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Chapter 5:

Revising Humanitarianism and Solidarity: Migration management and Peripheral Europeanism in the UK, Poland, and Hungary

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5.1 Introduction

The so-called “refugee crisis” of 2015 served to open European integration to new forms of contestation. While Brexit is the best publicised case, “populist” challenges to a perceived pro-Brussels liberal orthodoxy have dominated the last political decade. In the scholarly jargon, an earlier phase of “permissive consensus” gave way to a “constraining dissensus”, as leaders were forced to address public grievances towards the EU (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). The UK, Poland and Hungary, the cases considered here, belong to the extreme end of that spectrum: in all three, leaders with anti-establishment mandates have assumed control of government, in part by exploiting discontent at EU migration policy. All rejected the dominant EU narratives of continental “solidarity”, “burden sharing” and “humanitarianism” in favour of their own revisionist interpretations. While the UK chose the strategy of “exit”, other critical governments pursued the strategy of “voice” (Hirschman, 1970), gaining institutional influence by speaking to a range of grievances – over culture, democracy, and the economic crisis – across the continent with a conservative, civilisational idea of European identity. Equally, as this book has demonstrated, the idea of a European “way of life” in need of “defence” has also entered the ideologies at the heart of the EU’s cosmopolitan

institutions, including the European Commission. Discourses once associated with avowed Eurosceptics are now central to the imagination of the European project. The periphery of the EU has found mechanisms to exploit the institution's democratic deficit and reshape its legitimising ideas.

This chapter thus compares how governments in the UK, Hungary and Poland have narrated the challenges of European borders and international obligations. Reflecting the book's overarching project, we sought to break down narrow, stereotypical contrasts between liberal and conservative visions of Europe, and to examine the legitimisation process in practice. Our primary aim was to understand how nations that reject the established European narrative of international protection have framed their obligations to alleviate the suffering of war and conflicts. This has been broken into three conceptual areas for comparative purposes: humanitarianism, solidarity and sovereignty. We explore the extent to which their positions represent a breach with European norms and the uses of these ideological conflicts for various modes of order. A key finding is that, even in more extreme cases like Hungary, there is no direct rejection of humanitarianism as a guiding approach. Instead, the governing parties of Hungary, Poland and the United Kingdom have taken a revisionist approach to humanitarian questions. Their sense of humanitarian obligations, moreover, has been bound up with national perceptions of the state's alignment in world politics. A further finding is that the apparent breach between European and nation-sovereign approaches risks exaggeration. Indeed, there is considerable evidence that narratives of Europeanness developing on the liminal periphery have been reshaping core notions of European identity embodied in the Commission.

5.2 Humanitarianism, Solidarity and Sovereignty

The concepts of humanitarianism, solidarity and sovereignty developed in our three cases are often defined against a perceived European orthodoxy. However, the boundaries of contestation are often vague, because the core concepts have undergone numerous rounds of evolution in response to competing pressures. In general, international humanitarian law (IHL) is a set of rules seeking to limit the effects of armed conflict (Hans, 2019). Asylum policy, in that context, is just one type of humanitarian claim, and while refugee protection is an acknowledged part of the IHL package, most explicit discussions of European humanitarianism centre on conflict reduction, relief work and the provision of external aid. Given emerging debates, it is crucial to consider that these facets are not mechanically separated. Indeed, the observable trend of European policy, particularly in the cases discussed here, is towards externalising obligations, and towards offshoring refugee management, based on bilateral treaties with third countries (e.g. Akkerman, 2018; Betts and Milner, 2007; Mc Namara, 2013). These have tended to form part of a pragmatic migration management programme, largely in response to the growing volume of asylum claims. Such efforts have been pursued most vigorously by the most avowedly pro-migration of European leaders, Angela Merkel (Streeck, 2016). This expanded idea of Europe's humanitarian obligation thus transcends particular "populist" government or challenger states.

This evolution is not altogether new. While all modern humanitarian ideology has foundations in the Geneva Conventions and their additional protocols, they have been continuously reinterpreted to reflect changing historical circumstances. The letter of the Convention inheritance relates to the obligations of sovereign states to individual victims of persecution. Such terms were established with European and particularly Soviet dissidents in mind (e.g. Whitaker, 1998). Since then, three shifts have transformed humanitarian sentiments towards asylum seekers. Firstly, a shift from persecution, as traditionally defined, to forced migration in the wake of civil wars and other disasters, which has the consequence

of managing larger movements of people as opposed to individual political dissidents. Secondly, relatedly, a geographical shift towards the global south, serving to attach new stigma to the asylum system, particularly though not exclusively where this has involved migration from Muslim majority nations. Lastly, the development of the European Single Market, with its elimination of internal borders tending to shift the problem of migration management to the transnational level.

Recent contestation reflects the interaction of these three shifts. The EU's objective of open markets, porous internal borders and subsequently a unified "area of freedom, security and justice", in the Lisbon Treaty's terms, came up against the problem of uneven interpretations of humanitarian obligations. This caused friction as states sought to limit certain types of migration, particularly from the global south. There were complaints of "asylum shopping", with claimants supposedly seeking to exploit unevenness of conditions, or, having faced rejection, moving to other countries. Conversely, the EU insisted that "asylum must not be a lottery" and that "Member States have a shared responsibility to welcome asylum seekers in a dignified manner, ensuring they are treated fairly and that their case is examined to uniform standards" (European Commission, 2014). These were the rationales behind moves towards a Common European Asylum System (CEAS). However, despite numerous rounds of harmonisation protocols defining obligations with regard to non-refoulement, asylum procedures, reception conditions, and qualification standards, asylum remains under the control of member states, and unevenness embedded in the system. A single area of free movement has not been accompanied by anything approaching a single area of law.

Solidarity has a specific meaning defined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (CFR), where it is listed as a "universal value". However, that definition refers specifically to employment rights. In discussions of asylum, "solidarity" has a separate meaning, referring not to a relationship of right between inhabitants and state power, but

rather to the quantitative distribution of international protection obligations between states. A recent press release thus refers to “the concerns of countries at the EU's external borders, which worry that migratory pressures will exceed their capacities and which need solidarity from others” and calls for “fair sharing of responsibility and solidarity...for rebuilding trust between Member States and confidence in the capacity of the European Union to manage migration” (European Commission, 2020). As Mitsilegas observes, this conception of solidarity involves a focus on the impact of migration flows on the state, rather than on the asylum seeker, and that they use the term “burden” to describe increased pressures upon the state- with asylum seekers thus viewed implicitly as a burden to national systems. Solidarity here thus takes the form of what has been deemed and analysed as ‘burden sharing’...and in particular from a legal perspective the sharing of the responsibility for increased flows of asylum seekers. As with the logic of abuse underpinning the Dublin system, the logic of burden sharing in effect securitises asylum flows by viewing asylum seekers and asylum seeking in a negative light (Mitsilegas, 2014).

This idea of “solidarity” has obvious overlaps with the broader shift in rethinking humanitarian obligations around asylum. There has been a discernible move from a qualitative relationship between individuals and the state (protection from persecution) towards a quantitative problem of distributing obligations (or “solidarity”) (Mitsilegas, 2014). This has been inflamed partly because the European system, particularly the Dublin Regulation, have served to concentrate asylum applications in particular border states. The leaders of the EU’s dominant state, Germany, have openly admitted that the system, in Merkel’s terms, “doesn’t work”; Frank-Walter Steinmeier, then German foreign minister, called for reform of Dublin to ensure “fair distribution” of refugees in Europe (Garcés-Mascareñas, 2015). Conversely, it should be admitted that the countries with the greatest grievances towards migration are not always those facing the greatest “burdens”. Indeed, the

three states considered in this paper, who are among the few to elect actively Eurosceptic governments, exemplify that contradiction.

A final common theme is “sovereignty”, a concept that plays a central role in the idea of Europe as ontologically liberal. Theoretical debate about the EU order usually rests on this concept. As Bickerton observes, “Theorists of integration are divided between those who see sovereignty retained at the national level, only delegated in specific areas to the EU, and those who see in the EU the emergence of a new, pan-European sovereign power” (Bickerton, 2012; cf Bellamy and Castiglione, 1997). The European Union appeals to the principle of “pooled sovereignty”, a concept which has defined theoretical debate about the EU’s purpose. Equally, critical governments have promised to “restore sovereignty” from the European level, a notion central not just to outright Euro-rejectionists such as the Brexit movement, but also to reformist ideas of a “Europe of nations”.

Most ideological claims to sovereignty are not followed with consistency. Thus, all three states considered in this paper make claims to defend national sovereignty. Equally, all have participated in military interventions (in some cases, on “humanitarian” grounds) that violate the sovereignty of other nations, and, indeed, often present such adventures as alternatives to participating in European humanitarian schemes (Cunliffe, 2020). Indeed, these were precisely the grounds on which former US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld defined the contrast between “Old” and “New” Europe (Anderson, 2009; Lansford, 2017; Levy et al., 2005). Hungarian officials thus justified sending further forces to Iraq, “because the terrorist organization is one of the causes of migration pressure on Europe, and because the Islamic State is striving to destroy Christian communities in other parts of the world”. In other words, as discussed elsewhere in this book, they define their humanitarian obligations specifically towards Christians, and actualise those obligations through sending armed forces to a country that only threatens Hungarian sovereignty in the loosest possible sense of the word. This

again highlights the complexity and inconsistency of the interaction between humanitarian obligations and claims to sovereignty.

5.3 The UK

The United Kingdom's exit from the European Union risks overshadowing its longstanding revisionist approach to humanitarianism. However, the tensions that led to "Brexit" have deep historical roots. Britain's shifting approaches to asylum, migration and Europe reflects its complicated efforts to adjust to a post-colonial role. The narrative of refuge initially served to rationalise liberal-democratic and Cold War opposition to totalitarian regimes, but since the 1990s, in a post-Cold War context, the new asylum seekers from the global south have increasingly been framed as a problem requiring containment (Chimni, 1998; Erel et al., 2016). Relationships with the European project have a complex interaction with Britain's image of itself, which cannot always be reduced to introspective nationalism. While British leaders, most notably Thatcher, framed Brussels prerogatives as a threat to British sovereignty, it was often insofar as the UK saw the EU as too narrow, constraining wider global ambitions. Documents seen as key "Brexit" manifestos, such as *Britannia Unchained*, are likewise invested in defining a wider world role, rather than retreating into a defensive national unit (Kwarteng et al., 2012; Lakin, 2014). Britain's state managers and political managers, in other words, have perceived themselves as belonging to a wider cosmopolitan sphere that transcends Europe, which is further complicated by Commonwealth ties and an American-led military policy. Discourses of humanitarianism are thus shaped by Britain's world role, and the state has repeatedly tried to define its commitments in terms that transcend asylum, to encompass a wider interventionist military and diplomatic policy. Recent UK approaches to asylum owe much to the long period of centre-left dominance under New Labour (Mulvey, 2011, 2010). This established a compound of liberalism and

authoritarianism that has continued to prevail under Conservative governments. On the one hand, New Labour established the Human Rights Act, bringing a range of potential legal protections and recourse to European Court of Justice. This has been a regular point of contention with subsequent Conservative governments, which have often vowed to replace the Act. On the other hand, this emerged alongside an increasingly punitive approach to asylum management, rooted in discourses of the “bogus asylum seeker”, which coalesced, crucially, with a relatively permissive approach to European economic migration. The latter type of migration was rationalised on neoliberal grounds as enhancing Britain’s economic competitiveness by achieving a competitive labour market and providing firms with access to a pool of highly skilled workers. By contrast, asylum seekers were firmly denied access to the labour market. The mark of differentiation, as researchers have long observed, was the likely racial and cultural background of asylum applicants. The UK here reflected a wider shift in the imagination of asylum seekers, from being heroic victims of political persecution, to a stigmatised mass of migrants from the global south. Equally, New Labour built its legitimisation on “War on Terror” security policies that have been linked to the spread of Islamophobic rhetoric (Kundnani, 2014; Moosavi, 2015). Rhetoric conflicts over asylum also merged into terror-related security discourse.

Subsequently, a succession of Conservative governments has managed the fallout from the Arab Spring and in particular the Syrian Civil War, which again problematised the UK’s relations with Muslim-majority nations. No UK government has presented a theoretical objection to humanitarianism (although “human rights” have been criticised in the particular context of the Human Rights Act), and there has been an emphasis on the asylum system as a distinctive “British tradition”: “We are granting asylum to those who need it, consistent with this country’s proud tradition of giving help to those who need it most” (May, 2014). After an initially deterrence-focused response, David Cameron’s government was forced to issue

statements of humanitarian concern: Cameron even argued that “no country has done more than Britain when it comes to help for Syrian refugees” (Prime Minister’s Office, 2016).

Established efforts were made to frame a balance between humanitarian obligation, on one side, and “burdens” (including security burdens) on the other:

Britain will always be open to those who are seeking asylum from persecution. That says something very important about the kind of country we are and we should be proud of that too. But excessive immigration brings pressures, real pressures on our communities up and down the country. Pressures on schools, housing and healthcare and social pressures too (Cameron, 2013).

Nonetheless, the above was founded on a revisionist take on humanitarian purpose.

Conservative leaders emphasised that humanitarian aid was best delivered externally, outside of UK borders, often in third countries such as Lebanon. Although the UK was taking a comparatively low amount of asylum seekers, leaders emphasised that the country was providing external humanitarian aid, which was preferable on humanitarian grounds, as it would prevent Syrians fleeing the conflict from undertaking “perilous journeys” to reach European countries. A discourse was thus established in which Britain was combining deterrence against those seeking to journey to Europe, and nonetheless establishing itself as the “most humanitarian” response. In this sense, the aim was to break the link between offering asylum and humanitarianism.

Following internal criticism of the UK response, the government established resettlement schemes targeting the “most vulnerable” refugees – notably the VPRS – as alternatives to the standard asylum system. Resettlement is represented as a distinctive UK approach, and an alternative to relocation within Europe or to admitting greater numbers of applicants into UK borders: “We will not be taking more refugees – we have our programme of resettling people direct from the refugee camps and that stays the same” (Cameron, 2016). In the UK

Government's discourse, their system of resettlement is simultaneously a mechanism of "controlled immigration" and, by their own estimation, a more altruistic approach than comparable European schemes, allowing political leaders to bridge conflicting narratives of humanitarianism and border control. However, a new order of stigma was attached to the spontaneously arriving asylum seekers, as opposed to the legitimate, hand-selected recipients of the resettlement programme. These claims rest on the criterion of "vulnerability", which serves as a critical stance on the established international system for managing refugees. They claim that the existing global asylum "system is geared towards helping those most able to access it, and sometimes manipulate it, for their own ends – those who are young enough, fit enough, and have the resources to get to Britain" and as a result, "support is too often denied to the most vulnerable, and those most in need of our help" (May, 2015). The category of the deserving, hand-selected refugee is, in most cases, built on a contrast with the undeserving, spontaneously arriving asylum seeker.

The aim, as above, was to balance apparent humanitarian commitments with an immigration control agenda. This was sometimes framed in conflict with European institutions, although largely insofar as the latter were attempting to achieve similar ends. On the one hand, the UK must present itself as unusually virtuous, particularly relative to the EU. On the other hand, controlling migration has been central to the legitimisation strategies of both governing parties, and both parties have indulged the idea (not supported by statistics) of a country "overburdened", having taken on an unfair load relative to others. Equally, the above narratives show that humanitarian moralism and anti-migration deterrence measures can be reframed as compatible objectives.

Thus, the UK had developed a revisionist take on humanitarianism long before Brexit. It officially rejected official EU schemes for "solidarity" based on quotas for Syrian refugees, and instead established an autonomous system, which it rationalised as representing higher

humanitarian virtue. The Brexit campaign nonetheless served to heighten themes related to migration management. Themes of sovereignty converged around the slogan of “take back control”, and while this had broader meanings, its link to immigration and the asylum system was often explicit. Nigel Farage’s unofficial Leave campaign thus released a billboard poster headlined “Breaking Point” picturing a queue of non-white migrants crossing the Croatia-Slovenia border, with a subtitle reading: “We must break free of the EU and take back control”. While the official Leave campaign distanced itself from the poster, many critics link Brexit’s core themes of sovereignty to growing anti-migrant sentiment.

Brexit has meant the UK’s withdrawal from core elements of the European asylum system, such as Eurodac, Dublin and the various CEAS directives. However, it remains bound by a range of other international agreements, and the UK Government insists that leaving EU systems will not lessen commitments to international protection:

The UK already has high standards in how we operate our asylum system and we will continue to be a world leader in this area. The UK will of course continue to be subject to the ECHR (quoted in Gower, 2020).

It is also crucial to remember that the UK debate on migration control was not monopolised by Leave supporters. David Cameron’s initial referendum position was built around “reforms” to Europe that partly centred on migration. The ideological leader of the Remain and “People’s Vote” movements likewise sought to articulate EU membership with a harder position on external borders, specifically geared to reducing non-white, non-Christian migration. This was Tony Blair’s offer to voters discontented with migration and was fully consistent with the New Labour position outlined and above. It equally has overlaps with the views below: Hungarian and Polish leaders support internal but oppose external EU migration. In terms of actual political forces, the Brexit debate should thus be regarded less as a polarised debate between competing value systems, and more as a point of convergence,

based on a clash of competing visions of European border control. While the Brexiteers sought to control external migration unilaterally, through restoring powers to the UK parliament, their opponents sought a multilateral agreement for similar purposes.

5.4 Poland

Poland's relationship to Europe is complicated by its emergence from the Communist past, which on the one hand leaves a legacy of national resistance to external domination, and on the other hand has inspired a desire for "catch up" with Western Europe. Since accession to the EU in 2004, parties in opposition and government have become increasingly embroiled in European politics, especially during successive EU crises. Accession coincided with but also helped precipitate transformations in party-political conflict, with the dominant axis shifting from left-versus-right to liberalism-versus-social conservatism. Contestation over "European" identity has been central to the resulting differentiation of political values. Nonetheless, all Polish governments have supported European integration as a matter of national interest. The slogan "a strong Poland in a strong Europe" has been a rallying point for all parties.

Conversely, there has been cross-party resistance to perceived projects for European federalism and the notion of a "two-speed Europe" (Grosse, 2018). During the "refugee crisis", politicians from the largest parties (Law and Justice, Civic Platform, Modern) emphasised protection of the EU's external borders. Equally, there was convergence on the question of "solidarity": as a rule, all parties either distanced themselves from or expressed outright hostility towards refugee relocation mechanisms (Szalanska, 2020).

Crucially, shifts in electoral politics have diverted the Polish state from its earlier quest for modernisation and Europeanisation. Since coming to power in late 2015, the Law and Justice party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) has engaged in high profile conflict with the EU and perceived European ideals. It increasingly frames the EU less as an opportunity for Polish

development and more as a threat to Polish sovereignty (Buras 2017). The ideological roots of this discontent lie in convictions about nation, culture and Europe shared by party members and a wider social base in a predominantly Catholic nation. Jarosław Kaczyński, the unofficial leader of PiS, articulates a vision of Europe as a confederation of sovereign nation states, based on a pluralism of value systems (Rzeczpospolita 2020). (The Polish government has turned much of its criticisms on the contrast between the apparent pluralism of liberalism and its actual anti-pluralist consequences). Whenever Poland has been admonished or criticised for its illiberal turn, which has included attacks on minorities and press freedom, Kaczyński appeals to principles of national sovereignty.

The “refugee crisis” of 2015 was a lightning rod for the contestation of Polish and European identities. While the earlier Civic Platform government accepted the proposed quota system for relocating refugees, the Law and Justice party disregarded it when it came to power two months later. It first lowered the admission of refugees to 400, then rescinded plans for Poland to take its first 100 refugees in May 2016 (Łotocki, 2019, pp. 176-177). Based on our analysis of political speeches, PiS’s rejection of official EU solidarity was founded on five discursive framings: a rejection of EU decree; the defence of Polish sovereignty; care for Polish values; Poland’s historical experience of national oppression; and, lastly, disputation of the most effective policies for managing the “refugee crisis”. The first three framings were direct rejections of the solidarity principle, counterposing it to national needs. The final framing, by contrast, represents a more ambivalent reframing of humanitarianism, with calls to send aid to the asylum seekers’ country of origin (Szalanska 2020, Łotocki 2019).

Law and Justice thus explicitly rejected the officially conceived solidarity of the quota system, presenting it as unjust and self-interested. In this narrative, the party drew from wellsprings of Polish identity, especially the earlier legacy of dependence on and resistance to the Soviet Union. Equally, they drew on grievances against another historical oppressor,

Germany, with Merkel presented as having made smaller, poorer countries bear responsibility for her own policy errors (“It is a mistake of Merkel, and now she wants to share her mistake with other countries” (PL11-2015-Kaczynski in: Szalanska 2020)).

Additionally, conflict centred on the cultural and religious background of potential refugees relocated to Poland. Leading PiS politicians (Jarosław Kaczyński, Beata Szydło, Mateusz Morawiecki) presented the Muslim origins of asylum seekers as a civilisational threat to the Polish nation, with Kaczyński stating: “a family and the nation (and their safety) should be put first, before others” (PL6-2015-Kaczynski in: Szalanska, 2020).

Polish historical experience was also invoked, with Kaczyński arguing that a country which had not participated in colonialism should not bear the same responsibility for civil wars as former colonisers: “We did not exploit the countries from which these refugees come to Europe today, we did not use their labour force, and finally we did not invite them to Europe. We have every moral right to say no. Even more than that, since we are already helping” (PL21-2017-Kaczynski in: Szalanska, 2020). These rationales were used to counter accusations of having violated the party’s Christian morality, with the implied dissonance between charitable obligation and actual parsimoniousness.

Law and Justice likewise promoted overseas humanitarian and development aid as the alternative solution to the crisis: “we are helping and we will be helping – but those, who need help and wait there, in place” (PL20-2017-Szydlo in: Szalanska, 2020). This rhetorical framing, eliding humanitarian aid with the value of solidarity, was also inscribed in the party program of 2019, which asserted that Poland would be a country promoting freedom, justice, solidarity and truth in the world. It went on to assert that Poland’s solidarity was exemplified by military participation in humanitarian interventions in remote corners of the world. This revising of the solidarity principle went even further when the Prime Minister Morawiecki called for the EU engagement in stabilization and development of Africa to prevent further

migration: “We propose creating a European fund for development of Africa and I declare that Poland wants to participate in such help – in giving a rod instead of a fish – in a greater extent than it stems from our GDP” (PL22-2018-Morawiecki in: Szalanska, 2020). In Law and Justice’s framing, it was Poland standing for real solidarity; by contrast, the established mode of solidarity, the relocation mechanism between member states, was presented as a tool of Germany and Brussels.

Polish humanitarian aid was in fact substantially raised from PLN 26 million in 2015 to PLN 173 million in 2017; it subsequently declined to PLN 135 million in 2018 (Supreme Audit Office 2020). Politicisation of humanitarian aid led to the establishment of a new institution – a Humanitarian Aid Minister¹ – with an appointment for Beata Kempa, a politician openly opposed to admitting asylum seekers. This took questions of distribution out of the hands of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Yet whereas MFA humanitarian aid was distributed in a measured and well-audited manner, the new Ministry was less bound by guidelines on transparency. According to the Supreme Audit Office, all contracts in the Chancellery were concluded without competitions based on offers placed by NGOs (Supreme Audit Office 2020). An example of its ineffectiveness was a charity action “Backpacks for Aleppo” launched by the Minister Beata Kempa: the collected backpacks, far from being sent to children in Syria, ended up warehoused in a Polish church.

For the Law and Justice government, these revisionist approaches to humanitarianism and solidarity are part of its “policy of getting up from knees”. This nationalism involves having a distinct “Polish voice” in European matters and not surrendering to the will (and ideas) of stronger states like Germany. Their mode of contestation with the EU is explicitly designed to restore collective dignity as the foundation of nationalist revival (Runciman, 2018).

¹ The post of Humanitarian Aid Minister existed until December 2019, when Mateusz Morawiecki formed his new government after parliamentary elections.

5.5 Hungary

Hungary's recent evolution has been dominated by the figure of Viktor Orbán, Hungary's ultra-conservative Prime Minister since 2010. In Korkut's interpretation, this decade in power has been based on an alternative narrative of Europeanisation: Orbán believes that liberalism has failed and that future integration should be based on a Hungarian-style civilisational (white, Christian) value system (Korkut, 2020). While Orbán himself remains a contested and marginal figure in mainstream European politics, his rhetorical themes have unarguably exerted influence. Korkut thus demonstrates overlaps between Orbán's vision and the "European way of life" agenda promoted and endorsed by the Commission's new Pact on Migration and Asylum. However, while Orbán has some marginal ambitions for Europe-wide projects, his rhetoric is fundamentally and merely aimed at domestic audiences.

We have shown elsewhere how the Hungarian government dismantled the entire asylum system and criminalised migration (Gyollai and Amatrudo, 2019; Gyollai, 2018); denied international protection for asylum seekers with respect to the human rights of Hungarians and conditioned humanitarian support for would-be asylum seekers in the country of origin to belonging to Christian communities (Korkut, Terlizzi and Gyollai, 2020); and clashed with the EU on migration related issues that eventually resulted in numerous infringement proceedings (Gyollai and Korkut, 2020). Although indicative of a larger political agenda, none of these issues serve other than domestic electoral purposes. To Orban, we argue, the ideal of a conflicting or peripheral Europeanism to preserve national sovereignty is merely a coverup; the Orbanisation of EU policy is a collateral damage of the Hungarian PM's politics. Orban exploit humanitarianism, migration and Hungary's responsibilities as an EU Member State to bolster his politics of polarisation. In what follows, we will demonstrate

how Orbán's false Christian-nationalism has been used to fuel anti-immigrant; anti-Semitic and anti-EU sentiments to maintain Fidesz-KDNP dominance in Hungary.

The reconstitution of Hungarian national identity based on in- and outgroup conflicts has always been a core element, if not the organising principle, of Orbán's politics of polarisation. It is confrontational and led by enemy construction (Palonen, 2018; Antal, 2016). Prior to the issue of mass migration, the PM had already successfully instrumentalized the collective memories of the 1848/1956 freedom fights salient to the Hungarian public to gain electoral support. The arrival of the unprecedented number of asylum seekers in summer 2015 has served as an opportunity to reinforce the Us and Them dichotomy by invoking the past memories of the Ottoman conquest (Mendelski, 2019; Lamour and Varga, 2017). Fidesz have constructed the image of Hungary as a nation which, although left alone and suffered multitude of traumas, has always been able to fight back and regain its freedom from foreign and/or domestic aggressors. Orbán portrays himself as a freedom fighter who single-handedly chased the Soviets out of the country in 1989. Since 2015, he has been simultaneously defending "European Christianity" from the "Muslim invasion", and Hungarian national sovereignty against Europe itself. Most recently, triggered by the EU's new framework to strengthen the rule of law, he has been tirelessly fighting for a "new Brussels Empire" against the "Soros network". Orbán's narrative thus conflates opposition to his politics with opposition to the nation as such.

Orbán's narrative repertoire, "the monopolization of patriotism", "siege mentality" and "self-isolation" are all instrumental in unifying a community, and simultaneously generating and justifying collective hostility against opponents (Bar-Tal, 2000, Ch. 5-7). Fidesz won a landslide victory at the 2018 general elections with no platform other than the anti-immigrant campaign. Orbán has used this platform to escalate his illiberal policies and introduced a new

state of crisis (still in force at the time of writing): the so-called “crisis situation caused by mass migration”.

To Orbán, the term “Christian” is a multi-purpose ingroup attribute which, before becoming the synonym of “Islamophobic” has been used as an identifier for voters in opposition to Ferenc Gyurcsány’s socialist government. Fidesz has never made a secret of its devotion to the cultural legacy of the irredentist and antisemitic Horthy-era in its (group)identity politics for that matter (Palonen, 2018; Kovács, 2016). Horthy was the regent of Hungary between 1920-44, who put an end to, and avenged (“White Terror”) the bloodshed of the 1919 Hungarian Soviet Republic (“Red Terror”). Fidesz symbolically removed the iconic statue of Imre Nagy from Martyr’s Square in Budapest and replaced it with the monument that stood there before WWII, erected by Horthy to the memory of the victims of the communist regime. Anti-communist and Christian-nationalist ideologies dating from the interwar period thus form the ideological foundation of the political and policy strategies of Orbán. The new constitution, the “Fundamental Law of Hungary” represents a crystallisation of Orbán’s attempt to redefine and re-establish Hungarian national identity in line with the ideological framework of the authoritarian Horthy regime (Kis, 2012; Miklóssy and Nyssönenm, 2018). On the hand, the Fidesz has avoided being overtly anti-Semitic, rather downplayed Horthy’s otherwise well documented (Bodo, 2019; Romsics, 2016; Ungváry, 2016) role in the persecution of Hungarian Jews both before and during the Holocaust and mainstreamed the Christian-nationalist agenda only. This, coupled with the Fidesz’ kin state activism, is appealing to both conservative and diaspora voters. On the other hand, by denouncing Horthy as Nazi collaborator, the Fidesz would potentially lose its far-right, once-Jobbik voters. Neither the silence of Fidesz when neo-Nazi groups marching in the capital, commemorating the SS breakout attempt during the siege of Budapest in 1945, nor the covert antisemitism

palpable in narratives scapegoating George Soros for anything of which Orbán disapproves, especially irregular migration, are accidental.

Even by their own standards, Orbán's agendas are built on inconsistencies. Several senior members of Fidesz, including Orbán himself, have been recipients of Soros-funded scholarships. Despite the rhetorical conflicts with the Islamic world, Hungary's residency bond business has had an Abu Dhabi branch; Fidesz sold a residency permit to a key figure of the Bashar al-Assad regime; and Orbán is a returning guest of the Turkic Council, maintaining a good relationship with the President of Turkey. At the opening ceremony of Tomb of Gül Baba, in the presence of President Erdogan, Orbán praised the Ottomans for providing protection to fugitives of the 1848/49 revolution. The Tomb is an Islamic pilgrimage site in the heart of Budapest, recently restored by funds partly from the Hungarian government.

In his relations with Europe, Orbán's "solidarity" included not just withdrawal from the resettlement quota plan, but also a threat to veto the EU's 2021-27 budget. This sparring was engineered to establish a narrative for domestic audiences: to discuss his veto in Brussels, Orbán had to venture down into the "Wolf's Lair" but he returned with a "victory over Soros".

5.6 Discussion and Conclusion

There are notable differences between the three cases. Britain's conflicts with the European Union were a complex compound of two elements: the state's aspirations to higher global leadership; and the grievances of voters, which included immigration but also economic and democratic concerns. Both before and after Brexit, political leaders have presented Britain as a nation of higher humanitarian purposes, whether achieved through foreign intervention or boutique systems of refugee relocation. They have sought to transcend divides between anti-

migrant deterrence and humanitarian delivery, in a manner that is not altogether inconsistent with evolving EU policy. By contrast, Hungary and Poland have taken more inflammatory stances on humanitarianism, drawing on narratives of national oppression under the Soviet Union, as well as an explicitly ethno-religious conception of European identity. Nonetheless, both states have found, like Britain, that boutique humanitarian interventions can be a useful arm of foreign policy. As demonstrated elsewhere in this book, a central focus of Hungarian policy has been to reframe humanitarianism as a matter of Christian persecution in Islamic majority countries. The Polish state has involved itself in a range of military adventures and has sought to shift the boundaries of humanitarianism in these terms. All three governments have devised a conception of humanitarianism which reflects their national histories and their sense of a wider global mission.

All three rejected the authority of European institutions over quotas, and thus officially conceived “solidarity”. Britain agreed to take a specified number, but, crucially, only from camps near the conflict zone: it refused to engage with redistributing the refugees who had already arrived in Europe, a mechanism designed to relieve stress on border states. Poland’s conservative government signalled its departure from the established mode of Europeanisation when they overturned earlier commitments to relocation. The Hungarian government arguably went furthest, in actively arranging a plebiscite on the quota system. That referendum (which ultimately fell due to a limited turnout) was actively grounded on rejection of the European establishment. As the BBC reported, Orban sought to portray himself as the "champion of the concerns of ordinary Europeans" against the actions of "an unelected, liberal elite". Observable contrasts exist between these cases, with the UK appealing (however hypocritically) to a higher humanitarian calling, while Hungary’s plebiscitical approach was built on unabashedly populist contrasts between elites and masses.

Lastly, all appealed to principles of national sovereignty. Yet the seriousness of this aspiration has not been tested. The most trenchant academic critics of the EU's impact on popular sovereignty see the bloc as empowering the domestic state at the expense of domestic citizens. However, Kaczyński and Orbán have themselves centralised authoritarian power, and equally show little desire for exiting European structures. As Bickerton observes, "the 'counter-revolutionaries' have no real desire to leave the EU" (Bickerton, 2020). Instead, their manoeuvres have amounted to scapegoating vulnerable populations for the purposes of domestic posturing and internal EU politicking, while expanding the repressive state over ideologically opponents. Indeed, their narrative of a European federalist elite not only misunderstands the recent evolution of the EU towards inter-governmentalism, it also misconceives how member-statehood amounts to a process of state transformation, and the role this plays in the wider democratic deficit.

If these are the parameters of contestation, we must be cautious about superficial contrasts between an ethical, cosmopolitan European technocracy and its sovereigntist member states. If we consider the EU largely as a superstate bureaucracy evolving towards its own value system, then the above conflicts assume one type of importance. A dualism is maintained, between the progressive-cosmopolitan level and the regressive-sovereigntist level.

Conversely, if the EU is regarded as an inter-governmental bureaucracy, it highlights the interconnected nature of the emerging conservative, civilisational government discourses of Europe and the Commission's "way of life" agenda. This reinforces the conclusion, growing across much of the critical literature, that the EU is primarily a confused reflection of the internal politics of its various member states. In contrast to national parliamentary bodies, which are designed to manage the inevitability of conflict, EU tends to regard a clash of values as taboo and a problem to be managed out of existence (Anderson, 2009; Bickerton, 2012; Heisenberg, 2005). In this sense, the desire to minimise ruptures like Brexit coalesces

with the desire to incorporate dissenters, including populists in the European Parliamentary, but more especially dissenting governments in the more decisive institutions of the European Council. This suggests the peculiarities of EU “cosmopolitanism”, which functions less as an outright value system than a mode of containing conflicting value systems, to the point of integrating, clumsily, the illiberal sentiments of challenger governments.

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