

# **HOMINES SACRI IN EUROPEAN REFUGEE CRISIS**

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Submitted to  
Central European University  
Department of International Relations

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

Word count: 12,792

Budapest, Hungary  
2016

## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that no parts of this thesis have been accepted for any other degrees in any other institutions. This thesis contains no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgement is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

Štefan Korbel  
Budapest, Hungary, 3 June 2016

## Abstract

The thesis employs Agamben's theoretical concept of *homo sacer* as a person of the ancient Roman law which can be killed but cannot be sacrificed. It argues that the refugees are the most exposed *homines sacri* in the ongoing European refugee crisis, which started escalating roughly in the spring of 2015. First, it demonstrates how the European policies and attitudes towards the refugees perpetuate their status of *homines sacri*. Second, it argues that the incapacity to satisfactorily manage the refugee crisis across Europe contributes to rise of far-right politics, and in line with Agamben's argument, essentially uncovers the potentiality of the European citizens to also become *homines sacri* vis-à-vis the sovereign.

**Keywords:** *homo sacer*, refugee, migrant, sovereignty, Agamben

*To My Parents*

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Overview

In the spring of 2015, increasing numbers of asylum seekers started flowing to Europe, escaping war-torn countries, especially the ongoing civil war in Syria. The situation got out of the hands of the European leaders when as many as 1,255,600 persons claimed asylum in Europe in 2015, more than double the number in the previous year.<sup>1</sup> In response to this refugee or migration crisis, Europe has become divided, broadly speaking, in two polarized camps. This division is ideological and in general, cuts across states, nations and social classes. According to the first one, Europe should open its arms to those fleeing the life-endangering situations in their home countries, providing conditions preserving as much dignity to those who came to claim the refuge in Europe as possible, in order to live up to the Western standards of human rights. The second camp, however, has seen the growing numbers of asylum seekers as a threat: ideological-political, security and economic-social. An ideological-political one, because in their eyes, the asylum seekers mostly fleeing Muslim countries may, in more and more numbers, in shorter or longer runs, claim their religious rights (e.g. build mosques to practice their religion), spread their ideology (which is portrayed as incompatible with the Christian European values) and eventually gain as much power so as to tip the balance against the Christian population and endanger the European civilization.<sup>2</sup> A security one, because following the terrorist attacks

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<sup>1</sup> "Migrant crisis: Asylum seekers in EU 'doubled in 2015'," *BBC News*, 4 March 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35723057> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>2</sup> An example of this attitude is given by Suntinger, a member of the Austrian far-right party Freedom Party for Austria, who won in the 2015 municipal elections and declared that Europe only makes sense "if it focuses on preventing the Islamization." In Kazim Hasnain et al., "Rise of the Populists: Austria a Step Ahead in Europe's Race

around the world, especially the recent November 2015 Paris terrorist attacks in which 130 died and many more were injured,<sup>3</sup> as well as the New Year's Eve sexual assaults especially in Cologne, Germany, where carried out by up to 1,000 men of "Arab or North African" origin<sup>4</sup>, fears have been expressed that the Daesh militant group<sup>5</sup> may infiltrate the asylum seekers with their members to carry out more terrorist attacks in Europe, and that the chauvinist attitude of the migrant Arab men would significantly contribute to sexual harassment of Western European women. An economic-social one, because many believe that a significant proportion of the asylum seekers are economic migrants who are actually not fleeing from wars and other circumstances endangering their lives, but are rather abusing the European benevolence to take advantages of the advanced economic and social systems of the European Union's Member States, either by occupying jobs which would otherwise be filled with European workers or claiming the social allowances and thus draining the public wealth; in the least, even their temporary accommodation in detention camps and centers is seen as too great an expense for the EU to bear. The magnitude of this refugee crisis has resulted in an ever-increasing divergence of these two opinion camps, as well as radicalization in Europe. On the one hand, German Chancellor Angela Merkel employed a rhetoric by which she has welcomed over a million of the refugees. On the other hand, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban reacted to the influx of the refugees into Hungary by building a fence across Hungary's border.

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to the Right." *Spiegel Online International*, 18 May 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/austrian-right-wing-has-lessons-for-europe-a-1092653.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>3</sup> "Paris attacks: What happened on the night," *BBC News*, 9 December 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34818994> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>4</sup> "String of New Year's Eve sexual assaults outrages Cologne." *Deutsche Welle*, 4 January 2016, <http://www.dw.com/en/string-of-new-years-eve-sexual-assaults-outrages-cologne/a-18958334> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Faisal Irshaid, "Isis, Isil, IS or Daesh? One group, many names," *BBC News*, 2 December 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27994277> (accessed 31 May 2016).

News articles, opinion columns and other popular analyses of recent months have been focused on the policy issues, analyzing and evaluating the current approaches to the (mis)management of the refugee flows in the current migration crisis, as well as expressing their views on the interplay between the two aforementioned opinion camps. In turn, what is in question of this thesis is an analysis of the relationship between state sovereignty and individuals through the application of Giorgio Agamben's theoretical concept of *homo sacer* to the person of the refugee in the current European refugee crisis. *Homo sacer*, a figure of the ancient Roman law, represents a person who can be killed but cannot be sacrificed. They are excluded from both human and divine law. They are included in the city only and only by their exclusion from it, and their life is reduced to bare (or naked) life outside of what Aristotle termed good life of a citizen. *Homo sacer* thus belongs to the sovereign sphere where it is permitted to kill without punishment.<sup>6</sup> It will be argued that today's refugees are the most exposed *homines sacri*, not solely by the virtue of their non-belonging to any constituting power, but also due to the European policies aimed at the refugees whose journey is destined to end in the detention camps, the places of permanent exception, as well as due to the current European discourses which emphasize strengthening of the borders and materialize in the right-wing radicalization in Europe. Hence in today's world of biopolitics, the refugees are actually excluded in both discourses, the one preaching the open-door policy as well as the opposing one closing the doors to the refugees, even though the latter further perpetuates their exclusion. At the same time, the refugees are a sovereign exception which defines the rule: Agamben claims that all of us are potentially *homines sacri*;<sup>7</sup> unpleasingly, it will not only be argued that the current European

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<sup>6</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), Ch. 2.1.2.

<sup>7</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), Ch. 2.1.2.



politics maintain the status of the refugees as *homines sacri*, but also that the consequent radicalization and totalization of the old continent exposes the potentiality of all of its citizens to approach and acquire this status.

## 1.2 Methodology

The current European refugee or migrant crisis, which, broadly speaking, started escalating in the spring of 2015, has been one of the key current international political issues since then, and is likely to continue to be so in the upcoming months as a result of the ongoing civil war in Syria as well as other conflicts in Asia and Africa, will be used as a case study against which Agamben's theoretical-political concept of *homo sacer* as the paradigm of today's biopolitics will be assessed.

I will mainly rely on the coverage of chosen events of and elements in the European refugee crisis as depicted by the mainstream Western media: news articles, opinion columns, extended reports and essays. This approach naturally poses certain limits, since it gives a Eurocentric outlook on the refugee crisis, and it only provides an image of the crisis presented by the mainstream media, which is limited by the news formats and distorted by the writers' and editors' preferences. At the same time, nevertheless, the mainstream media are a useful tool for the coverage of the recent developments, and even though opinions differ and the presentation of facts is not value-neutral, what is needed for the analysis of this thesis is not a detailed consideration of the specific events, but a general understanding of the main trends and

approaches present in the political discourse: the mainstream media tend to reflect, produce and reproduce these.

### 1.3 Terminology

Given the often-heated debates about the current European refugee crisis, it is useful to make a note on the terminology used throughout this essay. The terms “migrant”, “refugee” and “asylum seeker” carry different meanings and the wording makes a significant difference to the actual discourses related to the debates about the people who are defined by this terminology.

While a “migrant” is someone “who moves, either temporarily or permanently, from one place, area, or country of residence to another”,<sup>8</sup> it carries the connotation of voluntary action and, in the current refugee crisis, has been reduced to a descriptor which “dehumanizes and distances, a blunt pejorative”.<sup>9</sup> According to the UN, “The term ‘migrant’... should be understood as covering all cases where the decision to migrate is taken freely by the individual concerned, for reasons of ‘personal convenience’ and without intervention of an external compelling factor.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Camila Ruz, “The battle over the words used to describe migrants,” *BBC News*, 28 August 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-34061097> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Camila Ruz, “The battle over the words used to describe migrants,” *BBC News*, 28 August 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-34061097> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>10</sup> “What is a refugee.” *USA for UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency*, <http://www.unrefugees.org/what-is-a-refugee/> (accessed 31 May 2016).

The voluntary, free action resulting in migration and embedded in the definition of the migrant is taken out of the definition of the “refugee”. Based on the 1951 Refugee Convention, the refugee “is any person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country”.<sup>11</sup> In the ongoing debates, this term is also not value-free; as Betts, director of the Refugee Studies Centre at Oxford University notes, “Refugee implies that we have an obligation to people [...] It implies that we have to let them on to our territory and give them the chance to seek asylum.”<sup>12</sup>

The term “asylum seeker” describes a person who has applied for refugee status and is waiting for the decision on their claim. It is, however, often used to describe those are trying to reach a particular country to make the asylum claim.<sup>13</sup> Hence in this second sense of the term, an asylum seeker may be a refugee according to the definition above but does not necessarily have to be one. Indeed, some only refer to refugees in relation to those persons who have successfully claimed asylum. The word “asylum”, dating back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, had been used to refer to “a sanctuary or inviolable place of refuge and protection for criminals and debtors, from which they cannot be forcibly removed without sacrilege”.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Camila Ruz, “The battle over the words used to describe migrants,” *BBC News*, 28 August 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-34061097> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>12</sup> Camila Ruz, “The battle over the words used to describe migrants,” *BBC News*, 28 August 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-34061097> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>13</sup> Camila Ruz, “The battle over the words used to describe migrants,” *BBC News*, 28 August 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-34061097> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>14</sup> Camila Ruz, “The battle over the words used to describe migrants,” *BBC News*, 28 August 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-34061097> (accessed 31 May 2016).

It can be argued that, to escape the sense of obligation inherent in the definition of the refugee and the origin of the word asylum, the term “illegal migrant” has been employed also for this purpose. Even though, as noted, the term migrant in itself already carries the negative connotation in the discourses revolving around the present European refugee crisis, defining the migrant as “illegal” provides an additional level to the anti-refugee rhetoric, because it transposes the responsibility to the refugee. What has caused turmoil in the debates has been the non-adherence to the Dublin agreements according to which a refugee should apply for asylum in the EU country which they enter first, while the refugees have often continued in their journeys to more refugee-friendly and more economically developed countries, especially Germany (but also others), and in so doing they have crossed multiple EU Member States. Notwithstanding, given that *homines sacri* are an exception, only included in the legal order through their original exclusion from it, the term “illegal migrant” is a paradoxical one. When Alp Mehmet, Vice-Chairman of MigrationWatch UK says that “[i]f you are coming into a country without permission and you do it outside the law, that is illegal,”<sup>15</sup> this is in contradiction to the real status of those migrants/refugees/asylum seekers who are nowadays seeking help in Europe. By assuming a legal relationship between the EU Member States and the refugees, by defining the state border as the legal agreement between these two parties, and then blaming the refugees for breaking this agreement by crossing the borders, an argument is made against supporting the refugees, even if this whole line of argument falls on the incorrect presumption that the refugees had agreed to the borders.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Camila Ruz, “The battle over the words used to describe migrants,” *BBC News*, 28 August 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-34061097> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>16</sup> If looking at the problem through the lenses of the Hobbesian state sovereignty, it can be argued that they have indirectly agreed to them via their sovereigns (their previous governments). At the same time, however, by the act of fleeing and seeking refuge elsewhere, they have also broken the contract with the sovereign.

From the perspective of the theory of sovereignty, according to Hobbes, the sovereign is the giver of names who speaks the law. Alan Travis, home affairs editor of *The Guardian*, notes that the conflation of the three terms in question (migrant, refugee, asylum seeker) can mean “the difference between life and death.”<sup>17</sup> Tim Stanley, historian and columnist for the Daily Telegraph adds that “[t]he moment at which they [the state authorities] can officially say whether they are refugees or economic migrants is the moment at which the EU state that is processing their claim makes its decision,” says. “I am not questioning the validity of their narrative, I am not saying that anyone was lying about it. I am saying that it is down to the state in which they have arrived to define what they are.” In principle, they are uncovering the status of the refugee as *homo sacer* vis-à-vis the state which processes the asylum application: the sovereign represented by the state authority speaks the name of the subject in question; the given name determines the likely future path of the subject, which may grant him refuge and the subject may live, or it may destine the subject to return to their home country and potentially face death.

As António Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, stated, “[a]s Europe debates the best way to deal with the rising crisis on the Mediterranean, we must be clear: most of the people arriving by sea in Europe are refugees, seeking protection from war and persecution.”<sup>18</sup> I will therefore prefer the term “refugee” throughout this essay, although I also apply the terms “migrant” and “asylum seeker” interchangeably, yet without any intention of the negative connotations associated especially with the term “migrant” as noted above. What is crucial is that

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<sup>17</sup> Alan Travis, “Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers: what's the difference?” *The Guardian*, 28 August 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/28/migrants-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-whats-the-difference> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>18</sup> “Mediterranean Crisis 2015 at six months: refugee and migrant numbers highest on record.” *UNHCR*, 1 July 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/5592b9b36.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

while the naming actually makes a significant difference to the lives of the persons in question, in the ongoing discourses, when taken from a high-level perspective, whether any of the three terms – migrant/refugee/asylum seeker – is applied, essentially they are all treated as potential or actual *homines sacri*.

## 2 BETWEEN BARE LIFE AND GOOD LIFE

### 2.1 Bare Life and Good Life in the Ancient World

To understand the persona of *homo sacer*, it is necessary to introduce the analysis of politics in the ancient Greece. As Agamben begins his analysis, In Aristotle's distinction, we as human beings share two kinds of life, two modes of existence, described in ancient Greek by two different words which share their etymological origin but differ in their semantic and morphological meaning. The first one is *zoe*, the bare (or naked) life, the simple, biological life shared by all the living beings, both people and animals; the second one is *bios*, the good life, the life of a citizen in a political community, "the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group."<sup>19</sup> The theoretical distinction between the two concepts is therefore clear, and for Aristotle, human beings constitute "political animals", "living animal[s] with the additional capacity for political existence."<sup>20</sup>

As there is a clear distinction between *zoe* and *bios*, bare life and good life, so there is a distinction between where they belong. *Zoe*, concerned with the biological needs, belongs to the sphere of *oikos*, the household, while *bios*, the political life, belongs to *polis*, the city. The natural life is hence only a necessary pre-condition to the political life, people<sup>21</sup> are "born with regard to

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<sup>19</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>20</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>21</sup> In ancient Greece, women, children and slaves were excluded from the political life.

life, but existing essentially with regard to the good life.”<sup>22</sup> In practice, the private (*zoe*) and the public (*bios*) blend together, because, as Aristotle says, “men also come together and maintain the political community in view of simple living, because there is probably some kind of good in the mere fact of living itself.”<sup>23</sup>

## 2.2 The Limit Space between Bare Life and Good Life

What lies at the interception of *zoe*, the natural life, and *bios*, the political life, is the limit space between the bare life and the good life. Agamben defines this as a zone of indistinction where the sovereign establishes the political order. Agamben employs Carl Schmitt’s definition of sovereignty and introduces the sovereign is the one “who decides on the exception”.<sup>24</sup>

Sovereign power is constituted by the exclusion of the bare life from the realm of the polis. The bare life is only included in it in as much as it is precisely this exclusion. In the Hobbesian analytical framework, sovereign power arises as a relationship of violence. In the abstract construct of the state of nature, every man is in war of every man against all the other men, *homo homini lupus*, and the life is “nasty, brutish and short.” It is the space where only the fight for the preservation of the bare life is carried on. The men, seeking their self-actualization in the domain of good, political life, have to establish a social contract whereupon they give their bare lives to the sovereign. This is the trade-off between the sovereign and the man, and thus only the

<sup>22</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>23</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>24</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).



sovereign may make the decision on life and death. While killing of a citizen by another citizen would constitute a homicide, this would not apply to the sovereign, who can decide on the exception and suspend the law. This would not constitute a legitimate use of violence in the Weberian sense; rather, it would constitute an extralegal decision on the bare life, the relation of the sovereign ban when the sovereign decides on the suspension of the law, based on the sovereign's preservation of his state of nature in the zone of indistinction. Hence the sovereign, being the one who decides on the exception, is both inside and outside of the law: "Neither political *bios* nor natural *zoe*, sacred life is the zone of indistinction in which *zoe* and *bios* constitute each other in including and excluding each other."<sup>25</sup>

### 2.3 Homo Sacer

The direct opposite counterpart of the sovereign, the limit figure between *zoe* and *bios*, between bare life and good life, is *homo sacer*. Homo sacer is a figure of the ancient Roman law, and like the sovereign, is both inside and outside the law, included only through its exclusion, therefore constituting a relation of exception where homo sacer is included in the polis only through their capacity to be killed.

Homo sacer cannot be sacrificed, and its killing is unpunishable, since it is excluded from the realm of the law: "a person is simply set outside human jurisdiction without being brought into

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<sup>25</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

the realm of divine law”.<sup>26</sup> The *sacratio* “takes the form of a double exception, both from *ius humanum* and from the *ius divinum*”, and

“Just as the law, in the sovereign exception, applies to the exceptional case in no longer applying and in withdrawing from it, so *homo sacer* belongs to God in the form of unsacrificeability and is included in the community in the form of being able to be killed. *Life that cannot be sacrificed and yet may be killed is sacred life.*”<sup>27</sup>

Homo sacer and the sovereign are correlative in the sense that “the sovereign is the one with respect to whom all men are potentially *homines sacri*, and *homo sacer* is the one with respect to whom all men act as sovereigns.”<sup>28</sup> In other words, “*The sovereign sphere is the sphere in which it is permitted to kill without committing homicide and without celebrating a sacrifice, and sacred life – that is, life that may be killed but not sacrificed – is the life that has been captured in this sphere.*”<sup>29</sup>

In the current discourses on refugees, it is also useful to consider the following approximation of *homo sacer* to the Germanic *wargus* (wolf-man), who is *Friedlos* (“man without peace”):

“The life of the bandit, like that of the sacred man, is not a piece of animal nature without any relation to law and the city. It is, rather, a threshold of indistinction and of the passage between animal and man, *physis and nomos*, exclusion and inclusion: the life of the bandit is the life of the *loup garou*, the werewolf, who is precisely *neither man nor beast*, and who dwells paradoxically within both while belonging to neither.”<sup>30</sup>

The refugee also occupies this zone of indistinction, falling at once both under and outside of the law of a sovereign state, falling both inside and outside of the city.

<sup>26</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>27</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>28</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>29</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>30</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

## 2.4 The Camp as the Antithesis of the Polis

Even though in theory, there is a clear distinction between bare life and good life, in the modern world, bare life is more and more politicized and political life is pushed out of its place until it eventually vanishes. The ultimate place of indistinction between bare life and good life is the camp, and as such, it is the ultimate place of the sovereign exception.

“Inasmuch as its inhabitants have been stripped of every political status and reduced completely to naked life, the camp is also the most absolute biopolitical space that has ever been realized – a space in which power confronts nothing but other than pure biological life without any meditation. The camp is the paradigm itself of political space at the point in which politics becomes biopolitics and the *homo sacer* becomes indistinguishable from the citizen.”<sup>31</sup>

According to Foucault, “at the threshold of modern era, natural life begins to be included in the mechanisms and calculations of State power, and politics turns into *biopolitics*”.<sup>32</sup> Foucault brings reversal into the understanding of politics. “For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics calls his [her] existence as a living being into question.”<sup>33</sup>

The polis is the antithesis of the camp. Unlike the camp, the city is a space of freedom, as Arendt argues:

<sup>31</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>32</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>33</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

“What distinguishes the communal life of people in the polis from all other forms of human communal life – with which the Greeks were most certainly familiar – is freedom [...] Man must first be liberated or liberate himself in order to enjoy freedom.”<sup>34</sup>

Arendt disagrees with Aristotle that man is a political animal. She sees man as apolitical, because politics is concerned with the association of men, and politics can therefore be executed only among men. An individual cannot carry out politics, because politics “deals with the coexistence and association of *different* men. Men organize themselves politically according to certain essential commonalities [... but f]rom the very start , politics organizes those who are absolutely different with a view to their *relative* equality and in contradistinction to their *relative* differences.”<sup>35</sup> Therefore Agamben can conclude that “[n]ot the act of tracing boundaries, but their cancellation or negation is the constitutive act of the city,”<sup>36</sup> because the boundaries are drawn along the lines of sovereign power against bare life, a relationship which is based on violence, whose exemplary paradigm is the camp.

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<sup>34</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Promise of Politics* (Schocken Books, 2007), pp. 116-117.

<sup>35</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Promise of Politics* (Schocken Books, 2007), pp. 93-96.

<sup>36</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

### 3 REFUGEE AS HOMO SACER

#### 3.1 Background of the European Migration Crisis

The European refugee crisis started escalating and getting out of control in mid-2015, when the number of asylum seekers flowing into Europe started to rapidly rise. In fact, in 2015, the number of asylum seekers in the EU more than doubled to 1,255,600 persons, compared with the previous year.<sup>37</sup> According to Eurostat's Asylum quarterly report, the number of first-time asylum seekers increased by more than 130% in the fourth quarter of 2015 in comparison to the same quarter of 2014.<sup>38</sup> The top three nationalities seeking refuge in the EU were Syrians, Afghanis and Iraqis. The fears of increasing numbers of refugees were expressed already in 2014<sup>39</sup>, but it was the scale of the migration movement in 2015 which escalated the crisis.

Already the Nazis realized the force of the refugees and the way in which they can undermine the political order of a sovereign nation-state. Hannah Arendt brings into attention the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' circular letter to all German authorities abroad after the November pogroms of 1938, in which it was noticed:

"The emigration movement of only about 100,000 Jews has already sufficed to awaken the interest of many countries in the Jewish danger. . . . Germany is very interested in maintaining the dispersal of Jewry . . . the influx of Jews in all parts of the world invokes

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<sup>37</sup> "Migrant crisis: Asylum seekers in EU 'doubled in 2015'," *BBC News*, 4 March 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35723057> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>38</sup> "Asylum Quarterly Report," Eurostat, last modified 15 March 2016, [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum\\_quarterly\\_report](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_quarterly_report) (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>39</sup> "Europe's African Refugee Crisis: Is the Boat Really Full?" *Spiegel Online International*, 15 April 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/european-refugee-crisis-worsens-in-mediterranean-a-964304.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

the opposition of the native population and thereby forms the best propaganda for the German Jewish policy. . . . The poorer and therefore more burdensome the immigrating Jew is to the country absorbing him, the stronger the country will react."<sup>40</sup>

This was almost a century ago without the Internet and the opportunities which it provides for communication and media coverage, and the number of the Jewish refugees represented about a twelfth of the influx of the refugees into Europe in 2015.

Carl von Clausewitz stated that war is “continuation of politics by other means.”<sup>41</sup> Possibly, when talking about war as a means to an end. However, war, unlike politics (or unlike what politics should be) is a relationship of violence. In fact, for Foucault, politics is “a continuation of war by other means.”<sup>42</sup> War is also a state of exception where refugees fleeing war are *homines sacri*.

Worldwide, there were 19.5 million refugees in 2014 (out of 59.5 million forcibly displaced persons, i.e. including those displaced within their own countries’ territories), according to the UNCHR.<sup>43</sup> This figure of almost 60 million people is highest since the end of World War II,<sup>44</sup> the time when the pure sovereign decision over life and death, and the absolute reduction of people’s lives to bare lives materialized in the Nazi concentration camps.

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<sup>40</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Decline of Nation-State and the End of Rights of Man,” in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Society, 1951), pp. 269.

<sup>41</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (London, 1873), <https://www.clausewitz.com/readings/OnWar1873/BK1ch01.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>42</sup> Michel Foucault.

<sup>43</sup> “Facts and Figures about Refugees.” UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency, <http://www.unhcr.org.uk/about-us/key-facts-and-figures.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>44</sup> David A. Graham, “Violence Has Forced 60 Million People From Their Homes,” *The Atlantic*, 17 June 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/06/refugees-global-peace-index/396122/> (accessed 31 May 2016).

Already 2014 saw an increasing number of refugees located in developing countries, which came to 86% of the refugees worldwide. Turkey accommodated the greatest total number of refugees, 1.59 million. The country from where most refugees were fleeing became Syria: almost one out of four refugees was from Syria, and 95% of all the Syrian refugees were located in the surrounding countries.<sup>45</sup> It is useful to keep these figures in mind when discussing the current European refugee crisis and the European responses to it.

The situation of the present-day refugees can be compared to the one after the explosion of World War I in 1914, as Hannah Arendt described it, that

“the sufferings of more and more groups of people to whom suddenly the rules of the world around them had ceased to apply. It was precisely the seeming stability of the surrounding world that made each group forced out of its protective boundaries look like an unfortunate exception / to an otherwise sane and normal rule.”<sup>46</sup>

### 3.2 Journey of the Refugee

The journey of the refugees can be equated to no less than the preservation of their bare lives. Already when a state fails to protect its citizens and falls into a civil war, such as in the case of Syria, the situation becomes one of permanent exception. It is, however, not necessarily only about overcoming bare life, but a statement about hope to reclaim the good life as well. The journey to Europe is one where the preservation of natural life depends on multiple factors

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<sup>45</sup> “Facts and Figures about Refugees.” UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency, <http://www.unhcr.org/about-us/key-facts-and-figures.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>46</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Decline of Nation-State and the End of Rights of Man,” in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Society, 1951), pp. 267-268.

outside of the refugee's control. Most notorious is the journey which needs to be undertaken across the Mediterranean Sea, and as the figures demonstrate, many have lost their lives while undertaking the journey. According to UNHCR, only in the first half of 2015, 1,867 refugee deaths by drowning or refugees going missing while crossing the Mediterranean were reported.<sup>47</sup>

Daniel Loick makes a comparison between Agamben's paradigm of the camp and the Mediterranean Sea. The Mediterranean Sea, through which the vast majority of refugees pass in order to seek asylum in the EU, resembles the camp in that the refugees are powerless vis-à-vis the actions of the border protection agency. While the refugees can be, again, equated to the figure of *homo sacer*, the border protection agency, Frontex, can be seen as a temporary sovereign on the high seas; as Loick further argues, it has been blamed for infringing international law by push-back actions against the refugees seeking asylum in the EU.<sup>48</sup> What is noteworthy is that the Mediterranean Sea patrolling has transformed from rescuing people at sea (*Mare Nostrum*, the Italian operation, ended in 2014) to securing of the EU external borders (Triton, the Frontex mission). While *Mare Nostrum* was a search and rescue operation which contributed to the rescue of estimated 150,000 persons in a year since the death of 500 migrants during the Lampedusa tragedies in October 2013, Triton is a "border protection" operation without the search and rescue element explicit in the *Mare Nostrum* operation. Among things which angered human rights associations was the decision of the UK Government not to support any future search and rescue operations, because in their view, they encourage more people to

<sup>47</sup> "Mediterranean Crisis 2015 at six months: refugee and migrant numbers highest on record." UNHCR, 1 July 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/5592b9b36.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>48</sup> Daniel Loick, "We Refugees." *Public Seminar*, 23 May 2016, [http://www.publicseminar.org/2016/05/we-refugees/#.V01Jg\\_l96M-](http://www.publicseminar.org/2016/05/we-refugees/#.V01Jg_l96M-) (accessed 31 May 2016).



undertake the life-threatening sea crossing.<sup>49</sup> As such, the liminal status of the refugee as *homo sacer* is perpetuated.

It is therefore legitimate to ask what has done in the opposite direction, i.e. for the erosion for the conditions extending the exposure of the refugees' bare lives, especially when it comes to the life-threatening conditions awaiting the refugees when they pay the smugglers to get them across the Mediterranean Sea with often construction-wise unsuitable boats which are overcrowded with those who want to seek refuge in the EU. However, according to the Article 26 of the Schengen Convention,

“[i]f aliens are refused entry into the territory of one of the Contracting Parties, the carrier which brought them to the external border by air, sea or land shall be obliged immediately to assume responsibility for them again. At the request of the border surveillance authorities the carrier shall be obliged to return the aliens to the third State from which they were transported or to the third State which issued the travel document on which they travelled or to any other third State to which they are certain to be admitted,”

and the EU Member States undertake “to impose penalties on carriers which transport aliens who do not possess the necessary travel documents by air or sea from a Third State to their territories.”<sup>50</sup> If the EU Member States wished, they could, given the extraordinary situation, take extraordinary measures and, for instance, grant the permission to the air carriers for the transportation of the refugees even under the conditions which would be in contradiction of the aforementioned Schengen Convention article. Already a study conducted by the European

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<sup>49</sup> Alan Travis, “UK axes support for Mediterranean migrant rescue operation,” *BBC News*, 27 October 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/oct/27/uk-mediterranean-migrant-rescue-plan> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>50</sup> “The Schengen acquis - Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement of 14 June 1985 between the Governments of the States of the Benelux Economic Union, the Federal Republic of Germany and the French Republic on the gradual abolition of checks at their common borders.” *Official Journal L 239*, 22 September 2000, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:42000A0922%2802%29:en:HTML> (accessed 31 May 2016).

Parliament noted that “penalties for carriers, who assume some of the control duties of the European police services, either block asylum-seekers far from Europe's borders or force them to pay more and take greater risks to travel illegally.”<sup>51</sup> An amendment to Article 26 or its temporary suspension could bring numerous benefits: among others, exposure of the refugees to their bare lives would be lowered and greater security granted to them; it would allow easier monitoring of the passengers (which is, in itself, a biopolitical measure, but still an incentive for the sovereign to control the refugee more easily); it would release the pressure of the Mediterranean countries, especially Greece and Italy, and improve the management of the refugee flows and provision of better life conditions for them; refugee money would not end with the smugglers making profit of the refugees’ situation, and other benefits. For such a change, however, a consensus among the EU Member States is required. As Nick Thorpe noted at the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Visegrad Group, “[t]he idea of flying 300,000 carefully screened refugees each year into Europe, to stop them risking their lives at sea, will dilute Christian Europe!”<sup>52</sup>

As shown above, the dangerous sea crossings have already cost a significant number of refugee lives. But the camp-like conditions do not end with the crossing of the Mediterranean Sea. As the tragedy at Parndorf, Austria, which happened on 27 August 2015, demonstrates, they extend further to the journey of the refugee across Europe. In an abandoned refrigerated track near the

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<sup>51</sup> Rodier, Claire and. “STUDY: ‘Analysis of the external dimension of the EU’s asylum and immigration policies’ – summary and recommendations for the European Parliament.” Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union, *PE 374.366*, 8 June 2006, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004\\_2009/documents/dt/619/619330/619330en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dt/619/619330/619330en.pdf) (accessed 31 May 2016), p. 11.

<sup>52</sup> Nick Thorpe, “Visegrad: The castle where a Central European bloc was born.” *BBC News*, 21 February 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-35613206> (accessed 31 May 2016).

Hungarian border, 71 refugees, including four children, without any control over their bare lives, suffocated.<sup>53</sup> It is an unfortunate irony that they suffocated in a track which previously belonged to a Slovak agricultural company Hyza due to an advert which the company produced earlier that year to promote their poultry products and how it builds on and perpetuates the popular prejudices about the refugees.<sup>54</sup> They used the complicated situation with the refugees in Europe at the time to set their products in the juxtaposition of the home-made, Slovak meat against the “immigrant” poultry. They encouraged the watchers to reward themselves with the “true Slovak chicken” from Hyza (Hyza’s company name is also followed by the slogan “Honest Chicken”), instead of the poultry imported from abroad: personified chicken are depicted as “illegal immigrants” detected by a traffic patrol. They are described as passengers who “identified themselves with legal documents without proof of country of origin”, and criminalized by the finding of “excessive amount of unknown substances” in their car boot. Consequently, the vehicle crew is “submitted to questioning and subsequently taken into custody.”<sup>55</sup> The advert well demonstrates the popular discourse on refugees as persons who are first, unknown, the other; second, who commit illegal acts; and third, whose freedom of movement has to be severely curtailed. Indeed, as Agamben notes, the exception defines the rule and the modern system of nation-states is dependent on the reproduction of the refugees, either literally or as the *homines sacri* marked by the sovereign. So we are left again with the camp as the materialization of the sovereign exception.

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<sup>53</sup> “Hungarian police arrest driver of lorry that had 71 dead migrants inside.” *The Guardian*, 28 August 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/28/more-than-70-dead-austria-migrant-truck-tragedy> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>54</sup> The track had no longer been in possession of the company when this tragedy happened.

<sup>55</sup> HYZA vs Imigranti. “HYZA vs Imigranti POZOR NA FTÁKOVINY.” YouTube video, 00:33. Posted 22 May 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KNdiO9cI37E> (accessed 31 May 2016).

### 3.3 The Refugee and the Camp

What conditions await the refugees in the detention camps may be a question of fortune. The political agenda of the refugees is likely out of question. True, the refugees are in the first instance grateful for preserving their bare lives. In the longer run, however, the question of what kind of a camp they end up in turns into the question of a possibility of integration into one of the EU countries or undergoing an extended period of time solely preserving the bare life, sometimes for years. While for Agamben the integration into the society is not a solution to the overcoming of the bare life *per se*, it still provides an alternative to the continual erosion in the camp – which is the highest instance of the sovereign exception – of any hope for more of political life.

The reinforcement of this liminal condition of the refugees in the camps is best illustrated with the infamous example of the refugee camp in Calais, northern France. The camp has been dubbed the “Jungle”.<sup>56</sup> It is a term that has been perpetuated by the media to describe the slum-like conditions in which the refugees were living. The problem, however, with such a naming is that it raises questions about the qualities of its inhabitants: “What kind of people live in a jungle? Are they civilized? Are they respectable? Do they share our values?”<sup>57</sup> Harker correctly

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<sup>56</sup> Joseph Harker, “Stop calling the Calais refugee camp the ‘Jungle’,” *The Guardian*, 7 March 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/mar/07/stop-calling-calais-refugee-camp-jungle-migrants-dehumanising-scary-stories> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>57</sup> Joseph Harker, “Stop calling the Calais refugee camp the ‘Jungle’,” *The Guardian*, 7 March 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/mar/07/stop-calling-calais-refugee-camp-jungle-migrants-dehumanising-scary-stories> (accessed 31 May 2016).

points out that the employment of such a derogatory language used in relation to people leads to their dehumanization. It creates imagery of savages occupying these places, or in the better case, of people living their simple, natural lives.<sup>58</sup> But while they may be seen, in the better case, as the ones who solely find value in the simple, natural life as such, as also Aristotle noted, it still creates an atmosphere where the questions of their capacity to be integrated in our “civilized” societies are raised.

The naming of the “Jungle”, may have started as a joke, just like the Hyza advert on the “homeland” and “immigrant” chicken, but it is a certain representation of the reality as well as production of a certain reality. The fact that the refugees living in the Calais camp named it the “Jungle” themselves accentuates the dehumanizing conditions in which they had been forced to sustain their lives. But the fact that the term spread out across the media, and was not employed only by some right-wing tabloids but eventually started being used in the media such as the *BBC* and the more left-leaning *Guardian*, and that even the organization called Help Refugees providing essentials to the refugees in the Calais camp used the social media hashtag #CalaisJungle, all this suggests that this dehumanizing perception of the refugees permeates the discourse on the refugees in Europe.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, the naming of the Calais camp as the

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<sup>58</sup> Joseph Harker, “Stop calling the Calais refugee camp the ‘Jungle’,” *The Guardian*, 7 March 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/mar/07/stop-calling-calais-refugee-camp-jungle-migrants-dehumanising-scary-stories> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>59</sup> Joseph Harker, “Stop calling the Calais refugee camp the ‘Jungle’,” *The Guardian*, 7 March 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/mar/07/stop-calling-calais-refugee-camp-jungle-migrants-dehumanising-scary-stories> (accessed 31 May 2016).

“Jungle” also reinforces the negative perception of the refugees, and thus Harker calls for ceasing the use of “language that denies them this humanity.”<sup>60</sup>

It is a valid point that “[t]he dark imagery of the jungle is not a relic from the past.”<sup>61</sup> It is nevertheless eye-opening to look back at the era of World War II and specifically the Holocaust. The Nazi officers made sure to strip the Jews of their political lives by disposing them of their citizenship, reduce them to their bare lives, before deporting them to the concentration camps: dehumanize them. In a similar fashion, the detention camp is a place of dehumanization. French photographer Séverine Sajous decided to give the refugees in the Calais camp a chance to document their lives, and it is striking to see how their language fits into the theoretical discourse of the opposition between *zoe* and *bios*, bare life and good life, and essentially the figure of *homo sacer* as most exposed in the camp. One of the refugees wrote on a postcard that “[w]e wait for our permission to be human,”<sup>62</sup> exposing the sovereign ban under which the refugees sustain their bare lives.

Essentially, the refugees are being transformed in the camp into a mass of people without political agenda. As another Calais refugee wrote: “I am without a voice... Nothing more to say.

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<sup>60</sup> Joseph Harker, “Stop calling the Calais refugee camp the ‘Jungle’,” *The Guardian*, 7 March 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/mar/07/stop-calling-calais-refugee-camp-jungle-migrants-dehumanising-scary-stories> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>61</sup> Joseph Harker, “Stop calling the Calais refugee camp the ‘Jungle’,” *The Guardian*, 7 March 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/mar/07/stop-calling-calais-refugee-camp-jungle-migrants-dehumanising-scary-stories> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>62</sup> Patrick Kingsley, “Postcards from the Calais Jungle: ‘I wish people could see how human we are’,” *The Guardian*, 3 February 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/feb/03/postcards-from-the-jungle-calais-jungle-refugee-photo-collective> (accessed 31 May 2016).

Keep hoping it won't continue like this.”<sup>63</sup> What he or she encapsulated is the status of the refugee as someone on the brink of becoming *Musselman*, a term analyzed by Agamben to describe the tangible, physical image of the human loss of will, the physical state of exception, where one becomes a non-person before their death.<sup>64</sup> So when another refugee asks “[w]here is the humanity in humans”,<sup>65</sup> they may be themselves facing a situation where the relationships among those detained in the refugee camps are harder and harder to sustain, because they may be closer to the image of *Mussulman* that we can pertain to. This implies that humanity, including an understanding of justice springing from a legal order, is relational, exists between and among people and only as such can be materialized. The camp is the opposition to the polis; in the camp, the sovereign makes the decision on the bare life; in the polis, citizens coexist for the purpose of uplifting good, political life.

To end with a historical parallel,

“[n]o paradox of contemporary politics is filled with a more poignant irony than the discrepancy between the efforts of well-meaning idealists who stubbornly insist on regarding as “inalienable” those human rights, which are only enjoyed by the citizens of the most prosperous and civilized countries, and the situation of the rightless themselves. Their situation has deteriorated just as stubbornly, until the internment camp – prior to the second World War the exception rather than the rule for the stateless – has become the routine solution for the problem of domicile of the “displaced persons.”<sup>66</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Patrick Kingsley, “Postcards from the Calais Jungle: ‘I wish people could see how human we are.’” *The Guardian*, 3 February 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/feb/03/postcards-from-the-jungle-calais-jungle-refugee-phot-collective> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>64</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (New York: Zone Books, 1999), Ch. 2.

<sup>65</sup> Patrick Kingsley, “Postcards from the Calais Jungle: ‘I wish people could see how human we are.’” *The Guardian*, 3 February 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/feb/03/postcards-from-the-jungle-calais-jungle-refugee-phot-collective> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>66</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Decline of Nation-State and the End of Rights of Man,” in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Society, 1951), pp. 279.

## 4 RISE OF EXTREME RIGHT IN EUROPE

### 4.1 Defining Fascism and the European “Right” Turn

As Agamben notes, it was fascism which most exemplarily materialized the sovereign-homo sacer dichotomy and brought it to its extreme through ethnic and political cleansing in the concentration camp. Essentially anyone could become the homo sacer, either through their ethnic, religious or political-ideological identities. Now the incapacity of the European nation-state system to accommodate the “refugee question” (even though, like the “Jewish question”, it is a question of the European sovereign political-ideological system rather than the question of refugees) reinforces the extreme right-wing forces across Europe<sup>67</sup> and thus brings to the fore those approaches which, in the 1930s, led to the creation of the concentration camps. What this exposes is also the potentiality of each one of us to be reduced closer to *homo sacer*.

To better analyze the situation, I will use Michael Mann’s definition of fascism as the paradigm against which to assess the rising far-right in Europe. In Mann’s view, fascism is composed of five elements, which can be summed up in the definition of fascism as “the pursuit of a

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<sup>67</sup> Gregor Aisch et al., “How Far Is Europe Swinging to the Right?” *The New York Times*, 22 May 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/05/22/world/europe/europe-right-wing-austria-hungary.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).



transcendent and cleansing nation-statism through paramilitarism.”<sup>68</sup> The five elements therefore are:

- i) Nationalism. In a book of letters between a Jew and a social nationalist, the social nationalist opens the conversation with his understanding of national socialism in the equation of “Nation = Land + Blood”.<sup>69</sup> The fascists are committed to an “organic” or “integral” nation, and therefore they have a strong sense of its “enemies”, both abroad and home. The original source of fascism’s extremism stems from the aggression against the enemies of this organic nation. The consequence is a low tolerance of ethnic and cultural diversity.<sup>70</sup> In the current refugee crisis, both ethnic and cultural identities of the refugees are viewed as the impediments of their potential integration in the European societies. At the first level, the refugees are seen through the ethnic lenses as Syrians, Iraqis or Afghans, depending on their nationality, but the fear that they would, as immigrants, expand in Europe and outnumber “white Christian Europeans” is widespread. At the second level, they are despised through the cultural lenses as Muslims who threaten the Christian roots of the European civilization. This view is much like Huntington’s clash of civilizations, with the exception that the physical borders are being dispersed, but the cultural borders are raised as the clash of civilizations is reduced to the national majorities vs. ethnic minorities (in this context especially the refugees), the Christian European citizen versus the Muslim Asian/African refugee.

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<sup>68</sup> Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 13.

<sup>69</sup> Fedor Gál and Matej, *Cez Ploty* (Absynt, 2016), p. 5.

<sup>70</sup> Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 13-14.

- ii) Statism. In the fascists' eyes, the state is a representation of the organic nation, and is "both goal and organizational form".<sup>71</sup> [...] "Since the state represented a nation that was viewed as being essentially organic, it needed to be authoritarian, embodying a singular, cohesive will expressed by a party elite adhering to the 'leadership principle'".<sup>72</sup> What has been emphasized among scholars is the "totalitarian quality of fascist goals and states" or "total transformation of society", even though, as Mann concludes, the fascist regimes were "more totalitarian in [their] transformational aims than in [their] actual regime form."<sup>73</sup> In the context of the European refugee crisis, it is especially the anti-EU sentiment across the Member States which see any attempts stemming from the EU level to resolve the refugee crisis as the "Brussels dictate", and thus the far-right calls for strengthening of the sovereignty of the nation-states. Even though pre-2008 economic crisis, statism was "out of fashion", Mann well predicted that "[g]iven time for a supposedly stateless neoliberalism to do similar damage to parts of the world, this rejection of the powerful state will probably fade. Then extreme statist values might be harnessed again to extreme paramilitary nationalism in movements resembling fascism."<sup>74</sup> In Austria, Hofer's poster ahead of the 2nd round of the presidential elections said: "Those who love our homeland don't divide it."<sup>75</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 14.

<sup>72</sup> Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 14.

<sup>73</sup> Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 14.

<sup>74</sup> Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 4.

<sup>75</sup> Hasnain Kazim et al., "Rise of the Populists: Austria a Step Ahead in Europe's Race to the Right," *Spiegel Online International*, 18 May 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/austrian-right-wing-has-lessons-for-europe-a-1092653.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

- iii) Transcendence. Mann argues that “ideologies are at their most powerful when they offer plausible yet transcendent visions of a better world,” when they “combine the rational with the beyond-rational.”<sup>76</sup> In the 1930s, the rise of the fascist movements followed the Great Economic Crisis of 1929; today, the rise of the far-right parties follows another great economic crisis of 2008, and as back then, also today the neoliberal capitalist system is seen as the one which failed the people. It is crucial that the fascists came from across the whole political specter (right, center, left) and from across social classes. They rejected conservative, liberal and social democratic notions about the harmoniousness of the social order and the conflict of interest groups as a normal feature of politics.<sup>77</sup> “Liberal and social democracies recognize no monopoly of virtue, no absolute truth. They are antiheroic. I have learned from writing these two books not to expect our politicians to be too principled. We need their instrumentalism, their dirty deals. But fascists differed. They saw politics as unlimited activism to achieve moral absolutes.”<sup>78</sup>
- iv) Cleansing. “Because opponents were seen as “enemies,” they were to be removed, and the nation cleansed of them. This was fascist aggression in action.”<sup>79</sup> Cleansing refers to elimination of both ethnic and political enemies, but while the political enemies could repent and thus be readmitted into the nation, ethnicity is seen as given

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<sup>76</sup> Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 15.

<sup>77</sup> Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 14.

<sup>78</sup> Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 8.

<sup>79</sup> Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 16.

and cannot be simply changed. The refugees today are seen both as political and ethnic opponents, whose culture threatens the European values. While they are not a part of Europe, they do not need to be removed, they just should not be accepted, even though their non-acceptance can also turn into a decision over their life and death. As for the refugees who have reached Europe, they have had to face increasing attacks on the places of their accommodation.<sup>80</sup>

- v) Paramilitarism. “Fascism was always uniformed, marching, armed, dangerous, and radically destabilizing of the existing order.”<sup>81</sup> It was of bottom-up quality, and their violence was portrayed as “defensive” but “successful”. For the fascist movements, however, paramilitarism as a value and an organizational form did not represent mere violence, but it was a part of their electoral struggle and undermining of the elites.<sup>82</sup>

Not all of these fascist aspects have necessarily been materialized, but what the turn to the far-right is about is the increasing acceptance of values and attitudes which bring societies closer to the aforementioned five elements of fascism. Far-right movements can be more or less fascist depending on the extent to which they encompass these elements within themselves, or they can still be termed as extreme-right if they strongly identify themselves with these elements.

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<sup>80</sup> “Attacks on refugees in Germany double in three months,” *Deutsche Welle*, 7 November 2015, <http://www.dw.com/en/attacks-on-refugees-in-germany-double-in-three-months/a-18833991> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>81</sup> Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 16.

<sup>82</sup> Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.16-17.

Furthermore, it may be the atmosphere in general, not necessarily a specific party, which favors the aforementioned values to come to the fore of the public discourse.

Indeed, most far-right movements tend to protest against the “fascist” label, since the words “fascist” and “fascism” have been abused in the political battles to discredit the political opponents. As Mann notes, “I doubt new movements will call themselves fascist, since the word is now so abhorred. Yet some of the substance of fascism lives on.”<sup>83</sup> A good example of such a profanation is the Austrian far-right presidential candidate Hofer’s attempt at discrediting of his opponent in the second round, whom he termed “green fascist.”<sup>84</sup>

The European refugee crisis has significantly contributed to the radicalization of Europe. While not being the only reason for it, anti-refugee and anti-immigration rhetoric made its mark in the political discourses across Europe. In Hungary, Poland, Finland and Switzerland, the extreme right-wing is already part of the government.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 4.

<sup>84</sup> Hasnain Kazim et al., “Rise of the Populists: Austria a Step Ahead in Europe's Race to the Right,” *Spiegel Online International*, 18 May 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/austrian-right-wing-has-lessons-for-europe-a-1092653.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>85</sup> Hasnain Kazim et al., “Rise of the Populists: Austria a Step Ahead in Europe's Race to the Right,” *Spiegel Online International*, 18 May 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/austrian-right-wing-has-lessons-for-europe-a-1092653.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

## 4.2 (Mis)management of the Refugee Crisis in Germany

In Germany, the EU's strongest economy and its de-facto political leader, Angela Merkel's *Willkommenkultur*, the open-door policy to welcome the refugees in need and integrate them backfired. This policy led to both the divisions in Merkel's own CDU party, and it also sparked the rise of the far-right political party Alternative for Germany. Merkel's Bavarian partner, Horst Seehofer, expressed his opinion that the party's conservative bloc "can't go on like this."<sup>86</sup>

One of CDU-CSU's rising political opponents, Germany's Alternative for Germany indeed appears as a political force with the aim of transcendence of the current political order. It started as a political movement against the Euro currency, and the refugee crisis made them felt more as a political force. In the words of Sylke Tempel of the German Council on Foreign Relations, their electoral success is the result of "not just because of the vacuum on the right, but because they attracted voters who were anti-Establishment, anti-liberalization, anti-European, anti-everything that has come to be regarded as the norm".<sup>87</sup> He assigns this to the fact "that we have a world which is changing, and that many people have the impression that this world is in great disorder."<sup>88</sup> The fear of the refugees has been on the rise in Germany.<sup>89</sup> It is symbolic that

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<sup>86</sup> Smale, Alison. "German State Elections Point to Vulnerability for Angela Merkel," *The New York Times*, 14 March 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/15/world/europe/german-state-elections-point-to-vulnerability-for-angela-merkel.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>87</sup> Smale, Alison. "German State Elections Point to Vulnerability for Angela Merkel," *The New York Times*, 14 March 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/15/world/europe/german-state-elections-point-to-vulnerability-for-angela-merkel.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>88</sup> Smale, Alison. "German State Elections Point to Vulnerability for Angela Merkel," *The New York Times*, 14 March 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/15/world/europe/german-state-elections-point-to-vulnerability-for-angela-merkel.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>89</sup> "German poll notes rise in fears over refugee influx," *Deutsche Welle*, 2 October 2016, <http://www.dw.com/en/german-poll-notes-rise-in-fears-over-refugee-influx/a-18757023> (accessed 31 May 2016).

Alternative for Germany may be the first political party to enter the Bundestag since World War II: while they narrowly failed to cross the required 5% threshold to win the seats in 2013, now the polls indicate that they may gain 10 to 12 percent.<sup>90</sup> In the German state elections of March 2016, Alternative for Germany gained up to 25 percent of the vote.<sup>91</sup>

The Cologne sexual assault made its mark on the public view of the refugees. As Sylke Tempel continues to argue, Cologne was “a killer” because it “is not just about giving shelter. It is about integration, and therefore a much, much deeper matter.”<sup>92</sup> She further adds that

“The fact that North African men who had arrived in Germany years ago — not in the current wave of migration — were blamed for the assaults gave people the feeling that the government had been lax about security, allowing these men to “hang around unnoticed for years,” engaging in petty or more serious crime, Ms. Tempel said. Most Germans she knows are still glad to help refugees, Ms. Tempel said. But after Cologne, she added, they are more likely to conclude that, no matter what, “these people don’t integrate.”<sup>93</sup>

As Drakulic notes, this was thus not as much about the crimes against the women themselves:

“The reason why the Cologne assaults have been blown up is, unfortunately, not because of women, but only because the perpetrators come from different backgrounds and have a different skin colour.”<sup>94</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Gregor Aisch et al., “How Far Is Europe Swinging to the Right?” *The New York Times*, 22 May 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/05/22/world/europe/europe-right-wing-austria-hungary.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>91</sup> Smale, Alison. “German State Elections Point to Vulnerability for Angela Merkel.” *The New York Times*, 14 March 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/15/world/europe/german-state-elections-point-to-vulnerability-for-angela-merkel.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>92</sup> Smale, Alison. “German State Elections Point to Vulnerability for Angela Merkel.” *The New York Times*, 14 March 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/15/world/europe/german-state-elections-point-to-vulnerability-for-angela-merkel.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>93</sup> Smale, Alison. “German State Elections Point to Vulnerability for Angela Merkel.” *The New York Times*, 14 March 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/15/world/europe/german-state-elections-point-to-vulnerability-for-angela-merkel.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>94</sup> Slavenka Drakulic, “Cologne: The second assault on women,” *Eurozine*, 14 January 2016, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2016-01-14-drakulic-en.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

Expectations are high when it comes to the refugees. In a way, they really are expected to be “sacred”, because any overstepping of the boundaries, both legal and illegal attack on the established norms decreases the chances of their acceptance. A characteristic of the group is thus defined by the singular case (or a set of singular cases). Even though the German Federal Office of Criminal Investigation (BKA) concluded that “crimes committed by refugees stood at the same level as those committed by native Germans”<sup>95</sup> On the contrary, attacks against the refugees, as opposed to the crimes committed by the refugees, do not seem to gather as much popular attention. While in the second quarter of 2015, the attacks on refugee accommodations amounted to 136, in the third quarter, they doubled to 274.<sup>96</sup>

The EU-Turkey deal about the exchange of the refugees can also be seen in the light of the internal politics in Germany, where Angela Merkel may simply need to compromise her stern politics of *Willkommenkultur* for the refugees in order to maintain the political power at home.

### 4.3 Search for Transcendence in Austria

Recent presidential elections in Austria showed how much such a rhetoric can help win elections. Norbert Hofer, the presidential candidate of the right-wing populist Freedom Party of

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<sup>95</sup> “Report: refugees have not increased crime rate in Germany.” *Deutsche Welle*, 13 November 2015, <http://www.dw.com/en/report-refugees-have-not-increased-crime-rate-in-germany/a-18848890> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>96</sup> “Attacks on refugees in Germany double in three months,” *Deutsche Welle*, 7 November 2015, <http://www.dw.com/en/attacks-on-refugees-in-germany-double-in-three-months/a-18833991> (accessed 31 May 2016).



Austria (FPÖ),<sup>97</sup> "decisively opposed to forced multiculturalism, globalization and mass immigration,"<sup>98</sup> won the first round of the 2016 presidential elections with an "unexpected" 35 percent.<sup>99</sup> He eventually lost to the former Green Party leader, Alexander Van der Bellen and passed into the second round against the did not eventually win, his loss was marginal: if the ideologies which the two presidential candidates represent are taken to their extreme, then the election result basically represented a draw between the representatives of the two major political doctrines that arose in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, namely fascism and environmentalism,<sup>100</sup> and a blow to the mainstream political parties. "Across Europe, large, mainstream parties are losing power and influence. It has happened in Spain, France and Germany, but nowhere has the phenomenon been as dramatically visible as during the first round of the presidential elections in Austria."<sup>101</sup> This is a strong indication that an increasingly stronger ground is made for one of the key aforementioned characteristics of fascism, namely transcendence with the goal of overcoming the current political order.

"We are in a situation where people don't understand the world anymore, because it is changing so fast," said Georg Hoffmann-Ostenhof, a columnist for the liberal weekly magazine Profil.

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<sup>97</sup> Hasnain Kazim et al., "Rise of the Populists: Austria a Step Ahead in Europe's Race to the Right," *Spiegel Online International*, 18 May 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/austrian-right-wing-has-lessons-for-europe-a-1092653.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>98</sup> Hasnain Kazim et al., "Rise of the Populists: Austria a Step Ahead in Europe's Race to the Right," *Spiegel Online International*, 18 May 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/austrian-right-wing-has-lessons-for-europe-a-1092653.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>99</sup> Hasnain Kazim et al., "Rise of the Populists: Austria a Step Ahead in Europe's Race to the Right," *Spiegel Online International*, 18 May 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/austrian-right-wing-has-lessons-for-europe-a-1092653.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>100</sup> Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 1.

<sup>101</sup> Hasnain Kazim et al., "Rise of the Populists: Austria a Step Ahead in Europe's Race to the Right," *Spiegel Online International*, 18 May 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/austrian-right-wing-has-lessons-for-europe-a-1092653.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

“And then came the migrants, and people were told that the politicians had lost control of the borders. That just heightened the overall sense that control was gone.”<sup>102</sup>

“Just how much influence a far-right president might exert in Austria is hotly debated. The office has been seen as largely ceremonial. But powers laid out in the 1929 Constitution, still in effect, enable the president to dismiss a government or refuse to swear in a controversial leader. Mr. Hofer and the Freedom Party have campaigned on what their posters call “a new understanding of the office.” Mr. Hofer has said he would give the government six months to a year to fix what he sees as Austria’s woes — migrants, crime, rising unemployment — and then dismiss it if necessary.”<sup>103</sup>

“If one looks geographically at the congratulatory messages the FPÖ candidate Hofer received following his triumph in the first round of presidential elections, a checkered pattern of new European nationalists emerges. Marine Le Pen from the French party Front National was first, followed by the Lega Nord of Matteo Salvini and Forza Italia, under the leadership of former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. From the Netherlands, congratulations came from PVV head Geert Wilders and from Germany, plaudits were sent by the right-wing populists from the Alternative for Germany (AfD). The right wing in Europe is becoming organized and developing contacts across the Continent. The election on Sunday is far more than just a purely Austrian affair.”<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Alison Smale, “Long Dominated by Center, Austria Splinters to Left and Right,” *The New York Times*, 15 May 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/16/world/europe/long-dominated-by-center-austria-splinters-to-left-and-right.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>103</sup> Alison Smale, “Long Dominated by Center, Austria Splinters to Left and Right,” *The New York Times*, 15 May 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/16/world/europe/long-dominated-by-center-austria-splinters-to-left-and-right.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>104</sup> Hasnain Kazim et al., “Rise of the Populists: Austria a Step Ahead in Europe's Race to the Right,” *Spiegel Online International*, 18 May 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/austrian-right-wing-has-lessons-for-europe-a-1092653.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

“The new arrivals, many of them Muslim, are regularly portrayed in tabloids, and by Mr. Hofer and his party, as freeloaders bringing crime, rape and even murder to this country of 8.4 million people.”<sup>105</sup>

Mayor Peter Suntinger sets the European refugee crisis in a much broader specter of the fight against Islamization:

“In a wood-panelled parlor, Mayor Peter Suntinger has set out a Bible, a book about Islam and a further volume with the title: “The Koran, God and I.” In addition, he has put on display colored printouts of the asylum-seeker IDs and passport photos belonging to seven refugees from Syria who now live in the village. He wants to show everything that is going wrong in Austria -- and in Europe at large.”<sup>106</sup>

In the Mayor’s eyes, “The Koran sees only dead Christians as good Christians,” and Europe only makes sense “if it focuses on preventing the Islamization.”<sup>107</sup> He is accentuating the upcoming clash of civilization, and as he sees it, “[t]he West is colliding with the East [...] the people have to wake up!”<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Alison Smale, “Long Dominated by Center, Austria Splinters to Left and Right,” *The New York Times*, 15 May 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/16/world/europe/long-dominated-by-center-austria-splinters-to-left-and-right.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>106</sup> Hasnain Kazim et al., “Rise of the Populists: Austria a Step Ahead in Europe's Race to the Right,” *Spiegel Online International*, 18 May 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/austrian-right-wing-has-lessons-for-europe-a-1092653.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>107</sup> Hasnain Kazim et al., “Rise of the Populists: Austria a Step Ahead in Europe's Race to the Right,” *Spiegel Online International*, 18 May 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/austrian-right-wing-has-lessons-for-europe-a-1092653.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>108</sup> Hasnain Kazim et al., “Rise of the Populists: Austria a Step Ahead in Europe's Race to the Right,” *Spiegel Online International*, 18 May 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/austrian-right-wing-has-lessons-for-europe-a-1092653.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

"Because of the overpopulation of foreigners, many more people have weapons here."<sup>109</sup> Even though the paramilitary forces are not seen in the public sphere in Austria, what is common here with the idea of paramilitarism is the evaluation of the situation as being one which requires more than a protection from the state; the state is seen as not strong enough when the people buy increasingly more guns; thus they give an indication that they may see the state as failing them in some of the aspects – especially the security ones.

#### 4.4 Who are Homines Sacri Now?

It is a historical irony that the countries of the so-called communist Eastern bloc, whose citizens were seeking refuge in the Western democracies pre-1989, “are dripping with visceral xenophobia”.<sup>110</sup> The Visegrad countries are an example of a regional grouping which has been long grasping to find a unifying theme, and they found it in the protection of Christian Europe by prevention of intake of refugees.<sup>111</sup>

An infamous example is that of Slovakia, where Prime Minister Robert Fico held several speeches in which he mentioned that one of the priorities is the prevention of creation of any

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<sup>109</sup> Hasnain Kazim et al., “Rise of the Populists: Austria a Step Ahead in Europe's Race to the Right,” *Spiegel Online International*, 18 May 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/austrian-right-wing-has-lessons-for-europe-a-1092653.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>110</sup> Nick Thorpe, “Visegrad: The castle where a Central European bloc was born,” *BBC News*, 21 February 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-35613206> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>111</sup> Nick Thorpe, “Visegrad: The castle where a Central European bloc was born,” *BBC News*, 21 February 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-35613206> (accessed 31 May 2016).

“coherent Muslim communities” in Slovakia.<sup>112</sup> Securitizing all the Muslims by linking Islam to security threats of terrorism and sexual violence, he declared that the Slovak Government is monitoring “every Muslim” on the Slovak territory.<sup>113</sup> The Slovak Muslim Community responded negatively, expressing that it felt fear<sup>114</sup>, following also racially motivated attacks on Muslims in Slovakia in the recent past.<sup>115</sup> By declaring that they cannot be integrated, that “[t]hey can’t, it simply doesn’t work”,<sup>116</sup> the Slovak Prime Minister, in effect, pushed also Slovak citizens out of the sphere of politics, and seeing this through the paradigm of *homo sacer*, reduced them to bare life. Already Hannah Arendt noted that the one of the great shocks of the European nation-states as a result of the arrival of the refugees was “the realization that it was impossible to get rid of them or transform them into nationals of the country of refuge.”<sup>117</sup>

If we are now asking for borders, we must also accept letting people die at them, because people in need will always be migrating and seeking refuge.<sup>118</sup> We constitute the borders as we see them fit: along racial lines to exclude the Roma minorities or Middle Eastern immigrants; along

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<sup>112</sup> “Fico rejects creation of compact Muslim community in Slovakia.” *The Slovak Spectator*, 7 January 2016, <http://spectator.sme.sk/c/20070863/fico-rejects-creation-of-compact-muslim-community-in-slovakia.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>113</sup> “Fico rejects creation of compact Muslim community in Slovakia.” *The Slovak Spectator*, 7 January 2016, <http://spectator.sme.sk/c/20070863/fico-rejects-creation-of-compact-muslim-community-in-slovakia.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>114</sup> “Fico rejects creation of compact Muslim community in Slovakia.” *The Slovak Spectator*, 7 January 2016, <http://spectator.sme.sk/c/20070863/fico-rejects-creation-of-compact-muslim-community-in-slovakia.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>115</sup> “Fico rejects creation of compact Muslim community in Slovakia.” *The Slovak Spectator*, 7 January 2016, <http://spectator.sme.sk/c/20070863/fico-rejects-creation-of-compact-muslim-community-in-slovakia.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>116</sup> “Fico rejects creation of compact Muslim community in Slovakia.” *The Slovak Spectator*, 7 January 2016, <http://spectator.sme.sk/c/20070863/fico-rejects-creation-of-compact-muslim-community-in-slovakia.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>117</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Decline of Nation-State and the End of Rights of Man,” in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Society, 1951), pp. 279.

<sup>118</sup> Jagoda Marinić, “Yes, we can’t,” *Die Tageszeitung*, 21 January 2016, <http://www.taz.de/Debatte-Merkels-Fluechtlingspolitik/!5266509/> (accessed 31 May 2016).

national lines when we want to excluded the minorities living on a territory of a European nation-state (e.g. the Hungarians living in the south of Slovakia); the list continues, but eventually we end up drawing the borders along the cultural lines to define ourselves as Christians protecting ourselves from the Muslim refugees' culture. Furthermore, the borders are not drawn just along race, religion, etc., but also along varying opinions, and those which threaten the identities to which people cling, those become undesirable and are marked unacceptable. See the case of Gross in Poland, where he was described as "an exceptionally dangerous slanderer", "the lethal danger for Poland", somebody who "crossed every possible border of spitting on Poland".<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Anna Bikont, "Jan Gross' Order of Merit," *Tablet*, 15 March 2016, <http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/books/198490/jan-gross-order-of-merit> (accessed 31 May 2016).

## 5 CONCLUSION

The European refugee crisis of 2015 with well over a million refugees seeking asylum in Europe has been, in terms of scale, the largest migration crisis in Europe since the end of World War II, and one of the greatest challenges to the European political order since then. This has been accentuated by the preceding economic crisis of 2008, which was equated by some to the Great Economic Crisis of 1929, which in turn preceded the rise of the fascist movements across Europe and led to the establishment of extermination camps, the highest instance of the sovereign exception and the sovereign ban, the place where human life was reduced to the bare life.

Yet even the concentration camps were preceded by the detention camps for the refugees. While this is not a prediction that the concentration camps will follow in the present day as well, parallels can be found when the camp is perceived as the highest instance of biopolitical power over bare life. It has been argued that the refugees of the present European refugee crisis not only find themselves in the state of exception as a consequence of a civil war such as the one in Syria or of life under an authoritarian regime, where the decision over their life would be the decision over bare life, but when they flee and seek refuge in Europe, the European policies and attitudes perpetuate their status of *homo sacer*, be it the actual journey to and across the European continent or the detention camps as the places where they have to wait for the decision on their status, until the sovereign “names” them.

What is, however, at stake, is not only the life of the refugees as *homines sacri*, even though they are most exposed to their bare lives; the relationship between sovereign and *homo sacer* is also the paradigm of the European nation-states. The refugee crisis exposes the vulnerability of the refugees, but our radicalizing responses to it also expose how much we fear to have our way of life altered in any way. The current European refugee crisis is a mirror which exposes our fears, and we consequently hold more firmly to our identities and build upon our social prejudices; as Arendt highlights, the “danger of prejudice lies in the very fact that it is always anchored in the past – so uncommonly well-anchored that it not only anticipates and blocks judgement, but also makes both judgement and a genuine experience of the present impossible.”<sup>120</sup> An increasing fear of and discontent with the changes which the globalization brought in the recent years make us cling to our prejudices more dearly; Hannah Arendt sees it “in all times and places [that] it is the task of politics to shed light upon and dispel prejudices,”<sup>121</sup> but what we witness is, instead of carrying out of politics as a space among men with differences, an acceptance of the more totalizing approaches which occupy the public sphere, the relationship of violence which empowers the sovereign at the expense of the citizens as legitimators of its constituted power. As a result, we do not only act as the sovereigns towards the refugees who then are reduced to *homines sacri*, but we uncover the potentiality of ourselves becoming *homines sacri* as well.

When Slavoj Žižek attempts to answer the question what our fear of refugees tells us about ourselves, he accentuates that we need to recognize the stranger in ourselves:

“Is a “way of life” not precisely such a way of being a stranger on the earth? A specific “way of life” is not just composed of a set of abstract – Christian, Muslim – “values”; it is

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<sup>120</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Promise of Politics* (Schocken Books, 2007), p. 101.

<sup>121</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Promise of Politics* (Schocken Books, 2007), p. 99.



something embodied in a thick network of everyday practices: how we eat and drink, sing, make love, how we relate to authorities. We “are” our way of life: it is our second nature, which is why direct “education” is not able to change it. Something much more radical is needed, a kind of Brechtian “extraneation”, a deep existential experience by means of which it all of a sudden strikes us how stupidly meaningless and arbitrary our customs and rituals are – there is nothing natural in the way we embrace and kiss, in the way we wash ourselves, in the way we behave while eating...”<sup>122</sup>

A noteworthy example of such an extraneation is the metamorphosis of an ex-Jobbik (Hungarian extreme right-wing parliamentary party) member, who discovered his Jewish roots and underwent a radical transformation.<sup>123</sup> However, most of us do not undergo such radical transformations under the usual conditions of our lives. We need a higher goal in our lives, but we fear and cling stronger to our identities. So we stick to those abstract ways of life, which Zizek describes, and one of them relates to our understanding as belonging to Christian Europe.

What is awaiting the Western world in the near future are, the referendum in the United Kingdom whether the UK should remain in the EU or leave, the so-called “Brexit” referendum; in France, the extreme right-wing Marie Le Pen’s National Front is expected to have made its mark on the French political scene; in the US, Donald Trump’s dominance in the Republican primary elections for the US President and the vulgarization of the public discourse by marking the Muslims as a threat gains significant force; the prospects of overcoming the dichotomy of sovereign vs. *homo sacer* are bleak, the idea of politics as freedom seems to be in distance; the camp as the paradigm of today’s politics may seem much closer to the reality than that of the polis.

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<sup>122</sup> Slavoj Žižek, “Slavoj Žižek: What our fear of refugees says about Europe,” *New Statesman*, 29 February 2016, <http://www.newstatesman.com/print/node/301236> (accessed 31 May 2016).

<sup>123</sup> Jan Puhl, “Metamorphosis: A Hungarian Extremist Explores His Jewish Roots,” *Spiegel Online International*, 3 April 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/a-hungarian-right-wing-extremist-explores-his-jewish-roots-a-962156.html> (accessed 31 May 2016).

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