisations and discourses but also managed in an unprecedented manner to politicise and mobilise the strata of the white population that was deemed politically apathetic. Therefore, it became a phenomenon of truly destabilising proportions as it organised, fuelled and was driven by a re-formed explicit, white-supremacist representation of the American body politic that at least since the success of the Civil Rights movement had been established as an illegitimate alternative that was supposedly eradicated with when system of formal racist segregation was destroyed. But the political representation of the Trump phenomenon should not be seen as a simple repetition of an older white supremacist representation. It is specifically altered and adapted to the specificity of the present context because it interlinks the legitimate anger of dispossessed white populations with the defence of a victimised whiteness that is supposedly under attack from multicultural, anti-white globalisation.

The Trump phenomenon may therefore be interpreted as a radical destabilisation of the dominant legitimate political representation(s). However,

this destabilisation should not be understood in the sense of a radical destabilisation of the supposedly fundamental anti-racist nature of the American republic and its contemporary political representation(s). It should instead be understood in view of the historically recurring crises of political representation that were fundamentally linked to specific general socio-political and economic crises that led to the destruction of the existing legitimate cleavage and precipitated a fresh reconfiguration of American racism. What needs to be stressed is that this destabilisation has not yet been resolved in the sense of consolidating the novel legitimate cleavage since a substantial share of the American population perceives the Trumpian political representation of the body politic as illegitimate and, as such, in need of destruction.

Conclusion

The article critically examined the notion that, due to the Trump phenomenon and its accompanying explicitly racist discourses, the American republic is facing a fundamental crisis of democratic political representation. It demonstrated the constitutive relationship between American democratic political representation and structural racism. In this context, it rethought the nature of democratic political representation and its interlinkage with structural racism. Democratic political representation was thus reimagined as a mechanism of the creation (delimitation of the demos), normalisation (naturalisation of the people) and socio-political control (masking the existing hierarchies and exploitations) of the American nation. It demonstrated that democratic political representation historically established a specific subject and population norm, which hierarchically included or excluded all other subjects and populations residing in the American republic. Moreover, it showed that each radical historical socio-political crisis produced a specific novel cleavage between two central legitimate alternatives of democratic political representation of the body politic, while destroying or radically altering the previously dominant political representations. Further, by critically interrogating central historical destabilisations and crises of the American democratic political representation since its constitution and up until the present crisis it showed that the underlying constitutive crisis of American democratic representation, namely the crisis of racial/racist exclusion and/or hierarchical inclusion, is perpetual.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, T. (2012): *The Invention of the White Race*. London: Verso.
Allen, T. B. (2010): *Tories: Fighting for the King in America's First Civil War*. New York: Harper.

- Anderson, B. (1991): *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London; New York: Verso.
- Ankersmit, F. R. (2002): *Political Representation*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.
- Balibar, E. and Wallerstein, I. M. (1991): *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*. London; New York: Verso.
- Baptist, E. E. (2014): *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*. New York: Basic Books.
- Berlin, I. (2010): *The Making of African America: The Four Great Migrations*. London: Penguin.
- Bibič, A. (1992): Politicna misel federalistov: posebej glede na Madisonov esej st. 10. *Teorija in praksa* 29 (5/6), 585–594.
- Blackburn, R. (1997): *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492–1800*. New York: Verso.
- Bohn, C. and Hahn, A. (2002): Patterns of Inclusion and Exclusion: Property, Nation and Religion. *Soziale Systeme* 8 (1), 8–26.
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2010): *Racism Without Racists: Color-blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* [new chapter on the Obama phenomenon]: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bracey, G. E. (2014): Toward a Critical Race Theory of State. *Critical Sociology*, 0896920513504600.
- Brown, W. (2006): *American Nightmare*. *Political Theory* 34 (6), 690–714.
- Brunsmann, D. and Silverman, D. J. (2014): *The American Revolution Reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Citrin, J., Reingold, B. and Green, D. P. (1990): American Identity and the Politics of Ethnic Change. *The Journal of Politics* 52 (4), 1124–1154.
- Crouch, C. (2004): *Post-democracy*. Malden: Polity.
- Crouch, C. (2012): *Democracy and Capitalism in the Wake of the Financial Crisis*. In *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology*, 478–489.
- Davis, D. B. (2014): *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation*. New York: Random House.
- Davis, R. L. (2003): *Creating Jim Crow: In-Depth Essay. The History of Jim Crow*. Accessible at <http://voyager.dvc.edu/~mpowell/afam/creating2.pdf> (12. 10. 2016).
- Doane, A. W. and Bonilla-Silva, E. (2013): *White Out: The Continuing Significance of Racism*. New York: Routledge.
- Dormal, M. (2012): Political Representation and Imagined Community: The Case of Luxembourg. *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 12 (3), 498–516.
- Dow, M. (2004): *American Gulag: Inside U.S. Immigration Prisons*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Duffield, M. R. (2007): *Development, Security and Unending War: Governing the World of Peoples*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Engle, K. (2004): Constructing Good Aliens and Good Citizens: Legitimizing the War on Terror(ism). *University of Colorado Law Review* 75, 59–114.
- Feagin, J. R. (2001): *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations*. New York: Routledge.

- Feagin, J. R. (2010): *The White Racial Frame Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter-Framing*. New York: Routledge.
- Feagin, J. R. (2012): *White Party, White Government: Race, Class, and U.S. Politics*. New York: Routledge.
- Foner, E. (1974): *The Causes of the American Civil War: Recent Interpretations and New Directions*. *Civil War History*, 20 (3), 197–214.
- Foner, E. (1988): *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877*. The New American Nation Series (Vol. 9): New York: Harper & Row.
- Foucault, M. (1975–76/2003b): *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at The College de France 1975–76*. London: Penguin.
- Gellner, E. (2006): *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Gerber, D. A. (2011): *American Immigration: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gilens, M. and Page, B. I. (2014): *Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens*. *Perspectives on Politics* 12 (3), 564–581.
- Glenn, E. N. (2002): *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Gökarıksel, B. and Smith, S. (2016): “Making America Great Again”? The Fascist Body Politics of Donald Trump. *Political Geography*, xxx, 1–3.
- Goldberg, D. T. (2002): *The Racial State*. Malden: Blackwell Publishers.
- Goldfield, D. (2011): *America Aflame: How the Civil War Created a Nation*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Goodheart, A. (2011): *1861: The Civil War Awakening*. New York: Random House LLC.
- Greenfeld, L. (1992): *Nationalism: Five Roads to modernity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Grinde, D. A. and B. E. Johansen (1991): *Exemplar of Liberty : Native America and the Evolution of Democracy*. Los Angeles: American Indian Studies Center, University of California.
- Guillaumin, C. (1995): *Racism, Sexism, Power, and Ideology*. London: Routledge.
- Harvey, D. (2005): *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hooks, B. (2000): *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. London: Pluto Press.
- Horsman, R. (1981): *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Jordan, W. D. (1968): *White Over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550–1812*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Kundnani, A. (2014): *The Muslims are Coming! Islamophobia, Extremism, and the Domestic War on Terror*. London: Verso.
- Lee, E. (2003): *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882–1943*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Lentin, A. and Titley, G. (2011): *The Crises of Multiculturalism Racism in a Neoliberal Age*. New York: Zed Books.
- Lombardo, E. and Meier, P. (2014): *The Symbolic Representation of Gender: A Discursive Approach*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.

- Marx, A. W. (2003): *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
- McWhorter, L. (2009): *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America: A Genealogy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Mendieta, E. (2004): *Plantations, Ghettos, Prisons: US Racial Geographies*. *Philosophy & Geography*, 7 (1), 43–59.
- Middlekauff, R. and Woodward, C. V. (2005): *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763–1789*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Murji, K. and Solomos, J. (2015): *Theories of Race and Ethnicity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nadesan, M. H. (2008): *Governmentality, Biopower, and Everyday Life*. New York: Routledge.
- Pitkin, H. F. (1967): *The Concept of Representation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Smith, R. M. (1988): The “American Creed” and American Identity: The Limits of Liberal Citizenship in the United States. *The Western Political Quarterly* 41 (2), 225–251.
- Urbinati, N. (2006): *Representative Democracy: Principles and Genealogy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.