

Brussels and Budapest: Eurocritical Hungarian and European Union Identity Construction in the Age of Orbán

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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 in International Relations

Supervisor: Professor Péter Balázs

Word Count: 17, 206

Budapest, Hungary
2017

Abstract:

This thesis analyzes the fraught relationship between Hungarian Eurocritics and the European Union. It draws on statements and interviews from elite members of both parties, specifically the Fidesz and Jobbik parties in Hungary and members of the European Parliament and the European Commission. The thesis seeks to understand how each side of this debate crafts their respective identities in response to one another, and how these identities inform the political behavior of the respective parties. The thesis employs a constructivist theoretical framework of textual analysis from both sides of the debate. The thesis finds that each side of the debate is heavily influenced by the constructed manner in which they view themselves, and offers a critique of each side's arguments and positions.

Acknowledgements:

The creation of this thesis would have been impossible without the assistance, support and guidance of many wonderful people. First, I would like to thank Professor Petér Balázs for guiding me in my research, and for sharing with me his vast wealth of knowledge about Hungarian and European affairs. I would also like to thank representatives Márton Gyöngyösi and Richárd Hörcsik for taking the time to conduct interviews that were instrumental to my research. Additionally, I would like to thank Daniel Landeck and Georgina Bernáth for helping to make those interviews possible. A thank you is necessary to Robin Bellers for giving me some of the most useful feedback I've ever received on my academic work. Finally, none of this would have been possible without the constant support of my CEU classmates, without whom I would have surely succumbed, in horrific fashion, to the stress and strain of this project.

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Introduction

The rise of Eurosceptic and Eurocritical governments that regularly lob verbal assaults at the European Union has been one of the main sources of political friction within the European Union since the beginning of the decade. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán¹ of Hungary has been one of the main political figures leading this charge. The contemporary political discourse coming from Prime Minister Orbán and his Fidesz party has been some of the most critical in Europe regarding the nature of the European Union and his country's role and place in that Union. For his part, Prime Minister Orbán has made multiple overtures towards Russia and can be clearly seen as taking a path away from the influence of Brussels. While there are, of course, a wide range of opinions and stances regarding the European Union across the Hungarian political spectrum, there is an undeniable Eurocritical flavor coming from some of the nation's top political actors; in addition to Fidesz, the right-conservative Jobbik party (which has become a prominent force in national Hungarian politics) has been critical of the European Union and has been targeting the European Union in their political statements as well.²

The European Union has targeted Orbán's government as a primary agitator among its member states. This is evidenced by official reports on what the European Union has deemed unsavory practices emerging from Orbán's government. It is further indicated by repeated provocations by members of the European Parliament citing Orbán and other Hungarian Eurocritics as a potential (or current) thorn in the European Union's side.³

Furthermore, the European Union has an intense interest in preserving its identity as a normative power; i.e., an institution that draws its political clout from preserving and

¹ Within Hungarian media and culture, names are written with the family name first, followed by the given name (ex, Orbán Viktor). However, within the corpus of Western media, Hungarians are referred to by providing the given name first (ex. Viktor Orbán); this thesis will be following the style used in Western media and discourse.

² Borbála Göncz, and György Lengyel, "Changing Attitudes of Hungarian Political Elites Towards the EU (2007-2014)." Vol. 41, No. 4 (158), *Special Issue: National Political Elites and the Crisis of European Integration, Country Studies 2007-2014* (2016), pp. 106-128.

³ Associated Press. "Exclude Hungary from EU, Says Luxembourg's Asselbon." *BBC*. September 13, 2016. Last Accessed March 19, 2017.

propagating a set of political and social norms; it faces a dire threat when its constituent members, such as Prime Minister Orbán's Hungary, willfully disregard these norms and threaten to undermine the fundamental principles of the European Union. With the election of governments around the world with similar "illiberal" tendencies to those of Orbán, such as Trump in the United States or the PiS⁴ in Poland, the rise of conservative right movements is potentially entering a new golden age.⁵ The European Union's response to these provocations will be extremely telling as to how the Union plans to negotiate what may be an existential threat to its basic political character.

0.1: Background

The two main Eurocritical elements within contemporary Hungarian politics are the Fidesz and Jobbik parties. Fidesz, also known as the Hungarian Civic Alliance, is the current majority party, holding 114 of 199 seats in the national parliament. The party is additionally well-represented at the sub-national level, as it currently holds 200 of 419 county assemblies. Fidesz has held a ruling majority in the national parliament since their sweeping electoral victory in the 2009 election, in which the party took control of the government back from the Socialist Party (MSZP), who had held governing power since 2002. The party is led by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who has been Prime Minister since 2010; Orbán had previously served as the Hungarian Prime Minister from 1998-2002, overseeing the initial phases of Hungary's accession to the European Union.

Jobbik, which is also referred to The Movement for a Better Hungary, is another source of Eurocriticism from within Hungary. Jobbik has been traditionally more radical than Fidesz, and they have been accused of a litany of racist and ultranationalist positions, including anti-Semitism, anti-Romaism; the party has also advanced conservative and repressive social values,

⁴ PiS is the Law and Justice Party which is currently the ruling party in Poland. It is often twinned with Fidesz as an example of a nationalist, Eurosceptic party.

⁵ George Friedman. "Hungary, Poland, and Illiberal Democracy." *Geopoliticalfeatures.com*. March 16, 2016. Last Accessed March 27, 2017.

including advancing legislation that would target the gay and transgender communities. In recent years, Jobbik has attempted to scale down its more radical rhetoric, renouncing anti-Semitic positions and its criticism of the Roma community to move to the political center.⁶ Jobbik was founded in 2003, and first appeared on electoral ballots in the 2006 round of parliamentary elections. The party's initial foray into national politics failed to garner the party any seats in parliament. By 2010, however, the party saw a dramatic increase in support, as they won the third most votes of any Hungarian party, and occupied forty-seven of 386 seats. The party won twenty percent of the national vote in the 2014 elections, and remains the third largest party in government. The party has been led by Chairman Gabor Vona since 2006.

0.2: Research Question and Relevance

The research question for this thesis will focus on how Hungarian Eurocritics view themselves in the context of the European Union and how the European Union has responded to the political discourse emanating from Hungary. The thesis will show exactly how political agents within Hungary have positioned the European Union as a potential enemy, and how the European Union responds to dissent among the ranks of its member states, specifically, in this case, Hungary. By understanding these twin dynamics, a greater understanding of the behavior of the European Union in the face of political strife can be arrived at. If it is revealed that the European Union has proved unwilling, unable (or both) to respond to dissent within its ranks, this may have dire implications for the efficacy of the Union in the years to come.

The thesis will be of value to the field as the rise of Eurosceptic parties will prove to be the driving political force of the present and near future in the European Union. Across Eastern Europe, Eurosceptic parties have already seen great political success. The elections in the spring of 2017 in the Netherlands and France were hailed as a victory for proponents of the European

⁶ Nick Thorpe. "Is Hungary's Jobbik Leader Really Ditching Far-Right Past?". *BBC*. November 15, 2016. Last accessed May 14, 2017.

Union, as Eurosceptical parties in both these contests failed to win power.⁷ However, the presence of Eurosceptic candidates, be it Wilders in the Netherlands or Le Pen in France, in such places of prominence in European elections nevertheless speaks to the presence and influence of Euroscepticism across the continent, even if the most recent national elections speak to a backlash against anti-EU forces.⁸ Using Hungarian Eurocritical statements as a case study will go a long way towards understanding how these parties perceive the European Union, and how the European Union constructs its response. Furthermore, Orbán has been held up as the ideal example of Eurosceptic governments within the European Union. The thesis will show how Eurosceptic movements (specifically those in Hungary) go about framing the European Union as a hostile agent which works to undermine the efficacy of the sovereignty of member states. Finally, the thesis will offer an understanding of how the European Union responds to governments of its member states who are actively impugning it.

0.3: Methodology

The thesis will employ textual analysis of statements coming from both parties (The European Union and members of the Hungarian government) and will look at these statements within the framework of constructivist international relations theory, with a focus on the role identity in political maneuvers and positions. The speeches and transcripts of key members of the Hungarian government will be studied to gain an understanding of the accusations levied against the European Union, as well as the general perception of the European Union. The texts analyzed, while being the words of individuals, and, in certain cases regarding the European Union, small groups, will nonetheless provide for an understanding of the larger political realities of within both Hungary and the European Union.

⁷ Mathieu Rosemain and Matthias Blamont. "Marcon Wins French Presidency, to Sighs of Relief in Europe". *Reuters*. May 8, 2017. Last accessed May 19, 2017.

⁸ The German federal elections, set for September 2017, have also been noted as a potential source of further national debate on the future of the European Union, this time from the Union's strongest single national economy.

In addition to a textual analysis of these documents, the thesis will incorporate interviews with sitting members of the Hungarian government. The interviews were conducted with National Assembly members Márton Gyöngyösi of the Jobbik Party and Richárd Hörcsik of the Fidesz Party⁹. The intent of the interviews will be to gain an understanding of the current attitude towards the European Union within Hungary as can only be understood directly from the source itself. The interviews will be of a specific nature, one employed in social sciences; i.e., that of elite interviews. The interview subjects will be members of the Hungarian government, and, as such, certain consideration need to be taken into account when dealing with the interview subjects.¹⁰ Additionally, it should be noted the interviewees will be trained in responding to questions of the nature to be posed in the thesis, given that they are the members of their respective parties who are tasked with public relations and communications. The interviews will be semi-structured and focus on the nature of the respondents' answers to questions pre-written before the interview begins, as well as questions that arise during the interview via the direction of the dialogue proffered by the respondents.¹¹

This methodology is appropriate as it will allow for a combination of methods that will achieve an optimal understanding of the research. It will allow for an understanding of the formation of the “self” and “the other” in the discourse coming from the Hungarian side of the research, and this will in turn allow for an understanding of the ways in which responses are formulated from the European Union.

Prime Minister Orbán's speeches are published on the official government website translated into English. While this is, of course, not a satisfactory substitute for language

⁹ Additional interviews were requested by the author. However, the Jobbik Party was only able to offer Mr. Gyöngyösi, citing the run-up to the next parliamentary elections as a reason why additional members were unavailable. For Fidesz, initially, two members of parliament agreed to respond to interview requests; however, only Mr. Hörcsik responded. Fidesz said that the reason for the low response rate was a result of debates in the Hungarian parliament regarding the passage of the national budget.

¹⁰ Joel Aderbach and Bert Rockman. *Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews*. PS: Political Science and Politics Vol. 35, No. 4 (Dec., 2002), 673-674.

¹¹ Hilary Arksey. “Interviewing for Social Scientists.” *SAGE Publications*. 1999, London. Pg. 103-107.

proficiency, it does allow for, at the very least, a cursory examination into the dialogue emanating from the chambers of the Hungarian government. Additionally, it is hoped that the interviews with government officials (which will be conducted in English) will fill any gaps present from the Hungarian perspective. With these interviews in hand, combined with the information from the English translations of the speeches from Prime Minister Orbán, it is hoped that a comprehensive picture of Hungarian discourse regarding the European Union will be gleaned.

0.4: Thesis Structure

The thesis will begin with an explanation and justification for the theoretical framework to be employed. The first chapter will outline the theoretical underpinnings that will inform the research of the thesis, and seek to respond to the larger debates within the field of international relations which are germane to the topic at hand. It will effectively tell the reader why the theoretical chosen has been deemed to be an appropriate approach, and will hope to highlight why other theoretical avenues would not be inadequate for the intended research.

The second chapter of the thesis will feature analysis of the dialogue emerging from the Hungarian side of the debate. This will include speeches, interviews and other textual analysis that will give shape to how elements of Hungarian political life have chosen to construct their interactions with the European Union. This chapter will seek to show the unique ways in which Hungarian politicians have gone about positioning themselves and their state within the context of, and against, the European Union.

The third chapter of the thesis will look at responses from the European Union in regards to what may be called “the Hungarian question”. This section will endeavor to examine the ways in which the European Union has responded to the provocations coming from Hungary,

and will show the ways in which elements of the European Union have engaged in their own identity formations in crafting their responses.

The fourth chapter will be a synthesis of the information provided in chapters two and three. It will identify the manners in which Hungarian and European Union mutual identity formation act in tandem and response to one another. In doing so, this chapter will additionally offer an analysis of the effectiveness of the European Union's responses to Hungarian provocations, and provide an analysis of weaknesses and strengths from both the Hungarian and European Union sides.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

Constructivist theory offers an ideal theoretical framework for the subsequent research of this thesis. The following chapter will begin with an overview of the theoretical debate within IR which surrounds constructivism. It will then outline core tenants of constructivist theory and why it is applicable to a study of the interactions between Eurosceptic elements of the Hungarian government and the European Union. The chapter will additionally seek to illuminate the definition and importance of identity in the field of international relations. Finally, the chapter will also offer a defense of why the framework was chosen in favor of other theoretical approaches.

1.1: Rationalist-Reflectivist Debate

The debate between rationalist and reflectivist IR theories, as first termed by Robert Keohane, is one of the key contemporary fracture points within the field. In the words of Christian Reut-Smit, this theoretical split represents the fourth great debate in the study of international relations.¹² This debate focuses on fundamental ontological questions, and strikes at the heart of international theory. The debate deals with issues of level of analysis, assumptions about international structures, and the nature of the social sciences, and provides a backdrop for the theoretical framework of this thesis.

Rationalist thought underpins two of the most historically influential schools of IR thought: realism and liberalism, as well as those theory's respective subsections. Rationalist thought begins its analysis of international relations on an individual level; the individual is not necessarily on the personal level, but can, and often does, start with the assumption that states are atomistic actors which form the bedrock of international analysis.¹³ Rationalists focus on

¹²Christian Reus-Smit. "Dangerous Liaisons? Critical International Relations Theory and Constructivism." *Journal of International Relations*. 1998, 4. Pg. 263

¹³ K.M. Fierke. "Constructivism" in *International Relations Theory: Discipline and Diversity*. Tim Dunne, et al. Oxford University Press. New York. 2010. Pg. 182.

the isolated individual rather than the social dimension in which that individual exists.¹⁴ In contrast, constructivism gives attention to the social context in which actors exist, and seeks to show that it is impossible to understand individual behavior in a vacuum isolated from any broader social environment.

Additionally, rationalist theories place a premium on the influence of material factors, positing that social realities are downstream from material concerns. In the words of Alexander Wendt, “the fault line between realist and constructivist vision of international structures is that realism thinks it is only material, while constructivism thinks it is also social”.¹⁵ For rationalists, the structure of international relations is a function of competition and the distribution of material capabilities. The subjects of rationalism are guided by the logic of consequences, a rational act is one that will produce an outcome that maximizes the interests of an individual unit.¹⁶ In doing so, rationalists claim that reflectivist theories (a catch-all exonym for IR theories who contest tenants of rationalism, including constructivism) are adding pieces to the puzzle that need not be there. For rationalists, behavior in the international arena can be explained by assessing rational choices which are enacted with the intent of maximizing an individual (or states’) power. In dealing with international structures, realists claim that reflectivists have missed the ontological mark, and are muddying the waters of the field by incorporating theoretical concepts which have no business in international relations.

Another point of debate between rationalist and reflectivist/constructivist thought deals with the manner in which analysis of the international world is done. Rationalists accuse constructivists and other reflective theories of being deficient in scientific rigor and being nothing more than criticism of rationalist-positivist approaches, lacking for themselves a

¹⁴ Ibid., Pg. 184.

¹⁵ Bill McSweeney, “Security, Identity and Interests: A Sociology of International Relations”. University Press. Cambridge. 1999. Pg. 123.

¹⁶ Fierke. Pg. 182.

coherent theoretical structure.¹⁷ Rationalists maintain that their theoretical opponents are not, in fact, performing the study of international relations for themselves, but are rather engaged in vague and nebulous projects that can not, in most of their iterations, be considered stand-alone subsets of the field. This claim has resulted in an acute amount of vitriol coming from the side rationalist side of the debate. In response to this claim, reflectivist scholars have claimed that the rigor and positivist nature of knowledge that rationalists themselves profess to uphold is, itself, a chimera, as the act of analysis of any kind is necessarily influenced by the person doing that analysis.¹⁸ Thus, this debate within the field deals with questions of both ontology and epistemology, and deals with questions at the core of International Relations.

This thesis will hope to highlight the strengths of constructivist theory. It will seek to show the ways in which identity and identity formation exerts its influence on contemporary political discourse. It will attempt to take a holistic view of international relations, with an incorporation of and appreciation for the power of social dynamics that is lost in rationalist perspectives.

1.2: Constructivism

Constructivist theory deals with the phenomenon at play in the interactions between the European Union and Eurocritical members of the Hungarian government. It places value on the importance of the ways in which debates are positioned and who international actors believe themselves to be. It affords weight to the importance of self and mutual perception, factors which are not given proper consideration in other strains of international relations theory.

Christian Reus-Smith noted that constructivism “is characterized by an emphasis on the importance of normative as well as material structures, on the role of identity in shaping

¹⁷ Milja Kurki and Colin Wight. “International Relations and Social Science” in *International Relations Theory: Discipline and Diversity*. Tim Dunne, et al. Oxford University Press. New York. 2010. Pg. 25.

¹⁸ Siba N. Grovogui. “Postcolonialism” in *International Relations Theory: Discipline and Diversity*. Tim Dunne, et al. Oxford University Press. New York. 2010. Pg. 241.

political action, on the mutually constructive relationship between agents and structures”.¹⁹ The normative elements of international relations are thus best dealt with within a constructivist framework. Constructivists additionally believe, as their name indicates, that the social world and the international realm are primarily the consequence of identity formation reinforced via communication. Hence, understanding these discourses and identities are of the utmost importance; or, as Sterling-Folker illustrates, “the words we use and the narratives we invoke matter a great deal to the social reality that is created”.²⁰ Constructivist thought rebukes the positivist and realist notions of a static, objectively existing political arena in which actors behave. Rather, they operate under the premise that social realities are the product of identity, discourse and language. As Kratochwil indicates: “precisely because social reality is not simply ‘out there’ but is made by the actors, the concepts we use are part of a vocabulary that is deeply imbricated with our political projects”.²¹ The vocabulary and terminology employed by the European Union and Hungarian Eurocritics in their verbal political disputes informs the very nature of the conflict between the two entities.

Tensions between the European Union and the ruling governments of its constituent member states is not a new phenomenon. In 1996, it was written that some of the potential problems of the European Union as organized under the Maastricht Treaty would be those of “long-standing resentments over regulatory decisions of the Brussels bureaucracy [and] fears of the erosion of national culture in a wider Europe”.²² These problems have not abated in the intervening two decades, and have intensified within factions of European politics who are critical of the European Union as a project. These problems do, of course, have material

¹⁹ Christian Reus-Smit. “Constructivism” in Scott Burchill, et al. *Theories of International Relations: 2nd Edition*. New York, New York. Palgrave. 2001. Pg. 209.

²⁰ Jennifer Sterling-Folker. “Constructivist Approaches” in *Making Sense of International Relations Theory*. Lynne Rienner Publishers. London. 2006. Pg. 119.

²¹ Friedrich Kratochwil. “History, Action and Identity: Revisiting the ‘Second’ Great Debate and Assessing Its Importance for Social Theory”. *European Journal of International Relations*. Vol. 12(1): 5-29. 2006. Pg. 11.

²² Yale Ferguson and Richard Mansbach. “The Past as Prelude to the Future? Identities and Loyalties in Global Politics” in Lapid and Kratochwil, *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory*. Lynne Rienner Publisher. London. 1996. Pg. 33. (Ferguson and Mansbach 1996)

considerations; they are, however, first and foremost problems of identity. To quote Alexander Wendt, “the behavior and functions of actors in the international arena is not exclusively governed by the allocation of power, but is moved as much by the “distribution of identities”.²³ As much as Prime Minister Orbán or a Jobbik member of parliament is concerned about ceding power to Brussels, that concern is driven by clashes of social constructivism as much as it is by material concerns.

1.3: Identity

The construction and distribution of identities is on full display in the contemporary interactions between the European Union and elements of the Hungarian government, and the importance of identity in any interaction in the international arena cannot be discounted. Identities, while malleable and transient, are of primary importance to the subject of the thesis. Identities “are the basis of interests” and are fundamental to understanding why actors function as they do in a given context.²⁴ To quote Ole Waever, “the definition of interests and options is conditioned by national identity and state identity”.²⁵ Without a consideration of identity, actors’ behavior is unintelligible, unpredictable, and, worst of all, impossible to understand. Continuing with Waever’s conception of identity, he is quoted as saying “identity is important because what is the value of studying the self-interested actions of states without knowing what this self is: what appears as our interest is highly dependent on who ‘we’ are”.²⁶ It is thus clear why identity should be given consideration in an understanding of why actors do what they do and behave as they behave.

²³ Ted Hopf. “Making Identity Count: Constructivism, Identity and IR Theory” in Bentley Allan and Ted Hopf. *Making Identity Count: Building a National Identity Database*. Oxford University Press. New York. 2010. Pg. 5.

²⁴ Alexander Wendt. “Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics”. *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2. Spring 1992. Pgs. 398.

²⁵ Ole Waever “The EU as a security actor: Reflections from a pessimistic constructivist on post-sovereign security orders” in Morten Kelstrup and Michael William. *International Relations Theory and the Politics of European Integration. Power, Security and Community*. Routledge. New York, NY. 2000. Pg. 266.

²⁶ *Ibid*, Pg. 267.

Furthermore, the reciprocal nature of identity construction must be realized and considered. The interactions between the European Union and Eurocritics offer an ideal example of the ways in which identities are mutually constructed. The term “Eurocritical” is an apt description of the phenomena at hand,²⁷ as both Fidesz and Jobbik have often made efforts to say they are not opposed to or necessarily skeptical of projects of European integration or even the idea of the European Union itself; rather, they criticize the current incarnation of the European Union, and seek reform rather than a wholesale break from or disintegration of the Union. Even so, in the absence of what they perceive to be an intrusive outside power cloaked in the garb of the European Union, it would be impossible for Eurocritical Hungarian MPs and Prime Ministers to position themselves in such a Eurocritical way. Similarly, in their responses to such criticism, sectors of the European Union are engaged in a mirror image of this identity construction process. Inayatullah and Blaney highlight this process of reciprocal identity construction when they say “after a series of communications it is no longer simply the case that [actor] A and [actor] B are influencing one another. Rather, the structure created by their communication begins to influence them both”.²⁸ The Eurocritical Hungarian element has designed their identity in response to the European Union, whereas the European Union has taken seriously the dictum that “the future of Europe rests on establishing authority in a particular domain, supported by identity and ideology”.²⁹ As will be shown, elements of the European Union, including the European Commission and various members of the European Parliament, assail Prime Minister Orbán’s shirking of the Union’s core value: its conception of its normative identity.

²⁷ Apt when compared to the commonly used Eurosceptic

²⁸ Naeem Inayatullah and David Blaney “Knowing Encounters: Beyond Parochialism in International Relations Theory” in Lapid and Kratochwil, *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory*. Lynne Rienner Publisher. London. 1996. Pg. 69.

²⁹ Ferguson and Mansbach, pg. 41.

The presence of conflicting identities is a certainty within the population of a given society. It is of course impossible to tease out the plethora of opinions, stances, and viewpoints held by any demographic the size of a modern nation-state. However, it is the general national identity which should be considered. This national identity is that identity which is presented to the international community by those individuals or groups imbued with power. As governance is part of their mandate, so is national identity formation. According to Bentley Allan, “the dominant discourse of national identity is propagated by the state, in the public speeches of political elites, on the editorial pages of major national newspapers, and in the state-authorized textbooks used in public schools”.³⁰ As Allan also notes, there are a litany of co-existing (and even conflicting) identities possessed by the denizens of a single nation or state. The identities proffered by the ruling government, however, are the ones of the greatest value to any study of international relations (and thus to this thesis), as they are the identities with the power to influence real-world change. There are, of course, elements of the Hungarian population and government who would like nothing more than to remain firmly in the European Union and who are highly critical and skeptical of the current discourse coming from the Országház³¹; however, when considering the constructed national identity, that of the government in power must hold primacy over voices of dissent.

1.4: Justification of Framework

In response to a rationalist perspective on the origin and functions of political identities, Reus-Smit underscores the rationalist argument when he posits the notion that “realists have long argued that ideas simply function as rationalizations, as ways of masking actions really motivated by the crude desire for power”.³² In the case of Eurocritical elements of the

³⁰ Bentley Allan. “Recovering Discourses of National Identity” in Bentley Allen and Ted Hopf. *Making Identity Count: Building a National Identity Database*. Oxford University Press. New York. 2010. Pg. 25.

³¹ Evidenced by the massive demonstrations opposing the Hungarian government’s legislative targeting of Central European University in March and April of 2017.

³²Christian Reus-Smit. “Constructivism”. Pg. 218.

Hungarian government, there is an argument to be made that this “crude desire” is the true motivation for their behavior. It may be the case that the European Union offers fertile ground for the mobilization of internal demographics in the Hungarian political sphere. The European Union, for certain elements of the Hungarian political arena, offers an ideal target for political attack. However, while such a strategy may indeed be partially motivated by a simple calculus for votes, this calculus would be impossible to arrive at in the first place in the absence of such constructed identities. Positioning the European Union as an enemy, an oppressor or a cadre of bumbling fools is only possible if this identity is adequately constructed via articulation and rhetoric. At a certain point, implementation of such a strategy, even if this strategy originates from a realist or rationalist perspective, become realities in their own right. Here, the imagination mechanism of constructivist thought comes into play. Euroscepticism within Hungary could only have been employed as a rationalist political tool because it was within the realm of possibility of conceived strategies that had the potential to achieve certain political objectives.³³ Had this constructed identity not been in place, the rationalist calculation of “Action A” producing “Outcome Y” resulting in “Gain of Power n ” could not have been arrived at in the first place, indicating the primacy of identity over action.

Rues-Smit highlighted a common critique of constructivist theory and the “power of ideas when he indicated that, “such talk within the field of [international relations] has long been dismissed as naive and even dangerous idealism”.³⁴ The power of ideas is not an insipid utopian phrase that can be dismissed as an ancillary consideration to the tradition analyses of material capabilities and interests. Rather than being cordoned off to the “soft power” confines of international relations studies, constructed ideas and norms may in fact be the hardest power of all. Material considerations, or hard power concerns such as military prowess, economic might or political clout, are only as influential as the constructed identities of the societies

³³Ibid, 219.

³⁴ Ibid, 226-227.

holding those powers. A robust GDP and advanced military hardware can, of course, be used to sculpt international affairs; the ways in which these tools-and any tools of international interaction-are employed, however, is informed and limited by identity. A gun in the hand of an avowed pacifist is no more a threat to be fired than a militant holding no gun at all. Conversely, if that militant has gotten it in his head that kinetic action is the only path forward, he is no less likely to act on those beliefs if he is in the possession of a weapon or not; he will go forward with his bare hands if he has to. The European Union considers Eurocriticism in Hungary a threat in as much as it is within the confines of their constructed identity to preserve ideals such as free and open civic discourse, academic freedom and democratic liberalism. On the opposite side of that same coin, the European Union (as currently constructed) is an enemy to the Eurocritics of Magyarország as long as it clashes with their self-formed conceptions of state sovereignty and national identity. The actions and behavior of both parties involved in this paradigm are therefore dictated by-and impossible without-mutually constructed identities.

Constructivist theory provides the proper conceptual setting for understanding the current behavior of the European Union and elements of the Hungarian government. By understanding that any stage of the international arena is grounded in constructed identity formation, the Hungarian critiques of the European Union and the European Union's responses can be understood. The utilization of national identity, which "is never a finished product [and] is always in the process of being constructed and reconstructed"³⁵, by Eurocritical Hungarians is best understood within the context of a constructivist framework. Critiques of constructivism fail to counter the tenant held by that school of international relations which says, "studying international society is properly the study of meanings held by actors about their roles in

³⁵ Matthew J. Hoffman. "Social (De)Construction: The Failure of a Multinational State". in *Making Sense of International Relations Theory*. Lynne Rienner Publishers. London. 2006. Pg. 125.

constructing and living within this society”.³⁶ The interactions studied in this thesis are thus best served when operating within a constructivist theoretical structure.

³⁶ Inayatullah and Blaney, Pg. 82.

Chapter 2: Hungarian Eurocritical Positions against the European Union

The relationship between Eurocritical factions within the Hungarian political sphere and the European Union can be best understood if informed by constructivist theory. The identity formation on the part of the Hungarians is revealed by the public statements of the leaders of Fidesz and Jobbik. These parties readily and routinely engage in political rhetoric that relies heavily on the themes of identity formation and constructed identity. Both Fidesz and Jobbik operate within this constructivist framework, and it is thus vital to an understanding of their discourse.

Before assessing their respective critiques of the EU, a note on the relationship between Fidesz and Jobbik is needed. The impression should not be given that Fidesz and Jobbik are in complete political alignment. While their stances and rhetoric regarding the European Union fall into similar genres, they, as is to be expected of national political parties jockeying for domestic support, are often themselves at loggerheads. Jobbik, as the opposition party to the Fidesz majority, has made repeated assaults on Orbán's policies and strategies, as a mobile and effective opposition party would be expected to do. During the 2016 Hungarian referendum regarding the European Union's migrant quotas, Vona called for Orbán to step down should the ballot return as invalid.³⁷ In front of the National Assembly in the wake of the vote, Vona again attacked Orbán, saying "You will not be taken seriously by Brussels bureaucrats. Brussels will ruthlessly exploit your irresponsibility and mistake".³⁸ It should not be forgotten that these parties are political rivals, especially considering that, as both exist on the right side of the political spectrum, they are often seeking favor among the same swath of the electorate.³⁹ This split is informative as it shows the alignment between Jobbik and Fidesz on any issue of policy

³⁷ Associated Press. "A look at Hungary's referendum on EU Refugee Quotas". *Fox News World*. September 29, 2016. Last Accessed May 7, 2017.

³⁸ Leonhard Foeger. "Hungarian PM Pledges Constitution Changes Despite Invalid Refugee Quota Referendum". *Reuters*. October 3, 2016. Last accessed May 7, 2017.

³⁹ Keno Verseck. "Hungarian Leader Adopts Policies of Far-Right". *Der Spiegel*. January 30, 2013. Last accessed May 20, 2017.

or identity is far from a certainty. Thus, their general philosophical agreement on issues regarding the European Union indicates how deeply held these positions are within the political values of Hungarian Eurocritics.

The criticisms that Fidesz and Jobbik regularly level against the European Union can be broken down into three broad categories. First, the Eurocritical Hungarians say that the European Union is an illegitimate institution that has lost its mandate to protect the European community. Second, Fidesz and Jobbik often accuse the European Union of being a bloated, ineffective institution that has become so handicapped by its own bureaucracy that it can no longer function. Finally, the analyzed parties routinely maintain that the European Union is an agent of neo-imperialism which only serves to erode the sovereignty, independence and national character of its member states.

2.1: European Union's failure to maintain European identity

The first element of criticism to be examined is the conflict between the Hungarian Eurocritical concept of European identity and the ways in which these same Eurocritics lament that the European Union has failed to maintain that identity. In 2010, it was said that “the stronger a state’s European identity, the more commitment that state has to a broadening and deepening of the European Union”.⁴⁰ In the case of modern Hungary, can the same still be said? Like a nationalist who decries a sitting government’s mishandling or perversion of the state, members of the Hungarian government who cast askance glances towards Brussels believe that the European Union no longer-if it ever did-represents a European identity.

Hungarians with uneasy feelings about their place and identity in the European Union, Prime Minister Orbán included, have no qualms with European identity; in fact, they cling to it with a fierce and determined resolve. As they would claim, they are, in fact, the bastion of that

⁴⁰ Hopf, 9.

identity's defense against the perversion and subversion emanating from Brussels. Orbán himself claimed in a 2017 speech before the European Parliament that "When we criticize the European Union, it is because we want to correct [its] mistakes and reform the European Union. It is our opinion that this is the only way for people to regain confidence in European institutions".⁴¹ Orbán built on his support for a certain version of Europe when he stated in a March 2017 televised interview that "if we can be proud of our own country, we can be proud of Europe; there is no proud Europe without a proud Hungary".⁴² The Fidesz spokesperson, Zoltán Kovács, added to this pro-Europe, anti-EU sentiment when he said "[Fidesz] has always been...called anti-European or non-European, but that's nonsense".⁴³

Members of Jobbik have expressed views similar to Fidesz regarding their attitudes towards projects of European cooperation, and have gone to lengths that they are theoretically in favor of a united Europe, simply not the way in which the EU is structured presently. Following Brexit and in the lead up to the October 2016 Hungarian referendum Jobbik MP Márton Gyöngyösi said "I am highly dissatisfied with the European Union as it stands but we are between a historic moment. There are chances Europe will change its course and make things more acceptable for everyone".⁴⁴ Gyöngyösi expanded on these views, saying that he believes the European Union potential as governing body, but only if it undergoes substantial changes in the manner of its conduct.

*"It might be strange coming from me and a party that is labeled as anti-EU, or Eurosceptic, [but] I think that there is a great opportunity to change the European Union. I believe it can be changed, and brought back into a mutually beneficial cooperation of equal member states, but the EU needs to hear to voice of the people."*⁴⁵

⁴¹Pogany Koppany. "Viktor Orbán Speech at the European Parliament". *Youtube.com*. April 29, 2017. Last accessed May 8, 2017.

⁴² Viktor Orbán. Interview, March 25, 2017. *Kormany.hu*. Last accessed April 25, 2017.

⁴³ David Herszenhorn and Jacopo Barigazzi. "Insulted Hungary Won't Stop Criticizing EU". *Politico.com*. September 20, 2016. Last accessed May 8, 2017.

⁴⁴ Zoie O'Brien. "European Union has to Listen to Member States after Brexit, says Hungary Ahead of Key Vote". *The Express*. September 29, 2016. Last Accessed May 9, 2017.

⁴⁵ Márton Gyöngyösi.

Gabor Vona echoed a similar sentiment in a statement made in the wake of the migrant crisis entitled “What We Are Witnessing is the Collapse of the European Union”. In this statement, Vona claimed “just like other European Union sceptics, what Jobbik criticizes is not the idea of European cooperation but the European Union’s operational practice...”.⁴⁶ Vona was again quoted in 2016 as saying that “The European Union will change over the next five to 10 years and for the first time it may be for the better”.⁴⁷ The identity enacted here is that of a “true” Europe, one that exists in the hearts and minds of socially conservative, nationally-minded Europeans everywhere, and one that has been abandoned or alloyed by the EU.

Religious identity is an important category of the European identity that Hungarian Eurocritics claim the EU has abandoned. According to a study done by the Pew Research center in 2016-2017, fifty-six percent of Hungarians identified as practicing Catholics; fifty-one percent said they consider Hungary to be a “very or somewhat” religious country. Additionally, forty-three percent said being Catholic was important to truly being a Hungarian (the lowest rate among Catholic-majority countries in Central and Eastern Europe), but forty-six percent of respondents said Catholic culture was superior to other cultures.⁴⁸ As a conservative, traditionalist party, Fidesz and Orbán’s conception of European identity is strongly linked to a culturally Christian identity. Orbán at a meeting of the European People’s Party Congress, went as far as to say to “lose our Christian identity...would be fatal to Europe”.⁴⁹ At the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, Orbán employed intense nationalist and conservative religious rhetoric. In the course of that speech, the Prime Minister said, “there can be no free, strong, authoritative and respected Europe without the life-

⁴⁶ Gábor Vona. “Gábor Vona: What We Are Witnessing is the Collapse of the European Union”. 2016. *Jobbik*. April 29, 2017.

⁴⁷ Cynthia Kroet. “Hungary’s Far-Right Jobbik Party says leaving the EU no Longer on the Agenda.”. *Politico.com*. June 3, 2016. Last Accessed May 8, 2017.

⁴⁸ Pew Research Center. “Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe”. *Pewforum.org*. May 10, 2017. Last Accessed May 19, 2017.

⁴⁹ Viktor Orbán. “Speech at the European People’s Party Congress.” March 30, 2017. *Kormany.hu*. Last accessed April 25, 2017.

force of its nations and the two thousand-year-old wisdom of Christianity”.⁵⁰ Orbán followed with his advocacy of a Christian identity as the fundamental tenant of European identity in an interview on the eve of a meeting of the European Parliament. In the interview, Orbán said “there are always countries which want to preserve their Christian cultural identity, while others want to disregard this, a decisive battle is about to develop here.”.⁵¹ Kovács echoed his Prime Minister’s views on the Christian nature of their conception of European identity, when he said “most certainly, when we talk about the future of Europe, you cannot disregard common Christian values.”⁵² This link between Christian identity, particularly a conservative and traditionalist interpretation of that identity, and the vision Fidesz holds for the future of Europe is thus clearly one of the greatest sources of friction between Hungarian Eurocritics and the European Union. In the eyes of Fidesz, the EU’s promotion of liberal secularism is an affront to the engine that has driven European identity and progress for millennia.

Tangential to this idea of an erosion of Christian values and social construction, the Eurocritics position themselves as the true keepers of the European flame. This identity, which is occasionally accompanied with historic allusions to Hungary’s role in fighting the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century and thus defending “Christendom”, is formed in direct response to the Europe Union’s purported betrayal of true “European-ness”. Further evidence of this “defense” of Europe-both from itself and from external others-can be found in the fervor surrounding the migration crisis and the October 2016 referendum in which Orbán called for a vote against the European Union’s quota system. The European Council decision on the resetting of migrants in 2015 was cited by Mr. Hörsik as the “biggest sources of tension [between Hungary and the European Union].”⁵³ Hörsik added “This resolution deprives the

⁵⁰ Viktor Orbán. “Speech at the Commemoration of the 1956 Revolution.” October 23, 2016. *Kormany.hu*. Last accessed April 25, 2017.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Lili Bayer. “Viktor Orbán’s vision of a bigger, looser Europe.” *Politico.com*. September 7, 2016. Last accessed May 8, 2017.

⁵³ Richárd Hörsik. Interview by Harrison Leone. Conducted via email. Budapest, Hungary. May 5, 2017.

Hungarian National Assembly, the Government, and the citizens of the right to decide who can live on Hungarian soil, threatening the fundamentals of Hungarian statehood and sovereignty.”⁵⁴ In an interview given following a European Union summit, Orbán proclaimed “in Austria and Germany people can sleep soundly, because here the Hungarians will be protecting Europe’s external borders.”⁵⁵ In the same interview, Orbán found it appropriate to take credit for the security of the whole of Europe when he claimed “if today Europe’s borders are protected to some degree, we Hungarians have played a major role in that.”⁵⁶

In these statements, Jobbik and Fidesz are employing tactics to carefully illustrate that the European Union, not the idea of a European Community or the goals of European cooperation, are their target. Rather, their target is the European Union as currently conceived. It is not beyond alteration or redemption; however, the European Union as it is now, in the eyes of the Hungarian Eurocritics, is not acting in the best interests of its constituent member states or populations. In the eyes of Fidesz and Jobbik, the European Union needs to be saved from itself-and, in some cases, from the teeming hordes to the south-and it is within the purview of the Hungarian conservative populists to take up the task of doing so.

2.2: European Union as an ineffective governing body

Another charge against the European Union from Hungarian Eurocritics is that, in addition to betraying what it means to be a true European, the European Union is too large or too corrupt a body to govern properly. That is, even if the European Union got it into its collective head to protect and promote the Fidesz and Jobbik conception of “European-ness”, it could not do so even if it so desired.

Prime Minister Orbán frequently links Brussels with governing ineptitude. This rhetorical move, in tandem with his previous accusations of neo-imperialism, Orbán positions

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Viktor Orbán. “Second fence will block the path of even the largest numbers of migrants”. *Kormany.hu*. March 17, 2017. Last accessed April 25, 2017.

⁵⁶ Viktor Orbán. Speech given March 17. *Kormany.hu*. Last accessed April 25, 2017.

the European Union as simultaneously oppressive and ineffective. At the March 7 swearing in of new “border hunters”,⁵⁷ Orbán said “We cannot rely on Brussels and the European Union; on the contrary, they make our work harder.”⁵⁸ In response to the recent European Council legislation regarding the migrant crisis, Orbán dismissed the technocratic nature of the European Union’s bureaucratic structure. The Prime Minister was quoted at a press conference as saying “what we’ll do with the Brussels bureaucrats is another matter. Here in Brussels we not only have prime ministers, but also thousands of bureaucrats”.⁵⁹ In a contribution to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in September 2016, Orbán said “the essence of Hungarian thinking is simple: the European Union is rich, but weak. This is the worst possible combination of qualities”.⁶⁰ Mr. Hörsik re-asserted that his party is committed to remaining in the EU, yet expressed a desire for the functioning of the Union to be improved when he said “Hungary is definitely not considering leaving the European Union... However, this does not mean the EU does not function poorly in a number of respects that must be reformed”.⁶¹ From the side of Jobbik, Mr. Gyöngyösi indicated that he and his party believe the European Union has failed to indicate it is capable of functioning efficiently or effectively, and has only ignored the appeals of the European population who are asking for clarity and transparency from the side of the EU.

*“I think now, the EU has one or two years to prove that it is intelligent enough to understand the voice of the European people and that this construction-which is a 50-year-old institution-that it does have some common sense in the reserves. It’s not as crazy as it looks. In the past couple of years, we have seen no common sense or any kind of clarity of thinking in Brussels...the European Union has become a political project, a utopian project, instead of a practical, common sense project.”*⁶²

⁵⁸ Viktor Orbán. “Viktor Orbán’s speech at the ceremonial swearing-in of new border hunters”. *Kormany.hu*. March 7, 2017. Last accessed April 24, 2017.

⁵⁹ Viktor Orbán. “Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s press conference after the meeting of the European Council”. March 10, 2017. *Kormany.hu*. Last accessed April 24, 2017.

⁶⁰ Bayer.

⁶¹ Richárd Hörsik.

⁶² Márton Gyöngyösi.

The European Union, while endowed with great resources and the wealth of an entire continent, is squandering these resources via a combination of lack of vision and implementation strategies, according to Eurocritics. The Prime Minister echoed this sentiment of the European Union's purported interruption of functioning governance at the European People's Party Congress when he said "We Hungarians are protecting the borders of the European Union over hundreds of kilometers-without any major contribution from the European Union, in fact, but suffering backfire from Brussels".⁶³ In this statement, Orbán engages in direct identity construction, using the European Union as a foil for his government and its policies. Vona joined in this chorus of critiques of European Union ineptitude when he said during the migrant crisis "even though the European Union is still functioning legally, it has already failed in practice".⁶⁴ Mr. Gyöngyösi added to this notion of EU ineffectiveness, saying that the EU is removed from its population and has become a distant, detached body that does not deal with the primary issues facing the average EU citizen.

*"I know that the bureaucracy is sitting there with little responsibility, with little real influence on day-to-day matters. The European Parliament is negotiating matters which don't connect to reality and to the basic needs of the EU citizen. It seems like an institution for itself, which doesn't in anyway connect to European states, only in very exceptional cases."*⁶⁵

In these quotes, Fidesz and Jobbik are saying that not only is Hungary one of the last soldiers in the line protecting Europe physically and conceptually, it is being actively betrayed and undermined by the European Union. For Orbán, the staffers and functionaries of the European Union is nothing but a Kafkaesque impediment to governance. In this way, Orbán pivots from his previous assertions that the European Union has become lost on the path of maintaining and defending European identity, and instead portrays the European Union as feckless, incompetent and impotent.

⁶³ Viktor Orbán. "Speech at the European People's Party Congress." March 30, 2017 *Kormany.hu*. Last accessed April 25, 2017.

⁶⁴ Vona.

⁶⁵ Márton Gyöngyösi. Interview with Harrison Leone. Conducted in person. March 7, 2017. Budapest, Hungary.

2.3: *European Union as an outside oppressor*

In the spring of 2017, blue billboards, signs and posters sprung up around Hungary. These posters were part of a government run campaign targeting the European Union. This campaign, entitled “Let’s Stop Brussels”, speaks to the final category of anti-European Union sentiment that Eurocritical Hungarians levy against the Union: that of imperialist aggressor. The Hungarian Eurocritics charge that the EU is eroding member sovereignty, singling out Hungary as a target for scorn, and is intentionally cryptic in its dealings with its member states.

Fidesz and Jobbik repeatedly charge the European Union with robbing the independence of its member states. The Eurocritics propose that deepening European integration and the expansion of European Union competences will erode the sovereignty and national character intrinsic to each member state. In doing so, they employ martial and aggressive language, such as when Prime Minister Orbán said about the October referendum “this referendum will decide how strong a sword can be forged in the fight against the Brussels bureaucrats”.⁶⁶ Mr. Hörcsik said “we are pragmatic opponents of any measure that are only interest of some, or only one member state. In the present situation, it is clear for us, that it is imminent to fight for preserving [our] autonomy.”⁶⁷ Orbán followed up this aggressive position when he said “I’d say that this year Brussels must be stopped in its tracks”.⁶⁸ These assertive tones may be a deft political strategy, as it has the potential to win support from frustrated and disaffected demographics who feel they are the victims of outside oppression.

The identity being proffered here is that Hungarians are locked in a historic struggle for their independence; this identity is resonant in a country that has been the repeated victim of invasion and repression over the course of its history. Once again at the Revolution

⁶⁶ Alice Foster. “Hungary Referendum 2016: Could the Hungary Vote Signal the End of the EU as we know it?” *The Express.com*. October 3, 2016. Last accessed May 9, 2017.

⁶⁷ Richárd Hörsik.

⁶⁸ Viktor Orbán. “Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on Kossuth Radio’s “180 Minutes” programme”. March 19, 2017. *Kormany.hu*. Last accessed April 25, 2017.

commemoration speech, Orbán made an attempt to tap into this historical identity when he said “if it is Hungarian, freedom is wonderful...only our national independence can save use from the all-consuming, destructive appetites of Empires”. At this point in his speech, Orbán was expressly referring to the Soviet invasion in the fall of 1956, yet quickly pivoted to contemporary politics and set his sights on his favorite target-the European Union. In one of his most direct provocations against the European Union and its policies, Orbán said “This is also why we shall not accept the EU’s transformation into a modern-day Empire. We do not want them to replace the alliance of free European states with a United States of Europe. Today the task of Europe’s freedom loving peoples is to save Brussels from Sovietization.”.⁶⁹

Jobbik has also mentioned the Hungarian historical context as an explanation for the antipathy felt towards the European Union in recent years. Mr. Gyöngyösi, in a statement similar to Prime Minister Orbán’s speech, harkened back to Hungary’s history and compared the perception of the European Union to empires of the past.

*“We have an awful historical record of fighting for sovereignty and for freedom. Anytime there is some kind of restriction of our sovereignty, whether it’s done in Moscow or Istanbul or Vienna, then Hungarians feel itchy about it. When it comes to Brussels and the European Union, it’s not different. Anything that comes from Brussels is looked upon with great suspicion in this country.”*⁷⁰

Vona likewise attacked what he identified as the European Union’s attempts to engineer a federated, pan-European state bereft of national borders or identities. In his “The European Union is Sick” statement, Vona asked rhetorically of the European Union “Do they want to live in a centralized federal structure built upon imperial logic, or in the Europe of Nations where people can decide about their own fate?”.⁷¹ Hungarian Eurocritics indicate that they believe the European Union’s mission is one of creeping imposition, and one which must be halted at once.

⁶⁹ Viktor Orbán. *Kormany.hu*. Last accessed April 25, 2017.

⁷⁰ Márton Gyöngyösi.

⁷¹ Vona.

A subcategory of the mindset casting the European Union as an invader is that of the European Union as unfairly singling out Hungary for scorn and criticism. This mentality frequently comes through in the discourse of Hungarian Eurocritics. In an interview, Mr. Gyöngyösi accused the European Union of treating Hungary as a second-class member state. Mr. Gyöngyösi said “I think yes, on paper, [Hungary] is there on equal terms, but we are not treated as equals within the European Union”.⁷² Schöpflin said “the relationship between the EU Commission and the Fidesz government has been marked by the application of significantly harsher conditions by the former than is applied to other member states”.⁷³ Schöpflin continued in the same statement “there have been numerous other cases when the Commission followed a much harder line towards Hungary than was warranted”.⁷⁴ Mr. Hörsik added to this sentiment, and added the claim that Hungary in particular was being targeted by the EU, when he said “sometimes the EU is extending beyond of competencies, and raises her voice related to issues that belong to the competence of the member states. The European Union has openly applied double standard handling cases related to Hungary,”.⁷⁵ Interestingly, this issue is of such importance that Mr. Hörsik offered this response as an answer to the question “Is there anything you would change about the relationship between the European Union and Hungary?”. The Hungarian Eurocritics are crafting their identity as a principled underdog, unjustly targeted by a supranational bully that seeks to quash any and all dissent within its ranks. The European Union, simply by its size and nature, once again offers an ideal target for this constructed identity. The Eurocritics’ discourse and behavior is thus informed by their collective belief in their David-versus-Goliath battle against Brussels.

⁷² Márton Gyöngyösi.

⁷³ Jo Harper. “Hungarian MEP decries EU “Double Standards”. *Deutsche Welle*. May 9, 2017. Last Accessed May 9, 2017.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Richárd Hörsik.

These accusations are combined with charges of the European Union being disingenuous and intentionally manipulative; in response to the migrant quota question, Kovács said “why should we believe [the European Union] when they cheated us last year twice?” while Schöpflin said “We want a European Union that is ready to listen. They are not ready to listen and they are going their own way”.⁷⁶⁷⁷ Not only is the European Union portrayed as a shadowy, double-talking body, it is directly contrasted with what Orbán said is Hungarian openness, honesty and directness. Before the European parliament in April 2017, Orbán said “we Hungarians like honest talk. We are irritated by the verbal straightjacket which stops us from calling a spade a spade...[which] is common in European public life recently”.⁷⁸ Hungarian Eurocritics are positioning themselves as honest, straight-talking, and direct, as opposed to the Orwellian Newspeak coming from the European Union.

This category of Eurocriticism is the harshest levied by the Hungarians, as it accuses the European Union of acting in a malevolent fashion; by its very nature, from this viewpoint, the European Union is antithetical to core values of freedom and independence. It is not simply a body which has strayed from the path of European righteousness or a bumbling collection of lanyard-wearing fools; in the “European Union as an invader” mindset, the European Union shows little difference from the marauding, blood-soaked empires of the past, and it is thus the most potent weapon in the Eurocritical arsenal. As the Eurocritics would posit it, Hungary is a nation in grave threat, and can, in fact, disappear, subsumed by the quiet, technocratic encroachment of Brussels, as it was in the past at the edge of Ottoman sword and Austrian cannon.

2.4: Conclusion

⁷⁶ Herszenhorn and Barigazzi.

⁷⁷ O’Brien.

Hungarian Eurocritics have been vocal about their disdain for the European Union. The three ways in which they articulate this criticism fall into three main categories: accusing the European Union of betraying European identity, charging that the European Union is incapable of governance, and that the European Union is an outside aggressor actively seeking to undermine the sovereignty of its member states. In doing so, Prime Minister Orbán, members of his Fidesz government and members of Jobbik are forming their own identities as political actors in opposition to the European Union. In making these accusations, the Hungarian Eurocritics portray themselves as the caretakers of the true European identity and the protectors of European national sovereignty. The ways in which Hungarian Eurocritics interact with the European Union is directly informed by these constructed identities, and understanding their aims, intentions and goals is impossible without a consideration of these identities. While, as Europhilic members of the European Union would charge, the overtures of the may be done in the interest of generating outside enemies to curry the favor of domestic voters, this strategy could not have been employed if Orbán, Fidesz and Jobbik did not hold their identities in opposition to the European Union in such an important conceptual place.

Chapter 3: European Union Responses to Hungarian Eurocritics

This chapter will show the ways in which European Union politicians have responded to the Hungarian Eurocritics. It will first indicate the ways in which the European Union forms its identity; it is this identity which guides and informs its responses to the accusations emanating from Budapest. The chapter will then evaluate the broader themes in which these responses fall under: namely, that the EU is the true defender of Hungarian interests; that Prime Minister Orbán is opposed to European values, and that Orbán's behaviour is nothing more than posturing.

3.1: Power of Identity in the EU

The European Union, by its nature, is an international body rooted in a constructivist ethos. The European Union derives its power, influence and strategy not from traditional hard power sources, such as military might, but from its status as a “normative power”.⁷⁹ As a normative power, the European Union exerts its influence via setting norms of political and social behaviour within its member states, and requires these norms to be achieved by any potential candidate state. Thus, it has been suggested by Ian Manners that analysis of the European Union should be viewed as an “ideational, value-driven power” rather than considering its international and internal behaviour in a “traditional nation-state discourse”.⁸⁰ The European Union is indeed a unique animal in the history of international relations, one which derives much of its strength, vision and goals by drawing from the well of its norm-setting identity. The European Union conceives itself as the value-setting force of the world, and endeavours to behave in a manner consistent with its identity.

One of the European Union's most potent mechanisms for growth of influence and neighbourhood expansion is the power of the purse; that is to say, access to the European

⁷⁹ Tornike Metreveli. “The EU's Normative Power-Its Greatest Strength or its Greatest Weakness?” Pg. 1

⁸⁰ Ibid, 2.

common market is a powerful driving force behind the international presence of the European Union. The European Union's Gross Domestic Product is nearly fifteen billion Euros, making it the most productive economic political entity on Earth.⁸¹ The European Union accounts for a fifth of global trade, and nearly two-thirds of European Union member states' trade is done within the Union.⁸² At first glance, this economic might would appear to be nothing more than a traditional realist/rationalist consideration, as the European Union is able to use the prospect of access to its markets, and its ability to impose sanctions against uncooperative states, as a potent tool in the international political arena. However, as stated, the access to this market is directly tied to the European Union's normative identity: only once a state has conformed (or agreed to conform) to the European Union's standards of social, civil and political order can it gain access to the Union, and thus the market. The purse of the European Union, therefore, rests on its pillars of identity.

The founding documents and texts of the European Union offer strong evidence for its normative basis. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the *acquis communautaire* are both fundamental to the functioning of the European Union and the creation of its all-important normative identity. These documents combine to form the corpus of European Union identity, are essential to an understanding of the way the European Union positions itself when dealing with both external actors and its own constituent member states.

The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights is one of the strongest pieces of evidence of the European Union's constructed identity as a normative power. The Charter was initially proclaimed in December 2000 at the Nice European Council, and became legally enforceable in regards to European Union institutions and national governments with the Treaty of Lisbon

⁸¹ Communication Department of the European Commission. "The Economy". *Europa.eu*. May 10, 2017. Last accessed May 10, 2017.

⁸² *Ibid.*

in 2009.⁸³ The Charter of Fundamental Rights is broken down into seven chapters, entitled respectively Dignity; Freedoms; Equality; Solidarity; Citizens' Rights; Justice; and General Provisions Governing the Interpretation and Application of the Charter.⁸⁴ The European Union's identity formation is present in the preamble of the Charter. The second paragraph of the document begins with allusions to the European Union's "spiritual and moral heritage" and its duty to protect, preserve and promote the ideals inscribed in the Charter for "the human community and to future generations".⁸⁵ It is clear from this language that the European Union links its identity to a grand historical project of promoting liberal values inherited from a lofty common history; the European Union additionally takes it upon itself to be the provider of these values in perpetuity. These beliefs indicate an incredible strength of mission and purpose within the European Union: preserving the centuries-old cultural legacy of an entire continent, with the intent to implement that legacy in the present and pull it into the future, is no mean task.

The *acquis communautaire* is another source that points to the European Union's normative identity and the strength that identity plays in the Union's self-constructed image. The *acquis* is the collected corpus of legal decisions and strictures acquired by the European Union over the course of its existence. New member states are expected to accept the totality of the *acquis*, and it is expected that member states within the Union will uphold the legal principles outlined within. The *acquis* is not a single document, but a living collection of principles that drive the Union's identity; additionally, it covers a larger scope than the Charter, but deals with similar issues covered in the Charter, only with more specificity and depth. The *acquis*'s thirty-five chapters cover issues that are fundamental to the European Union's normative identity, including the free movement of goods; information society and media;

⁸³ European Commission's Directorate General for Justice and Consumers. "EU Charter of Fundamental Rights". *Europea.eu*. December 31, 2016. Last accessed May 10, 2017.

⁸⁴ Official Journal of the European Union. "Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the European Union." *Europa.eu*. October 26, 2012. Last accessed May 10, 2017.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

judiciary and fundamental rights; and justice, freedom and security.⁸⁶ In laying out these conditions for membership, which are reiterated and reinforced in the Copenhagen criteria of 1993⁸⁷, the European Union is once again staking its claim as a norm-setting institution.

The European Union would exhibit fundamentally different behaviour were it not for documents such as the Charter on Fundamental Rights and collections of codified principles like the *acquis*. These are far from the only examples of the European Union's constructed identity as a normative power. For example, the Treaty of Rome of 1957,⁸⁸ which founded the European Economic Community and set Europe on the path towards deeper integration and the establishment of the European Union, cites the establishment of "an ever-closer Union among the peoples of Europe" and to "ensure economic and social progress...by common action" as its founding principles.⁸⁹ Even in its primordial stages, the European Union has conceived of itself as linking the European continent in a unified embrace of common rights. The Charter and the *Acquis* sit at the heart of this identity, and this identity in turn describes the limits of its behaviours and sets the terms of the political challenges they are willing to embrace.

3.2: True Defender of Hungarian interests

The European Union employs its identity as the shepherd of Europe in its dialogue with the Hungarian Eurocritics. In doing so, one of the stratagems the European Union employs is positing itself as the true defender of the Hungarian people's interests which, as the Union would claim, are being assailed by their own national government. Such an attitude was clearly elucidated by Guy Verhofstadt, the President of the Alliance for Liberals and Democrats for Europe⁹⁰; the Belgian politician has robustly criticized the Orbán government, when he said at

⁸⁶ European Commission. "Chapters of the *Acquis*". *Europa.eu*. December 6, 2016. Last accessed May 10, 2017.

⁸⁷ "Accession Criteria: Copenhagen Criteria". July 2016. *Europa.eu*. Last accessed May 21, 2017.

⁸⁸ The Treaty of Rome has been updated and amended since its passing; Currently, the main Treaty governing the European Union is the Treaty of Lisbon, passed in 2007 and entered into law in 2009.

⁸⁹ "The Treaty of Rome". March 25, 1957. *Europa.eu*. May 11, 2017. Pg. 2.

⁹⁰ Verhofstadt has been the President of the ALDE since 2009. He also served as the Prime Minister of Belgium from 1999 to 2008.

a 2013 meeting of the European Parliament: “No, Mr. Orbán, you have no right to say that the European Parliament is fighting against the Hungarian interest. It is your interests, not the Hungarian interests. What we are defending here is Hungarian democracy, and the interests of the Hungarian citizens”.⁹¹ This sentiment was echoed recently in the wake of the CEU crisis, when the Italian Group Leader of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats Gianni Pittella⁹² said of Orbán “he is betraying his own people. After he strangled the independence of the media, now Orbán is trying to silence an outstanding symbol of freedom of thought and expression: The Central European University”.⁹³ Within the context of the same CEU crisis, European Commission Vice-President Frans Timmermans said “protecting the freedom of Hungarians [is] a European task, and we have to fight to do it”.⁹⁴ With these statements, members of the European Parliament and the Commission Vice-President are striving to appeal to the Hungarian people as the true defenders of what the values and ways of civic life that are integral to being a citizen of Europe.

The European Union has not only relied on appeals to civic identity and defence of values, but has additionally made claims that the European Union offers material benefits to the average Hungarian citizen. In response to the consultation published along with the “Stop Brussels” campaign, which claimed that “Brussels is attacking our job creation measures”, the Commission pointed out that it directly supports investment projects which provide employment for over one hundred and fifty thousand Hungarian citizens.⁹⁵ Be it providing jobs or defending the social values that unite Europe, one of the most-often employed strategies of

⁹¹ ALDEGroup. “Verhofstadt blames Viktor Orbán for defending his own interests, not Hungarian.” *Youtube.com*. July 3, 2013. Last Accessed May 12, 2017.

⁹² Pittella has been the leader of the S & D party since 2014. He additionally served as the President of the European Parliament from June-July 2014.

⁹³ Ryan Heath and Quentin Aries. “Brussels punches back at Viktor Orbán.” *Politico.com*. April 28, 2017. Last accessed May 10, 2017.

⁹⁴ Matt Day. “EU Mounts Legal Challenge Over Hungary’s Record on Democracy”. *The Telegraph*. April 27, 2017. Last accessed May 10, 2017.

⁹⁵ Andrew Byrne. “EU confronts Viktor Orbán in Parliament.” *The Financial Times*. April 26, 2017. Last accessed May 10, 2017.

politicians within the European Parliament and Commission who wish to respond to the Hungarian Eurocritics' claims is that it is the Union itself working in the best interest of the Hungarian people and their society. This is a similar construct to the rhetorical maneuverers used by the Hungarian Eurocritics themselves, as they form their identity and draw their political vocabulary in opposition to the Union, just as, in this instance, members of the Union strengthen their identities in opposition to Orbán.

3.3: Orbán as opposed to European Union Values

In their interactions with Prime Minister Orbán, European Union politicians who criticize the Prime Minister often accuse him of failing to uphold the core social values of the European Union. At the opening of the Riga Summit in 2015, European Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker, spotted Prime Minister Orbán approaching him for a press photoshoot. Juncker commented to an aide “here comes the dictator”, and as Orbán shook Juncker’s hand, the Commission President greeted Orbán with “Hello, Mr. Dictator”, along with an accompanying slap on the cheek.⁹⁶ This exchange, though brief and flippant, is indicative of the major accusations Orbán’s opponents in the European Union charge him with: that of being an authoritarian autocrat that has flouted the principles of democratic governance and civic conduct so cherished by the Union.

One of most significant flare-ups of the European Union accusing Orbán of abuse of his Prime Ministerial powers came in the wake of the passage of new Hungarian media laws in 2011. The laws were passed in the early days of Orbán’s second term as Prime Minister by a Parliament in which Fidesz held a two-thirds majority. The new media legislation demanded that all media in Hungary register with the government, placed broad restrictions on what the nature of media output could be, made it more difficult for journalists to protect their sources,

⁹⁶Shaun Walker. “Hello, dictator”: Hungarian Prime Minister Faces Barbs at EU Summit”. *The Guardian*. May 22, 2015. Last accessed May 12, 2017.

and imposed fines, suspensions and the threat of closure should these strictures be infringed.⁹⁷ In addition to these limits, the legislation called for a media review board - the Media Council - to be established to ensure these laws were being enforced; because of Fidesz's strong parliamentary position, it alone could control the composition of the Media Council, and the government set about staffing the Media Council with Fidesz appointees.⁹⁸

This legislation provoked a wave of criticism from a wide collection of elements in the European Union, and ultimately prompted the European Parliament to adopt a resolution in July of 2013 in which the Parliament stated its concern about the state of freedom of the press in Hungary.⁹⁹ Soon after the passage of the laws, Viviane Reding, the European Union Justice Commissioner, said "now that the laws have been passed without taking into account the Commission's legal concerns, it is the Commission's responsibility as guardian of the Treaties to ensure that EU law is upheld".¹⁰⁰ Commissioner Reding was calling on the European Union's constructed identity in full force in this statement; not only does she consider it the Commission's solemn duty to enforce the European Union's central identities within its member states, she is drawing on the European Union's founding documents as justification for its actions and rhetoric towards the Fidesz government. Within the same context, Commissioner Neelie Kroes levied similar accusations against Orbán when she said "freedom of expression constitutes one of the essential foundations of our democratic societies, recognised in the European Treaties and in the EU Charter of fundamental rights".¹⁰¹ Kroes performed a nearly identical rhetorical move to that used by Reding, in which she harkened back to the European

⁹⁷Márton Dunai. "How Hungary's government shaped public media to its mold". *Reuters*. Feb. 19, 2014. Last accessed May 12, 2017.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ European Commission Press Release. "European Commission ...Judiciary". *Europa.eu*. January 17, 2012. Last accessed May 10, 2017.

¹⁰¹ Neelie Kroes. "Hungary's New Media Law". *Europa.eu*. January 11, 2011. Last accessed May 10, 2017.

Union's core values, as expressed in its founding documents, as providing members of the Union the mandate to take Orbán to task.

Orbán and his government's behaviour towards the freedom of Hungary's media has been one of the major sources of friction between him and members of the European Union. Freedom of the press and freedom of speech in the public square is one of the fundamental values of the European Union; this friction is to be expected, as the European Union considers the defence of its values to be perhaps its primary function, and draws on these values as sources of coherent identity formation. The passage of the Media Laws was not the only instance in which Orbán's government ran afoul of what some members of the European Union considered to be the appropriate standards of press freedom. After Hungary's second largest and left-leaning newspaper, *Népszabadság*,¹⁰² was closed under government pressure in October 2016, Verhofstadt remerged in the debate against Orbán, saying that "with its current policies, Hungary would not have been allowed to join EU in 2004. This has to stop."¹⁰³ In the *Népszabadság* crisis, Orbán drew the ire of not only political opponents, but from his own European Parliament faction, the European People's Party, as well; in the words of EPP spokesperson, Pedro Lopez de Pablo, "it is regrettable that [*Népszabadság*] closed, no matter if they were against or for Orbán. One newspaper less means one less opportunity for freedom of speech."¹⁰⁴

In addition to accusing him of attempting to silence the press and limit civil discourse, the European Union has additionally accused Orbán of attempting to squash freedom of education and free functioning of the common market. These accusations occurred when Orbán's policies provoked the ire of the members of the European Union was the Central European University row in the spring of 2017. In April, Orbán pushed legislation through the

¹⁰² *Népszabadság* is Hungarian for "Liberty of the People".

¹⁰³ Eszter Zalan. "EU hesitant on Hungary Newspaper Closure". *EUobserver*. October 10, 2016. Last accessed May 10, 2017.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Fidesz-controlled parliament which would require dual-accredited universities to have facilities both in Hungary and the second country in which the university is accredited; the legislation was largely seen as targeting CEU-which was founded by the philanthropist and Orbán opponent George Soros-as it would have placed impossible-to-achieve regulations that would have forced the university to close.¹⁰⁵ At a meeting of the European Parliament, Orbán again faced condemnation from voices within the European Union. Verhofstadt was once again leading the charge against the Prime Minister; the Belgian MEP reiterated his claim that Orbán was actively scorning the values of the European Union. In a speech before Parliament, Verhofstadt said “you signed up to the values of the European Union, and you have violated every single one of them”.¹⁰⁶ Verhofstadt added to his criticism of Orbán in his statement, saying that Orbán was more than happy to take European Union funds while flouting his responsibility to live up to the all-important values and dictums of the Union.¹⁰⁷ Timmermans again echoed Verhofstadt’s claims of Orbán’s breach of European values, saying “civil society is the very fabric of democratic societies. We would not be democracies without strong and free civil societies. I would therefore deeply regret any action by the Hungarian authorities aimed at shrinking the space of civil society organisations, or any attempt to control or stigmatise their work.”¹⁰⁸ In this statement, Timmermans is furthering charges of the anti- Orbán faction within the European Union. The criticism from the European Union once again extended to Orbán’s own party, as Joseph Daul, the EPP president, said “we will not accept that any basic freedoms are restricted or that the rule of law is disregarded.”¹⁰⁹ The claim that Orbán’s behaviour in

¹⁰⁵Zoltan Simon. “Orbán Undaunted as Hungary Passes Law Targeting Soros’s CEU.” *Bloomberg*. April 4, 2017. Last accessed May 13, 2017.

¹⁰⁶Byrne.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ European Commission. “Opening remarks of First Vice-President Frans Timmermans in the European Parliament debate on Hungary”. *Europea.eu*. April 26, 2017. Last accessed May 13, 2017.

¹⁰⁹Jonathan Sterns. “Orbán Scolded by EU Over Law Targeting Soros’s University”. *Bloomberg*. April 29, 2017. Last accessed May 10, 2017.

opposition to the civic values of the European Union stems from the Union's own identity as a source and defender of such values.

3.4: Eurocritical claims as Political Posturing

The final category of criticisms targeted at Orbán from the side of the EU posit the claim that the Hungarian Prime Minister's behaviour is part of a political show in order to garner support from his voting base. Orbán-critical elements of the European Union accuse the Prime Minister of fabricating the European Union as an outside enemy against which he can position himself as the defender. They claim that Orbán's actions and anti-EU rhetoric come not from genuine concerns for national identity or member state autonomy, but are rather wholly contrived-and facile-games of political manipulation. They accuse Orbán of intentionally distorting facts to convince his constituents of his claims, and of simple posturing to his base.

The European Union has targeted certain Orbán accusations against the Union as disingenuous, misleading or factually incorrect. In response to the national consultation sent across Hungary as part of the 2017 "Let's Stop Brussels" campaign, which, among other things, accused the European Union of being harmful for the Hungarian national economy, the European Commission published a report countering Orbán's claims. The report, entitled "Facts Matter: The European Commission Responds to Hungarian National Consultation", breaks down how the European Union has been beneficial to Hungary's economic vitality, and accuses the consultation itself of being propagandistic. The report begins "Several of the claims and allegations made in the consultation are factually incorrect or highly misleading. The European Commission would like to set the record straight – based on hard facts"¹¹⁰ and targets six "false claims" of the Hungarian consultation with a Union "truth".¹¹¹ In tandem with this publication came comments from Timmermans again, who, in the same Parliamentary session previously

¹¹⁰ European Commission. "Facts Matter: European Commission responds to Hungarian National Consultation". *Europa.eu*. Last accessed May 12, 2017.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

mentioned, told Prime Minister Orbán “everyone is entitled to their opinions, but you are not entitled to your own facts”;¹¹² the EPP was again dissatisfied with Orbán’s behaviour, and the party leader Manfred Weber took the opportunity to say “the consultation and the questionnaire isn’t about collecting opinion but about stirring up dissent against Europe.”¹¹³ Both political friend and foe took Orbán to task regarding this consultation, and their criticisms speak to their accusations of Orbán’s intentional and, from their perspective, transparent campaign of smearing the EU to strengthen his own identity as a noble crusader fighting against the Brussels empire.

The 2017 consultation and the wake of the CEU crisis were not the only times elements within the European Union accused Orbán of the use of distorted information or fabricated outrage in the interest of stirring up domestic support. During Orbán’s presence in the European Parliament during the Media Law fallout, French member of parliament and protestor-turned-politician, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, engaged in a theatrical speech targeting the Prime Minister. Cohn-Bendit struck the chord of accusing Orbán of being disingenuous in full force, saying “I know you don’t care about [the Media Law criticism] because you will give a big nationalistic speech and then all the Hungarians will say: at least we have shown it to Brussels.”¹¹⁴ In the same speech, Cohn-Bendit also accused Orbán of performing in a disingenuous manner depending on the political context in which he finds himself; Cohn-Bendit said of Orbán, “there are politicians who speak a certain way here in Brussels or Strasbourg and in another way in their own countries,”¹¹⁵ while the Prime Minister listened through headphones with a bemused smile. European Parliament President Martin Schultz reiterated the sentiment of Orbán

¹¹² Byrne.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Brendel Matthias. “Daniel Cohn-Bendit kioszt pár sallert Orbán Viktornak az EU Parlamentben 2011.07.05 French, English, Hungarian”. *Youtube.com*. June 5, 2011. Last accessed May 12, 2017. (Matthias 2011)

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

artificially generating concerns about the European Union, when he said “the European Union should engage in dialogue and solutions, not artificial tensions.”¹¹⁶

3.5: Conclusion

The European Union draws much of its political strength from its identity as a norm-setting institution. It is from these norms, codified within the European Union’s core documents and reinforced by the repeated statements of its top officials, that members of the European Parliament and the European Commission formulate their responses to Viktor Orbán’s verbal accusations of the European Union. In doing so, they are seeking to strengthen their identities as the true defenders of all Europeans’ interests (including, of course, Hungarian interests which they say are being undermined by Orbán) while forming their identity in opposition to Orbán’s failure to implement European Union values. Verhofstadt’s claim that Orbán’s hints at reinstituting the death penalty¹¹⁷ were “a European issue, not an issue of the member states. It’s an issue of the whole European civilization”¹¹⁸ speaks directly to the sources of European Union behaviour in regard to Viktor Orbán; that is, members of the European Union who criticize the Prime Minister do so under their claims to be the caretakers of a civilizational identity. Additionally, the members of the European Union’s governing structure are claiming to be the only side of the verbal debate acting honestly, as they seek to show the ways in which Orbán’s Eurocriticism is allegedly falsely generated. As was the case with Fidesz and Jobbik’s stances regarding the European Union, members of the European Union who respond to these stances are themselves engaging in mutual identity construction. The members of the European Union’s political positions in response to the Hungarian Eurocritics are thus shown to be guided by their

¹¹⁶ Ruptlytv. “Refugee crisis a German problem, says Hungarian PM Orbán.” *Youtube.com*. September 3, 2016. Last accessed May 14, 2017.

¹¹⁷ Orbán later retracted this suggestion in 2015.

¹¹⁸ ALDEgroup. “Guy Verhofstadt 19 May 2015 plenary speech on Situation in Hungary”. *Youtube.com*. May 19, 2015. Last accessed May 12, 2017.

identity as a normative power, and indicate the nature of the political game in which they are engaged.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Future of Eurocritical-EU Interaction

The previous two chapters outlined the ways in which both Hungarian Eurocritics formed their critiques of the European Union and the ways in which the European Union was responding to the Orbán government. This chapter will synthesize the information and analysis in the preceding chapters by pointing out internal flaws in the logic of the Hungarian Eurocritical statements and by addressing inadequacies and conceptual blind spots from the side of the European Union

4.1: Analysis of Eurocritical Positions

The broad themes identified that came from the side of the Hungarian Eurocritical elements have conceptual issues. First, two of the most significant claims coming from the Hungarian Eurocritical side dealt with the EU's methods of governance; the claims regarding this issue suffer from incoherence and a lack of internal logic. Second, the Hungarian Eurocritical accusations of the European Union failing to protect European civilization and identity are easily countered from the side of the European Union for the simple fact that the Union itself can claim with equal validity that it is the Union itself preserving European identity.

Orbán, Fidesz and Jobbik place much of their criticism of the European Union around the conflicting claims that it is at once an empire seeking to impose its will on its member states while at the same time being incapable of governance. These claims appear to be incompatible. The EU cannot be both a technocratic Empire bent on dissolving the sovereignty of its member states and a bungling, inept organization incapable of handling any crisis which comes its way. The Eurocritical elements of the Hungarian government are stuck with an inconsistency in which their vision of the EU cannot exist.

The migrant crisis of 2015-2016 offers a prime example of this phenomenon in practice. Orbán and Fidesz responded with revulsion at the European Union's migrant quotas, calling for a public referendum and lambasting the Union's quotas as brazen imposition that curtailed

Hungary's abilities to craft its own policies.¹¹⁹ At the same time, however, the Union was being portrayed as ineffective, incompetence and unable to handle the crisis properly. The migrant crisis was held up as evidence of being both an example of European Union all-powerful posturing while simultaneously supposedly providing evidence that the European Union is incapable of handling any crisis or issue which comes its way.

There are also factual issues with the Hungarian Eurocritic's claim that the European Union has been attempting to erode the sovereignty of Hungary; at least the very least, Hungary has not been a target of exceptional European Union imposition. Since 2010, Orbán's Hungary, for all the rhetorical headaches it has caused for the Union, has not been the target of outlandish sanctions from the side of the European Union. The European Union has historically levied fewer infringement cases against Hungary than other member states, as Hungary has been below the member state average of cases since the European Union began tracking the statistic in 2005. There are currently twenty-three infringement cases open against Hungary-still below the European Union average of twenty-five cases.¹²⁰ The Union has also allowed political space for the Hungarian government to operate, even when the government was directly targeting the Union. In the run up to the referendum, for example, Klaas Dijkhoff, Dutch immigration minister speaking on behalf of the Dutch presidency, said explicitly "every country has the right to hold referenda".¹²¹ This behavior and rhetoric is hardly that of an organization or governing body bent on bending its constituent members to its will. It is of course unlikely that an acknowledgement of these realities would do anything to dissuade Hungarian Eurocritics from assuming their rhetorical positions in opposition to the European Union; this again speaks to

¹¹⁹ The referendum, held on October 2, 2016, resulted in an overwhelming "no" vote to the question of whether or not the European Union's quota system should be accepted. The turnout, however, failed to reach fifty percent, and was thus invalid. Nevertheless, Fidesz and Orbán claimed a political victory.

¹²⁰ European Commission. "The EU Single Market: Single Market Scoreboard". *Europa.eu*. July 2016. Last accessed May 10, 2017.

¹²¹ Associated Press. "Hungary has right to hold referendum on migrant quotas - EU presidency". *Reuters*. February 25, 2016. Last accessed May 13, 2017.

the power of a constructed identity. Once a self-image has been arrived at and implemented in discourse and behavior, it requires a contextual sea-change for that identity to be amended or alloyed.

The battle for European identity is one of the most contested grounds in the dispute between Hungarian Eurocritics and their opponents in the European Union. For the Hungarian Eurocritics, the European Union has betrayed this identity, and this is one of the Union's greatest crimes. The Union's push for liberalism, its supposed erosion and betrayal of Christian values and its desire to open its doors to teeming hordes of migrants all speak to a fundamental failure on the part of the Union. However, this line of attack is open to critique from Eurocritical opponents. The Union can, as it often does, immediately turn this accusation back on the accusers, and profess that it itself is acting in the interest of European values, whereas Prime Ministers like Orbán and parties like Jobbik are the agents who are truly being disloyal to whatever it means to be "European". This means that, in the argument over protecting European identity, both sides are effectively talking past one another, as they begin from opposed conceptual positions.

4.2: Analysis of European Union Positions

The European Union's responses to the Hungarian government in the age of Orbán suffer from different ailments than those criticisms emanating from Budapest. The European Union, in constructing its identity as the true defender of European values, European (and by extension, Hungarian) citizens fail to directly respond to some of the criticisms of the Hungarian Eurocritics. However, by attempting to paint Orbán as a political manipulator, the European Union's response appears to be rooted in irrefutable evidence.

The European Union focuses its responses to Hungarian Eurocritics focuses on how Orbán has failed to live up to standards of good civic practice. It would appear from his statements that Orbán shrugs off this claim as illegitimate, stemming from his notion that the

European Union's standards are either not applicable to his country or that they are flawed from the outset. Furthermore, the European Union has not seemed to address any claims regarding its inefficiency or inability to govern. It has seemingly disregarded any claims against its technocratic or overly-bureaucratic nature; this line of attack is one of the favorites of both Fidesz and Jobbik. The Union has touched upon this issue indirectly, in its claims that it provides great economic benefits to Hungary and has been a force for domestic economic development. However, responses to charges of inefficiency or ineptitude seem lacking. How such a response would be crafted is not certain; however, failing to address such concerns leave a vulnerable flank on the side of the European government for Eurocritics like Orbán and Vona to exploit, which they regularly do.

Painting Orbán as an opportunist seems to be a strategy from the European Union that would offer an effective response to the Prime Minister's provocations. Orbán is noted for his dramatic personal swing in the political arena, as he first came to national prominence as an anti-communist crusader, charging from the political fringes of radical youth politics to the national stage during Hungary's transition from Communism. His political maneuver from the opposition left to the power-consolidating right is often brought up by his opponents in the EU, including Verhofstadt and Cohn-Bendit. Orbán was also Prime Minister during the run-up to Hungary's accession to the European Union in 2004; following the 2003 referendum which saw Hungarian voters approve the accession,¹²² Orbán, who was still the leader of Fidesz yet out of governing power, said "what binds us together is not whether we voted Yes or No, but that we are Hungarians and that we want to be winners of the future".¹²³ This shift speaks to the fungible nature of identity, and the power it can have in shifting political strategies. As the position of the European Union went from one as a goal or aspiration for Hungarians prior to accession to

¹²² The referendum was also troubled by political apathy among the electorate, as only forty-five percent of the electorate cast ballots, according to the article cited below.

¹²³ Nick Thorpe. "Hungarians lukewarm about EU". *The Guardian*. April 14, 2003. Last accessed May 18, 2017.

its current status as a frequent target of ridicule from the government, so do did Orbán's strategy. Thus, claiming that Orbán is a chameleon who lacks any ideological foundation and is doing nothing more than reading the winds of the political moment and responding in kind seems to be a sound strategy from the side of the European Union. Whether or not bringing Orbán to task about his ideological inconsistencies will be an effective strategy is not certain; it is, however, rooted in reality and appears from an outside perspective to be an accurate claim which, if properly relayed, could undermine the legitimacy of Orbán's Eurocritical position.

4.3: Potential Future Characteristics of the Debate

The debate between the Hungarian Eurocritics and certain elements of the European Union does not seem to be reaching a conclusion in the near future. The debate, focused along fault lines of identity-lines which cut to the core of political strategy and gamesmanship-may indeed be irreconcilable, and present a threat to the future efficacy of the European Union in regards to its perception within Hungary. There are, however, there is reason to believe that the EU has the ability to respond to the wave of Euroscepticism and Eurocriticism, namely, the political toll that has been exacted against Orbán within his own country and the European Union itself.

The situation of Hungarian youth is particularly interesting for assessing the potential future of anti-European Union sentiment. There is evidence that there is a potential for Eurocritical support among the youth demographic. According to a Eurobarometer survey of European Union Youth conducted in 2016, ninety-one percent of college-age Hungarians believed it was "totally important" for young Europeans to be informed about the European Union and how its institutions work, in line with the EU28 average.¹²⁴ The same survey, however, indicated that Hungarians were especially cynical or skeptical about political participation in the European Union: only a third of young Hungarians believed voting in

¹²⁴ Jacques Nancy. "European Youth in 2016: Special Eurobarometer of the European Parliament". *Europea.eu*. May 2016. Last accessed May 17, 2017. Pg. 21.

European elections represented effective political participation, the third lowest rate in the EU. Additionally, only five percent of polled Hungarians believed joining a political party was an effective action, tied for second lowest in the Union, ahead of only Greece.¹²⁵ This lack of civic participation among the next generation Hungarians speaks to a shocking level of cynicism-or possibly apathy-within the electorate.

While it may be possible to explain the lack of belief in the use of political parties as a consequence of domestic political issues, the skepticism surrounding the value of participating in European Union elections may point to the potential for sustained Euroscepticism among the Hungarian electorate; reinforcing this final point, a 2015 survey indicated that Jobbik was the most popular party among university students.¹²⁶ Further speaking to political apathy in regards to the European Union is the turnout in the 2014 European Parliament elections, in which less than thirty percent of eligible Hungarian voters voted, whereas over sixty percent voted in national elections held only two months earlier.¹²⁷ The lack of political participation and the presence of Euroscepticism prevalent among Hungarian youth means that Orbán's rhetoric has the potential for a sustainable political base for future elections.

The issue regarding Hungarian's general perception of the European Union is not certain, as there is evidence indicating dedicated factions on either side of the question of the Union's value to Hungary. According to a 2014 Eurobarometer survey, forty percent of Hungarian respondents were "totally pessimistic" about the future of the European Union, whereas fifty-five percent were optimistic about the European Union's future. These numbers placed Hungary in the bottom third of total European Union respondents and was slightly below the total EU average.¹²⁸ These results must, of course, be viewed in their proper context, as they

¹²⁵ Ibid, 23.

¹²⁶ Lili Bayer. "Why Central Europe's Youth Roll Right". *Politico.com*. October 18, 2016. Last accessed May 16, 2017.

¹²⁷ Márton Ugródy. "Hungary: Not Such a Black Sheep Within the European Union". *Building Bridges Series; Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade*. March 2016. Last Accessed May 19, 2017.

¹²⁸ European Commission. "Europeans in 2014". *Europa.eu*. July 2014. Last accessed May 19, 2017. Pg. 25.

deal with attitudes and opinions formed prior to some of the seminal events which are now used as evidence for the European Union's faltering, including Brexit and the 2015 migration crisis. However, they are useful to an understanding of the prevailing attitudes towards the European Union in the era of Orbán, as the surveys were conducted in the opening days of his second term as Prime Minister; furthermore, the survey was conducted following the passage of the controversial Hungarian Media Laws, which provoked strong condemnation of Fidesz's policies from the European Union.

Therefore, it can be said that there was a relatively substantial base of skepticism and concern regarding the European Union which Eurocritics like Fidesz and Jobbik could draw from. It is interesting to note, however, that in the same survey, that two thirds of Hungarian respondents considered themselves to be firmly and decidedly citizens of the European Union. This number was slightly higher than the European Union average, in which sixty-three percent of the total Member State population surveyed indicated they feel as though they are "European" citizens.¹²⁹ This information further reinforces the point that it is impossible and pointless to attempt to speak a universal and cohesive national identity that speaks for every member of the *demos*. It puts the criticisms of Fidesz and Jobbik in perspective, and reminds us that there are a diverse array of opinions regarding the European Union within Hungary.

Recent developments have indicated a degree of fatigue within Hungary regarding Orbán's behavior. This was partially demonstrated by the protests following the CEU affair, in which thousands of demonstrators took to the streets in opposition to the Orbán government's proposed law while chanting slogans in support of the European Union while carrying the EU flag.¹³⁰ Orbán saw a drop in his personal approval rating from forty-nine to forty percent following the passage of the law targeting CEU, with respondents also signaling dissatisfaction

¹²⁹ Ibid, Pg. 27.

¹³⁰ Reuters. "Hungarians Send Message to Orbán in march Supporting European Union." *The Guardian*. May 1, 2017. Last accessed May 18, 2017.

with Fidesz as party: forty-six percent said they did not plan to vote for Fidesz in the next round of elections in 2018.¹³¹ Jobbik was the beneficiary from some of its this fall in support for the ruling party, as the support for party rose from ten percent in January to fourteen percent in April, at the time of the poll¹³²; Vona's personal popularity also enjoyed a four percent boost, the largest gain among individual politicians.¹³³ Thus, it appears that Orbán's posturing against the European Union has limits within the Hungarian domestic political arena, and that, after pushing against the norms and values embodied by the Union, there is a point of diminishing political returns. Additionally, the comments from Orbán's EPP party have not indicate a full-throated support of their renegade member, but have indicated that Orbán's own party colleagues within the European Parliament may be reaching a breaking point with the Hungarian Prime Minister.¹³⁴ There appears to be a political cost for Orbán's latest round of domestic laws which draw the scorn of the European Union.

¹³¹Márton Dunai. "Support for Hungary's PM, Ruling Party Slumps After Protests-Poll". *Reuters*. May 4, 2017. Last accessed May 19, 2017.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ Eszter Zalan. "MEPs Preparing to Crack Down on Orbán". *Eu Observer*. May 16, 2017. Last accessed May 21, 2017.

Conclusion

The interactions between Hungarian Eurocritics and the European Union during Prime Minister Orbán's second term have been some of the most commented-upon elements of the contemporary European political scene. The friction demonstrated between the two parties in this debate indicates the power of identity, and shows the ways in which international actors construct their agendas and perform on the political stage.

It is impossible to speak of an all-encompassing Hungarian national identity. The range of opinions and viewpoints held by each member of a country of ten million are too diverse to essentialize, even on a specific and firmly described issue. However, the attitudes of members of the Hungarian political elite who hold critical opinions of the European Union can be attained, and assessing these attitudes can lead to an understanding of the present debate between Eurocritics and the European Union. It is of great importance for the future of the European Union to understand the ways in which its member states perceive the Union; those who are critical of the Union can provide guidelines and strictures for ways the Union may better interact with member states who show signs of dissatisfaction with the Union. The Hungarian Eurocritics' implementation of their the-pronged approach of Union criticism (the Union's betrayal of European identity; the Union's ineffective governance; the Union as an outside oppressor) indicates potential ideological failures and fault lines within the European Union's interaction with its member states. Whether or not the positions taken up by Hungarian Eurocritics are done so for simple political support is largely irrelevant to the question; these positions are significant, regardless of their strategic political importance, because they speak to fundamental issues of identity within the European Union.

The European Union's responses to Hungarian Eurocritics are informative and powerful in their own right. In addition to the political and material benefits provided by the Union, the Union's power of normative identity provides a strong foundation from which it can respond to

criticism from members of its ranks. The European Union's responses to Hungarian Eurocritics show ways in which the Union has the rhetorical tools to effectively counter waves of Eurocriticism and Euroscepticism. There are points of debate in which the Union seems to talk past its critics, such as their seeming inability or unwillingness to speak to claims of ineffectiveness; however, the Union's belief in its core identity as the agent of social and political values is one of its greatest strengths. This strength may not be quantifiable, but in the future of the European Union's interaction with discontented member states, it appears that the appeal to its normative power will be the strongest weapon in its arsenal.

Questions of international action have for too long been limited to discussion of traditional realms of hard power. The realities of economics, military might and force cannot be ignored, and they continue to be absolutely essential to an understanding of contemporary international relations. However, viewing these factors without any appreciation of the identities of the actors employing them will result in an incomplete and inaccurate picture of the forces that drives the political games of the modern era. The interactions between Brussels and Budapest in the age of Orbán show that identity cannot be ignored, and is an immensely powerful force in the arena of international relations.

Appendices: Interview Transcripts

Márton Gyöngyösi

Do you think that Hungary is allowed an appropriate amount of autonomy within the European Union?

Well, it depends. In theory, yes. The EU was constructed to have sovereign—it's supposed to be some kind of institution composed of sovereign entities, in that regard, it is declared that regardless of the size and regardless of the population, countries are represented on equal terms. But we can see that the European Union is not functioning that way. Like every union, every community—especially in democratic societies, there are very serious interests behind—political, economic motives, lobbying, which are a way of exerting influence within the Union. So I think, yes, on paper, we are there, we are there on equal terms on paper, but we are not treated as equals within the European Union.

Following up on that, do you think that Hungary's relationship with the European Union has improved or worsened over the past several years? How have you seen it evolve?

It's difficult to judge. The EU is in a great flux at the moment, if you heard Juncker's speech just the other day, where he's searching the various ways in which the EU should develop after Brexit. He comes up with five alternatives, all of which are quite unrealistic, of difficult paths to follow. I mean, the EU is going through great turmoil. It is completely in flux. I'm not quite sure it is possible to say.

Yes, Brexit is definitely an interesting case. What has been Jobbik's response? Were you in favor of it? Do you think it spoke to some of the issues that are systemic within the European Union?

Our attitude was—we had mixed feelings. Hungary has lost a great ally in the EU, because the British had a very—although there is a great difference in size and in political and economic might within the EU—but nonetheless, I think, for historic reasons, the British had a very similar attitude towards the general affairs on the continent to that of Hungary. Great Britain is an island. It's in its own world, with the Commonwealth and with the special US-UK relations. It's kind of European, but slightly different, and there is this sense of outsiders to the whole British context. I think Hungary, on the periphery in Central-Eastern European, we also have quite a few points of dispute with the Western European, and that also has a cultural and historical context in which we have a slightly different outlook on many things. Economic, cultural, global matters. We have lost an important ally in shaping the European Union. Nonetheless, I think we have to respect the people's choice in GB. They have had a mature debate and campaign. They had all the arguments put on the table, and, although slightly, Brexit has won. I think that has to be respected, and I think it's a great opportunity for the European Union to think about why the British people chose Brexit over the EU. This type of criticism that the British people have cast on the EU project should provide us with an opportunity with us to change course within the European Union. I'm quite distraught by the EU's attitude. The first reaction of the Brussels bureaucracy and the EU leaders was this great cynicism and arrogance: “Okay, the British want to leave, let them leave, and there will be no special deals done for the UK. If they chose that way, then they should go that way.” I think it was a very arrogant and a very cynical approach, and the EU bureaucracy just didn't want to hear the

criticism which is absolutely legitimate and absolutely valid. If you look at the debate there is in France, in the Netherlands, in Hungary, even within Germany, or in any member state, it's all very similar to what the British were saying. If Brussels doesn't hear these voices, it is basically ripe for disintegration. We can't help it. I think now, the EU has one or two years to prove that it is intelligent enough to understand the voice of the European people and that this construction-which is a 50-year-old institution-that it does have some common sense in the reserves. It's not as crazy as it looks. In the past couple of years, we have seen no common sense or any kind of clarity of thinking in Brussels. I very much hope that these crises which have basically been there. The 2008 financial crisis, the immigration crisis, now Brexit. This whole debate about legitimacy in the European context. It's nice and slow, it makes the Brussels bureaucracy understand that things must be changed. I think we should be grateful to Brexit that the point was made very clear to Brussels, and I hope that Brussels can interpret these signs and interpret it into action, and put some action to it.

What would that action look like? You spoke about the EU behaving with more common sense. What would that tangibly look like?

I think it's about time to realize that Europe is a very colorful continent, with very different sensitivities and cleavages in social and cultural terms. The migration dispute has brought out. It's very clear that Central and Eastern Europe think very differently than Western Europe on multiculturalism. It has historical and cultural reasons for it. It's not that we are racist or intolerant, we don't have a sense of solidarity. It just shows that these countries were not colonizers, they didn't open up their borders to all sorts of people. Our countries are not like the United States, which was basically founded on multiculturalism, it was founded by migrants arriving to the US from every country. There is a very different historical context in which arguments for multiculturalism, for example, should be judged. It's very different in the American context, it's very different in the Western European context, and it's very, very different in the Central European context. The EU wanted to take responsibility and to take away from the sovereignty of the member states and say "look, Brussels is going to decide on how the migrants are going to be disturbed across the continent regardless of what the European people think of it." It doesn't work that way. Economic policy. Since Maastricht, Brussels thinks that it can basically create, from above, a common currency, a common market, introduce a common budgetary policy, a common fiscal policy, a common monetary policy, without any regard for structural differences. It just doesn't go that way. It's not on that way. If the EU doesn't realize that this whole-there are borders, there are constraints to this type of ambition. I understand the ambition, but I think it is very illusionary or at least not done in the appropriate way. It's not prepared. It has all become a political project, a utopian political project instead of a practical, common sense project. I'm talking from an economic point of view. Say a common currency is fine as an idea, we can argue pro and con, and I can say the benefits and disadvantages. But one thing is clear: you cannot create a single currency if the economic, social and structural differences are there within the continent. Because then, one currency, one monetary policy, is not suitable to divergent economic structures. As far as economic theory and common sense goes, it will be a disaster, and it has turned out to be a disaster, as the Greek crisis has shown, and many crises which are lined up and would just take a spark to explode, are there. The EU has to realize there are constraints to this project, and it should return back to where the great designers of this project have placed it. It should be a community which is based on balanced and mutually beneficial agreements, and not on the economic or political might of certain member states who just want to push their interests through the whole community, and who just want to change its name to a union and try to suck away all the responsibilities and all

the sovereignty of member states and push down the will of the lobby group centrally from Brussels by force. In Europe, it's not a feasible project.

And so, following up on that, taken as a whole, would you say that being a member of the European Union has been beneficial to Hungary?

I think it could have been beneficial, but not under the terms and conditions under which it is functioning. Just now, just today, I held the leading speech of my faction-at the start of each plenary session, each faction has a 5 minutes speech, and I held the one today in the Parliament today on behalf of Jobbik. The German commissioner for the European Union budget said in an interview with the leading German financial newspaper that countries like Poland and Hungary which are stepping out of line, it wouldn't be suitable to sanction these countries by withdrawing or holding back cohesion funds. Do you know what the reply was? He said, no it's not a good idea to hold back cohesion funds, because the cohesion funds in reality don't serve the interest of the nations which they are given to. They serve the interest of Western European nations, especially German companies, which get, in huge volume, orders for services and goods from this money. Basically, what he was saying, the basic principle of EU cohesion funds, is that they are not there in the interest of Central and Eastern European countries, but in those countries which are net contributors to the whole EU budget, because these countries receive this money under the terms and the conditions that these countries use this money for goods and services that are ordered from Western European countries. For ten years, since we are members of the EU, we have been in the illusion that we receive this money to develop our country, that we receive these funds to bring up Hungary to the level of the EU average. We are surprised that we receive all this money from the EU, it is spent in Hungary, even if there is corruption surrounding all this EU money; a lot of money comes into Hungary from the EU, and why is it that the gap is not closing, it is widening? If you just take the single fact that 500,000 people have left this country since we joined the European Union, you can say there must be a reason for it. The whole transition process cannot be declared a success, if 500,000 people have said that Hungary is not a place where they want to build their homes, raise their families and have their children educated. There must be something behind it. Of course, since Hungary has joined the EU, in the whole region, we were competing against each other with low wages to attract foreign direct investment. It turns out, it's not a success story even if FDI is pouring into this country, it is coming here for cheap labor and it is repatriating profits from this country. We are happy because the GDP figures we show from this country, that macro figures, are healthy, because the GDP is only measuring what is being produced on the territory of Hungary; it doesn't measure what Hungarian capital is producing. It doesn't matter what the nationality of the capital is, it's only looking at the produce of the capital, whether it's owned by foreign owners or not. So the macro figures are healthy, and the government is campaigning on that, but, since we've joined the European Union, we've basically experienced a disaster of the cream of the society leaving the country. If you cannot show any perspective to the young, ambitious generation that is coming out of the universities, you cannot call this a success story. In Hungary, 60-70% of the students who come out of the universities don't even contemplate to stay in this country. How can you call that a success? Yes, if you look at the balance of advantages and disadvantages of joining the European Union, on first appearance, it looks like a success story. We have to pay this amount of money to members of the European Union, and we receive this amount of money, which outdoes the contribution, from EU funds. But if you look at the indirect costs of joining the EU, what it takes, in that we see that no protection is allowed from the government to protect ailing Hungarian industries, there are no forms of taxes, or customs, or state aid, it's a huge opportunity cost for the Hungarian economy, and this should

all be calculated into the balance. So, if you ask me, it is not that clear that we are great beneficiaries of the European Union. I think it is more to the negative side.

Do you believe it is possible that Hungary and less-developed Eastern European states could negotiate a better deal within the European Union?

Yes, yes, absolutely. At the moment, we are in the middle of a project; we are going to announce, in one week's time, a European Citizen's initiative, to address wage inequality of the European Union; the fundamental agreements of the EU that general, balanced well-being is among the aims of the EU, to have basically an equally-spread economic, social well-being across the EU. The EU should work towards eliminating these differences. It is quite vague. It addresses the issue, it declares the objective, but it doesn't state the mechanism. What we are doing in at the moment, in the countries that have become members of the EU since 2004, we have been trying to get allies into this European Citizens initiative. We are going to ask the Commission to address the issue of unequal wages. Central and Eastern European countries have a similar problem in all our countries. The whole topic is as familiar in the Baltic states as it is in Bulgaria. We have all been following the same neoliberal method. The same recipe has been adopted across the region, and the consequences were very similar. It is more or less the same consequence. This initiative shows that it is possible within the EU to aggregate the voices and the will of the population. We are generally smaller in size of population and in terms of economic and political weight. If we go one by one, we don't stand a chance against France or Germany. But if we unify our voice, and if we build an alliance of the 12 post-socialist trauma; if we get ourselves together and form an alliance, that's a serious voice and brings a big weight into EU disputes. We have achieve that from opposition. If we were in government, we could easily change the course if we find those topics in which we can unify our voice and change the course of the European Union.

Do you think that the split between the larger, more economically developed countries and the countries of the 2004 enlargement is the main cleavage within the European Union today?

There are a lot of cleavages, within member states and across the continent. As we stand today, in social terms, there is a huge gap. The migration crisis has basically brought to the forefront how different we are culturally in our mentality. A Polish, Hungarian, Czech or Bulgarian individual thinks completely different about migration, about multiculturalism than a Western European. This has to be judged within the historical, cultural context. In the economic context, there is a similar type of cleavage because of the economic development of these countries. Western European countries have been experimenting with the market economy for the last 200 years. They have had their phases of building up national capital. They have had their times when they had protectionist economies to let the homegrown enterprises and the national capital strengthen itself. Of course, once it became strong enough, then they started preaching free trade and globalization. Within the United States, there was a very similar path. In the 19th century it was as protectionist as hell, and once it was the strongest economy in the world and once it was in the interest of the US, it started preaching openness and multilateralism. And that's a natural development. I'm not blaming the US or the UK or France for doing that, but they are in a complete different phase than our countries. After 50 years of communism and central planning, this structure had been completely dismantled, and now we are trying to rebuild our own economies and raise entrepreneurship in Hungary and trying to get some homegrown financial market, homegrown investment and homegrown capitalism. We don't want to rely on the West for capital, for loans or for anything else. I think it is quite

understandable. Now, Hungary is in a different life cycle. We have joined the EU at a time when much of this was very premature. I think that we should have made it clear that we should have a moratorium or some kind of breathing space before we joined certain initiative of the EU, which are suitable for Germany or France, but is not necessarily suitable for us. I think much of our frustration today comes from the fact that Western European countries don't understand the situations in our countries. They don't understand that Hungary is facing a challenge which we have to solve before we can move on. It shouldn't be solved by prescriptions coming from Brussels which have to put into place before we can say we are ready to cooperate on other matters. Much of the debate that our government have with Brussels comes from this type of historical background.

Pivoting slightly towards civil society and social dynamics, do you think it is a right of the European Union to comment on the civil society of Hungary? Or do you believe these matters are better decided within internal Hungarian political space?

I think criticism is always welcome. It's more the manner in which the criticism is formulated, usually. Of course, it's difficult to speak of the EU, because there is an EU bureaucracy, but when we refer to the EU, we refer to those factions and political forces which are there in a democracy. It's not the EU criticizing Hungary, it's individuals who happen to stand at the top of an institution or the top of a parliamentary faction. But these people and these institutions, they come and go. It's all relative. I think criticism is always welcome. I think it's always good for every country if other countries honestly formulate their views in regards to developments in a country, because it creates an opportunity on the other side to explain why it is necessary. We've had a dreadful media law, before the Orbán government started to tinker with it. The constitution was also ready for amendment, I think it was necessary. The style in which the Orbán government has formulated the new media law and put it into practice, I think it's not to the benefit to my country. Any criticism which comes from the EU to the Orbán government in regards to some of the laws it has adopted, I think it is well founded. Then again, in the EU, you can see a strange double standard. When the socialist majority in Hungary adopted a media law which was equally biased, just the other way around, then the EU kept silent. Now that Orbán has adopted it, now it is completely mad about the developments in Hungary. What I find strange is this kind of double standard which is present in the EU, which perhaps comes from the left-liberal attitudes of Western European society. We are also worried that the Orbán government uses these new laws to divert attention from domestic matters and tries to find some kind of scapegoat. George Soros is the man who is frequently referred to. I do understand the worries these days. Soft power is there in our societies. We know exactly how you can influence matters through propaganda, media, NGOs, credit rating agencies, and so on. There is a lot of soft power which is kind of in the background, it's kind of nasty. It's not conspiracy theories, we know that they are there. We know how things can be influenced by the means of soft power. I think the best solution to that is transparency, to say, look, we live in a democratic society. Every voice is welcome. The only thing we request is everything is done transparently. An NGO should make all of its funding, its objectives and everything transparent. If we know who stands behind an NGO, then we should leave them alone. We shouldn't pressure or ostracize them, we should say that okay, we have all the information we need, we are a democratic society, we want to have transparent dealings in everything. When it comes to politicians' wealth, NGOs and public procurement, that should all be transparent. If everything is transparent, then the Hungarian people can decide for themselves what is what and who is who, and who wants what. That's the best we can do.

And continuing with Prime Minister Orbán, how would you evaluate his handling of Hungary's relationship with the EU?

I think Mr. Orbán is great in rhetoric. The way he has picked this fight with the European Union on migration and the way he has basically come out as a winner out of this debate, but harming the diplomatic relations a lot and the foreign policy positions of Hungary, he has basically gotten a lot of domestic benefits, but lost a lot on the diplomatic side. Of course, he's elected by the Hungarian people, and not by the people sitting there in Brussels. I understand the strategy of Mr. Orbán. I think he's a political animal. He's unbelievable, especially if you follow his rhetoric. It is quite misleading. On migration, for example. He has signed the resolution on the quotas, but then started a domestic campaign against it. In regards to the sanctions against Russia, Mr. Orbán has chosen a strategy whereby he signs a document in Brussels, and then goes to Mr. Putin and says, these idiots in Brussels don't understand, the sanctions are harming everyone. I think it's a nasty position. I think it's better if Viktor Orbán goes around the EU member states and convince the allies of Hungary on the issue of migration, of Russian sanctions, and all other matters. He has a lot of weight in the EU council. Why doesn't he bring all these critical issues to the European council? Why is he silent there, and then playing the freedom fighter here in Hungary? I know how it pays off in votes and with the Hungarian voters, but it's two faced and against the interests of our nation as well. It should be the other way around. Fighting these battles in Brussels would be more efficient, and then coming back to Hungary and saying "look at all I'm doing for you in Hungary".

Do you think this message would be well-received in Hungary?

Oh, absolutely. In this country, where we are paranoid anyway, it's genetically coded in us. We live in one of the most difficult geographic places, surrounded by super powers, the German, the Russian and the Turkish empires right next door. We have an awful historical record of fighting for sovereignty and for freedom. Anytime there is some kind of restriction of our sovereignty, whether it's done in Moscow or Istanbul or Vienna, then Hungarians feel itchy about it. When it comes to Brussels and the European Union, it's not different. Anything that comes from Brussels is looked upon with great suspicion in this country. It is very, very easy to build an argument for fighting for sovereignty. You live here, and you see the debates we have here. The defense of sovereignty is something that is at the center of Hungarian political debate, at all costs and in all cases. The way to go about it is to lead a proper debate and get the support here in Hungary, and then go to Brussels, look for allies, and defend the position. It's better than signing everything in the EU, then coming and exciting the Hungarian people about this ugly Brussels which forces me to sign everything and then going into this antagonistic relationship with the EU. If we did it the other way around, things would be much better. Go to Brussels, and with the support of your people, go defend a position. Then you can come home and say, look, with the support I've received here, I've done everything I've could. Let's fight against that. It would make much more sense.

Do you believe it is at all possible that Hungary would consider leaving the European Union?

Well, anything can happen. It depends on whether the EU can become a more palatable institution for our desires and our taste. I think if it remains like this, if it remains this very arrogant and dictatorial and federalist type of body, then it is not going to be only Hungary which will look for the exit. You can already see a lot of voices from member states, some of which have benefited from EU membership for decades, where a real adjustment is demanded

and requested. Austria, the Netherlands, France, Italy, the Finns who are fed up with the Euro and the whole economic dictatorship that comes from Brussels. I think there is a great wave of discontent sweeping through Europe. If I was the head of some EU institution, I would have emergency meetings about restricting the body. I know that the bureaucracy is sitting there with little responsibility, with little real influence on day-to-day matters. The European Parliament is negotiating matters which don't connect to reality and to the basic needs of the EU citizen. It seems like an institution for itself, which doesn't in anyway connect to European states, only in very exceptional cases. It would require a big shakeup and an adjustment of the EU project to suit the needs of the people. Here in Hungary, much of the debate is about our relationship with the EU, and up to what point should we tolerate things coming from Brussels, and when is the point when you say, look, this is taking away a lot more than what we benefit from it. It might be strange coming from me and a party that is labeled as anti-EU, or Eurosceptic, [but] I think that there is a great opportunity to change the European Union. I believe it can be changed, and brought back into a mutually beneficial cooperation of equal member states, but the EU needs to hear the voice of the people. We need to understand how the EU really functions, and give up this nasty position which Orbán is taking. I think we should seek opportunities where we can change the EU institutions. We need to learn how to make our voice distinct and strong in the EU. It takes a lot of work to build up an alliance of similarly minded member states. It might just be a misunderstanding: we forgot to explain our position properly to the EU, and hence, maybe the EU doesn't understand. If we could maybe clearly explain ourselves, they might say, oh, okay, why didn't you say so. Okay, let's do this. Then it's all much more livable. We should try that before we walk out. I think there's an opportunity there.

Richárd Hörcsik

Do you think Hungary is allowed an appropriate amount of political autonomy within the European Union?

Hungary strives to have her voice heard with the same weight as the other parties when determining the common rules. There are however ideas present in the politics, so in the EU, which try to push the member state interests behind the federative ambitions. It is important to say, that decreasing the number of policies in member state competence may be dangerous when an immediate action is needed on the side of the European institutions.

Hungary is always keen to negotiate any proposals, that serve the best interests of the EU in terms of creating a smoother operation, however, we are pragmatic opponents of any measure that are only interest of some, or only one member state. In the present situation it is clear for us, that it is imminent to fight for preserving this autonomy, even if it is not the one which we see as appropriate.

Do you think that Hungary's relationship with the European Union has improved or worsened over the past seven years?

We have seen various reactions to the answers given to the challenges of the recent times. From Hungary and abroad, we have received harsh criticism and supporting voices at the same time, the latter resulting in further cooperation. All in all, it is remarkable that the opinion of Hungary has attracted much more attention since the migration crisis, and brought followers from Central-Europe, too.

Has Hungary benefited from its membership in the European Union?

Joining to the elite circles – so was it told before 1 May 2004, when we became member of the EU with several other countries from this region. Being member of the EU was rather a necessity: the membership brought us some advantages while we got to comply with obligations which were rather detrimental to our interests. Hungary has of course benefited from the cohesion funds and the common market, but it is not to be forgotten, that these financial resources are compensating the less developed countries for opening their markets.

Is there anything you would change about the relationship between the European Union and Hungary?

Sometimes the EU is extending beyond of its competencies, and raises her voice related to issues that belong to the competence of the member states. The European Union has openly applied double standard handling cases related to Hungary: praising Austria for stopping EEA citizens on the border curtailing their right to free movement IN the Schengen Area, and punishing Hungary at the same time for complying with her obligation to protect the Schengen border, trying to check illegal migrants and reducing the odds of terrorist acts.

Do you believe it at all possible that Hungary will consider leaving the European Union?

Hungary is definitely not considering leaving the European Union, the country is thoroughly committed towards the EU, which is more popular in Hungary than in any other Member State. However, this does not mean the EU does not function poorly in a number of respects that must be reformed.

How would you evaluate the Orbán government's handling of Hungary's relationship with the European Union?

It is fundamental, that a statesman firmly protects the interests of the nation while listening to those who are criticizing his work and discuss the questions raised with them. The stance of the Hungarian government is not different when dealing with issues pertaining to the European Union.

What would you say has been the biggest source of tension between the European Union and Hungary?

The biggest source of tension is the so called migration quota, more precisely, the Council decision from 2015 on resettling migrants. Hungary is a strong opponent of this decision, and filed a case against it at the Court of Justice of the EU in Luxembourg. This resolution deprives the Hungarian National Assembly, the Government and the citizens of the right to decide who can live on the Hungarian soil, threatening the fundamentals of the Hungarian statehood and sovereignty this way. The Hungarian government is of the view, that the conflicts of the Middle East and the consequences thereof cannot be resolved by letting everyone into Europe. The reason behind is not that we, Hungarians are inhuman or lack solidarity, but rather the fact, that in the end, settling in Europe all those, who feel uncertainty in their homeland is not the best even for the migrants themselves. The other reason for rejecting the relocation scheme, that the European Commission cannot overrule the decision of the Council on the voluntary nature of the distribution of migrants.

Is Hungarian identity antithetical to existing in the European Union as the Union is currently constructed?

No, the basic values are shared commonly, and mutual benefits do come from membership. However, Hungary should be treated equal to the other Member States, which nowadays seems less obvious. Also, Hungary should not be forced to do anything that it has the right to reject. The Hungarian government stresses that the fund received from the European Union is not an act of charity. The net contributor Member States are also beneficiaries of the cohesion policy, because Hungary eliminated its customs tariffs, opened its markets and permitted the free flow of capital. Therefore, PM Orbán called upon the critics that *“you cannot ask us, Ladies and Gentlemen, to keep our mouths shut, and you cannot speak to us as if you were giving us some gift, and as if we should be grateful because you have bought us and now we are in debt to you.”*

Do you think the European Union has the right to comment on the internal civil society of Hungary?

All member states should respect the community law, but the EU shall also respect the regulations that are in the competence of the member states.

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