Racism and Racially Motivated Attacks
Racism is an ideology that defines a hierarchy of "races," posits the inherent superiority of some groups over others, and justifies actions that benefit "advanced" races and disadvantages "backward" ones. Race is a socially constructed category used to classify individuals by characteristics deemed immutable, which over time have included elements such as lineage, skin color, and even customs. Racially motivated attacks are thus a violent manifestation of racism in which perpetrators act out of racial animus to physically harm their victims.

History and Varieties of Racism
Some observers trace the roots of racism back to ancient Greece, citing the term xenophobia and its connotations of hatred of the other. Others point to early Christian persecution of Jews as evidence that racism has existed for thousands of years. Racism is more commonly defined, however, as an ideology that classifies groups as permanently inferior because of unchangeable characteristics. Because ancient Greeks and early Christians did not view their rivals as hereditarily evil and impossible to assimilate or convert, many specialists do not apply the term "racism" to these cases.

A belief in immutable differences between groups and a fixed hierarchy among them first clearly manifested itself in the middle centuries of the second millennium C.E. One school of thought dates the birth of modern racism to approximately the fifteenth century, by which time many Christians had come to portray Jews not as errant souls to be converted, but as inherently evil people who rejected Christ and were responsible for his crucifixion. Theorists of polygenesis argued that Jews and Christians were descended from different origins; other authors went further still, associating Jews with the devil or with witchcraft. These writings both reflected and entrenched beliefs about the inherent inferiority of Jews, serving to excuse acts of violence against them.

Over the course of the next few centuries, racism manifested itself in several ways. Colonization encouraged white Europeans to view nonwhites as deserving of conquest and subjugation. One interpretation of the Bible focused on the curse of Ham to justify enslaving blacks. With the Reforma-
tion and the Enlightenment, racism's religious bases were supplemented by anthropological, Social Darwinist, and scientific arguments. These strands of thinking emphasized divisions of mankind into subspecies whose biological differences could be measured and whose relative success could be gauged. Although most writers in the seventeenth through twentieth centuries categorized races in biological terms—the tripartite division between Mongoloid, Caucasoid, and Negroid races was common, though not universally accepted—references to national markers such as "the Irish race" were also frequently employed around the turn of the twentieth century.

As an organizing ideology, racism was deeply entrenched in countries such as the United States and South Africa from their earliest days. In Europe, racism reached its most destructive crescendo in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. Since that time, it has been largely discredited as an institutionalized political philosophy. Moreover, with the advent of the study of genetics in the twentieth century, the "scientific" bases for the belief in races were undermined; biologists found no distinct boundaries between humans previously defined as races, and in fact discovered much more internal genetic variation within so-called races than between them.

Of course, racism has not disappeared since the end of World War II. In its traditional form, it remained government policy in many southern U.S. states through the 1960s, in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) until 1979, and in South Africa until 1994. As official racism has waned in recent decades,
specialists have developed terms to describe the varieties of racism they argue are still prevalent around the world. "Institutional racism" refers to societal rules that systematically favor one "race" over another without requiring any explicitly racist acts on behalf of individuals. "Symbolic racism" describes whites’ outright denial of the ongoing disadvantages for minorities in the United States and their opposition to government policies in favor of minorities (such as affirmative action). "Cultural racism" (or "new racism") is a term used to designate racist rhetoric and actions that masquerade as a "natural" preference for one’s own way of life over cultural mixing.

Causes of Racism and Racially Motivated Attacks
Experts have long and fiercely debated the causes of racism and racially motivated attacks. Discussion has perhaps been heated because one’s conclusion has direct implications for whether and how racism can be minimized. Some observers view racism as springing from deep-seated and unchangeable biological or psychological needs. From these perspectives, racism is part and parcel of human nature. These authors typically argue that humans are programmed to attempt to amass resources in order to ensure physical survival, or to fight for genetic supremacy for our offspring, or to strive for self-esteem by regarding our in-group as inherently superior to all other groups. If this view is correct, it follows that eliminating racism is impossible and that a certain number of racially motivated attacks may be expected.

Other analysts see racism not as an intrinsic element of human nature, but rather as a product of structural and societal forces. A weak economy, the presence of significant numbers of disaffected youth, and competition with ethnoracial "others" for jobs, housing, and marriage partners are seen as a powerful cocktail of factors that generate racism and racially motivated attacks. Authors arguing from a more Marxist point of view stress the tendency of some groups to exploit others for their economic interests, isolating racially different workers in order to pay them lower wages. In either case, this type of analysis sees racism as deeply entrenched because its causes are difficult to manipulate; nevertheless, racism is not necessarily permanent, nor is it impossible to combat.

Yet another perspective emphasizes the idea of racism as a cause in and of itself. This line of thinking suggests that racism and racially motivated attacks are the products of lingering ideologies that pit groups against one another along racial lines, as opposed to structural variables that may have very little to do with race. Advocates who base their recommendations on this position frequently argue that education is a valuable tool for overcoming racism in the long run, since schools can be most effective at socializing children who grow up in racist households and who are most likely to perpetuate and to act on racist ideas. Although racism may not be easy to dispatch, this perspective focuses on our ability to tackle the problem and gives hope that it can be effectively controlled with a concerted effort.

Measuring Racially Motivated Attacks
As this last point suggests, politics and government policy can serve to encourage racism or to minimize it. The state generates an official definition of racism and enumerates racially motivated attacks. One of the central problems faced by policy makers, antiracist advocates, and researchers is the absence of well-established comparative data on racially motivated attacks. Countries have categorized these kinds of racist incidents in a wide variety of ways; they have applied inconsistent definitions over time; and their methods of collecting statistics have not always been thorough. Without an accurate count of racially motivated attacks and a basis for cross-national comparison, it is very difficult to understand
how government policies affect incidents and to arrive at conclusions about effective policy solutions.

For example, since 1990 the United States has collected data on racial “hate crimes,” a category that includes violence directed against both persons and property. The number of racially motivated hate crimes has varied between approximately 3,500 and 5,400 per year over the past decade. In Great Britain, data have been collected since the mid-1980s on “racist incidents,” a broader category that includes not only attacks, but also harassment and other forms of racism. The numbers of recorded racist incidents rose every year between 1984 and 1999, starting at 2,844 and ending at 47,814. The French government collects statistics on “racist and xenophobic actions,” which, according to official sources, have ranged between 30 and 392 over the past twenty years, depending on who has counted them and what has been included in the category. German data has been categorized according to “violent acts committed by right-wing extremists” and “right-wing, xenophobic and anti-Semitic acts carried out,” generating numbers between 173 and 13,753 incidents per year between 1989 and 2001.

The divergence in national definitions and the vast range of annual incidents reported both within and across countries reveal the inconsistent information available and raise questions about the accuracy of the data collected. Oftentimes the fluctuation in yearly tallies can be explained by new methods of categorizing incidents or by variation in the diligence with which racism is recorded. These factors make it virtually impossible to draw firm conclusions about exact numbers of racially motivated attacks, about trends across time, or about the effectiveness of government actions to combat racially motivated attacks. They do suggest, at a minimum, that racism remains a pressing issue in each country.

**Official Responses in the United States**

Racially motivated attacks have a long history in the United States, with lynchings being one notorious example of actions designed to terrorize blacks. Civil rights laws passed in the 1960s provided some protections against racial violence, yet it was only in the 1980s and 1990s that the push for hate-crimes legislation took off, and with it a sustained campaign to recognize and to punish racially motivated attacks. The
generic term “hate crime” in U.S. parlance is not synonymous with a racially motivated attack, since the term encompasses violence perpetrated not only against persons but also against property, and it also can include actions motivated by hatred against groups defined by gender, sexual orientation, disability, and other markers. Moreover, as of the mid-1990s, “hate” is not technically required as an element of a hate crime; courts have ruled that actions that take place merely “because of” race, religion, ethnicity, and the like can also be subject to punishment. This means that prosecutors in many jurisdictions are required only to demonstrate bias, not the additional passion implied by “hate.”

The first U.S. entities to institute hate-crimes legislation were the states, which have sponsored the most far-reaching statutes in the country. Increasing numbers of states passed laws over the course of the 1980s and 1990s. Legislation enacted in the past ten years has typically included protections against more types of hate crimes and has required the less stringent test of bias motivation. The federal government turned its attention to hate crimes in the 1990s but thus far has passed only limited legislation, such as laws that require collection of hate-crimes statistics and that provide enhanced sentences for a small number of federal crimes. As a result of hate-crimes provisions enacted at all levels of government in the United States, it is now common for increased penalties to apply in cases of racially motivated violence. Laws are inconsistent by region, but they are widespread. The effectiveness of the laws is frequently debated and has been called into question by some law enforcement officials and by some prosecutors. Recent studies indicate, however, that hate-crimes laws have generated relatively normal conviction rates, suggesting that they are viable legal tools.

**Official Responses in Europe**

All in all, racism and racially motivated attacks have been less in the public consciousness in Europe than in the United States over the past twenty years. Although a number of European states publicly proclaimed their opposition to racism in the aftermath of the Holocaust, it was not until the 1960s or later that the majority of countries enacted specific targeted antiracist laws. These followed the waves of non-European migrants that began arriving on the continent during the post–World War II years of strong economic growth. Most countries now have at least some provisions against racism, often aimed at punishing racial discrimination and incitement to racial hatred.

In recent years, a handful of countries have begun to create measures to confront racially motivated attacks. British law has gone the furthest, by establishing a class of racially motivated crimes and by enabling judges to give increased sentences to perpetrators of racist infractions. A few other countries also have penalty-enhancement provisions available. Many European states do not have specific statutes singling out racially motivated attacks for special consideration, as they judge existing laws sufficient for dealing with crimes such as assault or murder, regardless of the motive. As most European laws to combat racial attacks have not been in place for lengthy periods of time, assessing their enforcement and effectiveness is a task that remains to be undertaken.

**International Responses**

International organizations began responding to issues of racism immediately after World War II. By the late 1940s, United Nations bodies regularly presented reports on race, racism, and discrimination, and in 1958 the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted its Discrimination Convention, to which over 100 states eventually adhered. In 1965, the UN adopted its own International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), part of which enjoins states to outlaw acts of violence against people defined by race, color, or ethnic origin. Although the UN and ILO conventions have spurred numerous countries to report on their efforts to curb racism and racial attacks, it is likely that their overall effect on national laws and policies has been relatively insignificant.

Since the mid-1980s, the European Union has played a growing role in the field of antiracism, beginning with a series of reports, and graduating in the late 1990s to concrete actions. The year 1997 saw approval of a provision in the Treaty of Amsterdam that granted unambiguous power to the Union to act on issues of racial discrimination. It was also the officially designated European Year Against Racism, and the year the European Union Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia was founded in Vienna. Because the EU has more power than the UN, its recent directives on racial discrimination are likely to have a greater effect on its member states, and they have already helped to shape new laws in some countries. Although efforts to track and to combat racism and racially motivated attacks are at an early stage in the European Union, there is reason to believe that these efforts may have some concrete and positive effects in this region.

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*See also:* Assimilation/Integration; Colonial Immigration; Crime and Migration; Ethnic Cleansing; Eugenics; European Union; Genocide; International Labour Organization; Multiculturalism; U.S. Multiculturalism; U.S. Nativism

*References and further reading:*


Readmission Agreements
A readmission agreement regulates the return and readmission of persons between two or more states in a treaty of international law. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the deregulation of emigration, destination states have sought to enhance the effectiveness of their return policies. As a consequence, a cobweb of bilateral and multilateral readmission agreements has emerged, with European states being the main driving force. Readmission agreements should be seen as an integral part of emerging regional and intercontinental regimes to control and discourage irregular migration. A large number of contemporary readmission agreements open up for the transfer of asylum seekers to third countries, however, often without offering sufficient safeguards for the protection of readmitted individuals. The negotiation of readmission agreements must be seen as part of the North-South conflict on migration, with readmission being bartered against trade benefits, development assistance, or other forms of side payments.

Legal Base in International Law
As a corollary of sovereignty, states possess a qualified right under international law to expel aliens from their territory. In order for this right to become effective, another state has to receive the person expelled. Readmission agreements provide a regulation for the implementation of such transfers. The special case of extradition is usually not regulated in readmission agreements.

In general terms, two types of readmission agreements exist. The first type exclusively regulates the readmission of citizens by their country of origin. For this group, a readmission obligation already exists under customary international law, which is merely reaffirmed in the agreement, and complemented with procedures for implementation. The second type focuses on the return and readmission of noncitizens to transit countries and is typically concluded among neighboring states. In contrast to the first type, such agreements create an obligation to readmit. In addition, they stipulate procedures for implementation. The effectiveness of domestic norms referring asylum seekers to "safe third countries" relies critically on the existence of this type of readmission agreement, which provides for a shifting of migration and protection burdens to transit countries.

Readmission of Citizens
As early as the nineteenth century, obligations to readmit citizens were inserted in treaties regulating the right of citizens to establish themselves in the territory of other states. The linkage between enabling entry for foreigners and facilitating their removal is still relevant in contemporary practices. Hence, the contractual specification of readmission obligations may indirectly serve the interest of countries of origin as well; their citizens may enjoy more favorable admission privileges than they would have had in the absence of an agreement.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Western European states concluded a number of bilateral agreements on the transfer of persons at their common borders, which typically contained obligations to readmit citizens. The fall of the Berlin Wall set off a new wave of negotiations, extending into Central and Eastern Europe. Simultaneously, Western European states replaced older bilateral agreements amongst themselves with new ones, more adapted to the migration realities of the 1990s.

The standard solution chosen in contemporary European agreements is to prescribe a duty to readmit citizens who do not meet or no longer fulfill the conditions for entry into or residence in the territory of the requesting contracting party (see, for example, the 1994 Readmission Agreement between Switzerland and Bulgaria). States oblige themselves to readmit their citizens "without formalities," which allows border authorities to handle transfers without the involvement of diplomatic channels (Hailbronner 1997, 9). In some instances, states have listed documents to be used in proving or corroborating citizenship in separate protocols attached to readmission agreements. In a number of cases, readmission obligations have been extended to cover permanent residents as well (see, for example, the 1992 Agreement between Denmark and the Republic of Lithuania on the Abolition of Visas, obliging Lithuania to take back permanent residents without formalities). To allow for the correction of erroneous readmissions, many agreements feature a clause obliging the requesting state to take back persons who turned out not to be citizens of the requested state after transfer.

States have also sought to conclude agreements with the primary goal to facilitate extraordinary and large-scale return movements. Often, such agreements provide for a phased repatriation so as not to overburden countries of origin (see the 1995 readmission agreement between Germany and Vietnam, providing for the phased readmission of Vietnamese citizens no longer entitled to reside in Germany after reunification; the 1997 readmission agreement between Germany and Bosnia for the return of Bosnians displaced by the war; and the 2002 Memorandum of Understanding between the United Kingdom, Afghanistan, and