

TRACES OF A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL EVENT IN NATIONAL POLITICS, THE CASES OF ITALY AND HUNGARY

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Abstract

Major international events may exert lasting changes in the international system. Nevertheless, these changes do not homogenously occur in the national politics of states but develop depending on the peculiarities of the different regional and national dimensions they find themselves in. Within this regard, 9/11 represents a crucial event, which raised significant questions on the future of states and of the international order. Therefore, this work has the aim of understanding the political influences of the discursive framework established after 9/11 and its effects on the national politics of Italy and Hungary. The cases considered seem to converge towards similar nationalist and populist attitudes today, but it is not evident how national political discourses have differently developed in connection of September 11, with perduring effects at the political level.

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I will proceed “genealogically”:

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Table of contents

Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	3
Table of contents	4
Introduction	5
Chapter 1: Meaning making and connecting the dots in the post-9/11 world	12
1.1. <i>September 11: from 1,360 feet to ground zero</i>	14
1.2. <i>The nation-state: implications and the political elites</i>	21
Chapter 2: Hungary	28
2.1. <i>The ‘day after’ from the European lens:</i>	29
2.2. <i>The Hungarian state between European inspirations and domestic identity</i>	34
2.3. <i>The political dimension and the rhetoric of terrorism vs. migration</i>	41
Chapter 3: Italy	47
3.1. <i>Old traditions, new challenges: moral geopolitics</i>	48
3.2. <i>Confronting the anxiety of migration</i>	52
3.3. <i>Italy in the mirror: hostility under new frames</i>	56
Conclusions	59
Bibliography	62

Introduction

History develops and is articulated through crucial moments, which function as watersheds that contribute to the change of states and the system in which they exist, operate and interact. These may be wars, treaties and other symbolic moments that represent changes in the nature of the international and national order and often mirror windows of opportunity for changes at the political level. Within this context, this thesis takes into consideration an event that has brought about several significant changes both on the international and national level. For the sake of clarity, this work does not look at 9/11 as a matter of terrorist threat but this research is interested in the political potentials, which may arise from a critical moment and how these are further utilized by political elites.

The uniqueness of 9/11 relies on the unexpected and sudden nature of it. Still today it recalls a strongly disrupting happening, which has touched the reality of many and started a set of political actions and mechanisms that seems to affect today's politics. On the one hand, the traditional agents of the international system, i.e. states, had to confront a difficulty definable agent, terrorists. On the other one, the emotional frame in which 9/11 is perceived and conceived today potentially exerts a strong influence on political narratives that enabled the implementation of specific domestic and foreign policies.

Terrorism did not manifest itself with 9/11 for the first time, since non-state agents acting against the authority of the state are not new. Nevertheless, terrorism has extensively changed in shape and scope and states have always been trying to tackle this ‘enemy in the shadow’. Eighteen years ago, a specific event changed some rules of the game. 9/11 embodies an emblematic event, which has symbolically proven how the borders of a powerful state could be permeated and how easy it was to hurt the American goliath. The demise of the Twin Towers recalls a moment of crisis for Western democracies, since 9/11 subverted the traditional Westphalian system, leaving its values and norms unhinged and acting outside the known rules of intrastate conflict. Namely, there was no state fighting to invade or acquire territories but a non-state actor trying to deter “the ideological balance of power”.¹

From this perspective, the power of the attacks did not only reflect a significant material damage but embodied a clash of “thought worlds.”² States were required to reorganize themselves in light of an ever-changing malleable international system, which required forming an intelligibly consistent plan and provide frames of meaning making. The cultural and civilizational component reflected the leading configuration of 9/11. Transnational actors jeopardized states’ power, which, at the same time, attempted to reassert the primacy of the interstate realm by employing strong defenses and re-establish their *raison d’être* through the democratic and liberal values and beliefs.³

The political discourses and decisions taken in reaction to 9/11 reinvigorated the importance of the nation as an imagined homogenous unit but also the geographical and

¹ Ken Booth and Timothy Dunne, *Terror And The Future Of Global Order* New York: Palgrave, 2002, 13-14.

² Ibid., 1

³ Ibid., 14.

political boundaries defining it. This reaction was posited and explained differently by intellectuals and academics regarding both the nature of the states and of the international system. On the one hand, the politics of Western democracies in post-9/11 was seen as a classical reaction of states to re-ensure its power in light of the globalizing process, which was weakening their sovereignty.⁴

Others consider the Global War on Terror (GWOt) as a classical neo-conservative and rational behavior. In light of this light, the GWOt represents the traditional 'right to punish' of nation-state, as posited by Hobbes, in which war remains an instrument of statecraft.⁵ Other authors focus more on the ontological implications on the basis of the methods adopted by Western democracies, as a sign of a changing nature of the state itself.⁶ Conscious of the different evaluation and perspective of analysis with regard to the political implications, the aim of this thesis is not to address the normative implications of such policies but unpack the discursive impulses created to successfully put forward and implement political projects in the scope of the GWOt.

Empirically, the GWOt was officially initiated and concretized with the US-led invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, in which 39 countries globally took part, whether by deploying troops or providing assistance also under NATO instituted

⁴ Robert Jackson, "Sovereignty And Its Presuppositions: Before 9/11 And After", *Political Studies* 55, no. 2 (2007): 304.

⁵ Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Continuity of International Politics", *Terror And The Future Of Global Order* New York: Palgrave, 2002, 348-349.

Tim Dunne, "Liberalism, International Terrorism, And Democratic Wars", *International Relations* 23, no. 1 (2009): 108.

⁶ See: Didier Bigo and Anastassia Tsoukala, *Terror, Insecurity And Liberty* Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2014,

missions. The “Enduring Freedom” operations denote great intentions aimed at dismantling authoritarian regimes to export and establish democratic political institutions. Nevertheless, there is much more than that, since political decisions and actions have to be accommodated by discursive frames, which enable and legitimize such decisions.

It seems as if the national narratives of populist and nationalist stances would constantly find legitimacy in the event of 9/11 and through the interpretative and discursive frames established after the American terrorist attack, constantly recalling discussion on the basis of ethnicity and culture. This has given great centrality to the paradigm of the nation-state, while seemingly bringing processes of supranational cooperation to a standstill, such as the growing national hostilities towards the institution of the European Union. At this juncture, a legitimate question arises and encapsulates the main research question of this thesis: is 9/11 connected with today’s rampant nationalisms and populisms in Europe? If yes, this thesis argues that it dispersed and contextualized within domestic national realities.

The aim of this work is not to assume a causal straightforward connection between September 11 and the spreading nationalist and populist sentiments. Conversely, the goal is to unravel how the conscious selection of political discourse and political rhetoric centered around terrorism enables development of political processes. This have opened up political opportunities, which may seem to align today along nationalist and populist political stances within different countries.

September 11 functioned as Pandora’s box. States adapted to the changing international order and such a push coming from the international level unraveled

regional and national processes which were already in motion but kept withheld by the globalizing development taking place internationally. As a matter of fact, these have been indeed re-contextualized in a more urgent environment through the inexplicability of September 11 and the spreading sense of threat and unease.⁷ One of the main concerns regarding 9/11 does not only refer to the effect of thereof at the international level but the political opportunities created at the national level in the long-term. The reaction to September 11 enabled certain domestic mechanisms, which have taken different paths in the European region.

To show the intricate thread unpacking the far-reaching effect of 9/11, two cases are considered. Different and distant nation states are intentionally chosen to address how the 9/11 narrative - differently exploited by political rhetoric - have seemingly led to converging populist political behavior. Namely, Hungary and Italy have engaged in different reactionary processes in light of 9/11, unleashing tensions at state level, which have culminated in similar hostilities within the regional context of Europe. The outline of this process is considered in relation to regional particularities, which have further intensified the changes started with 9/11. For instance, the financial crisis of 2008 and the migration crisis, intensified something, which was not evident but already present at domestic levels.

The ways, in which crisis situations are handled by the political elites through specific narrative frameworks has crucial lasting effects in some occasions. This reflects the contribution of this work in addressing how the narrative of 9/11 created political windows of opportunity. The latter seemingly

⁷ Ibid., 314.

prompted a series of national responses that, in way or another, contributed to the rise of nationalism. By taking a closer look and analyzing two different European states, it is possible to outline that both political elites used a narrative with references to 9/11 but with actual different meaning-making and policy framing mechanisms. To understand these commonalities and differences, in the first part the U.S.-led discourse followed after September 11 will be investigated, focusing on the great relevance given to the paradigm of the nation-state and the implications of such narratives. The second part of this thesis will outline the differences in the implementation of the 9/11 discourse, presenting the cases of Hungary and Italy.

Since the focus of this thesis relies on the words and the frames constructed by the different national political elites, discourse analysis is the core approach employed, displaying the percolation of discursive frames within the realms of Hungarian and Italian politics. In this regard, a holistic approach to official statements of the political government are considered in light of an analytic approach to both domestic and foreign policies depending on the case considered. This approach takes inspiration from the methodology employed by Ole Wæver and Lene Hansen.⁸

Even though the authors focus on European integration in relation to national identities, political discourses are posited as creators of national identities as “meaning created from within.”⁹ Therefore, political discourses are the notional constructions, which are concretized through domestic and foreign policy. Considering both sides of policy changes sheds light on the interaction between the national and international

⁸ Lene Hansen and Ole Wæver, *European Integration And National Identity* London: Routledge, 2003.

⁹ Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, *World Of Our Making: Rules And Rule In Social Theory And International Relations* Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989 in Lene Hansen and Ole Wæver, *European Integration And National Identity* London: Routledge, 2003, 21.

dimensions, tackling states' interaction with the international system which influences the very concept of the state and sovereignty.¹⁰ Precisely, the first chapter will look into the general narrative started by the U.S. after the aftermath of 9/11 considering the implication of the driving concepts in light of the agency of the state and sovereignty and how the latter confronts and interacts with the changes both at international and national level.

This thesis takes into consideration a significantly wide timeframe, which is not fully covered. Instead, the main focus is on the most salient recurring discursive themes. Precisely, once unpacked the U.S.-framed narrative, Hungary and Italy are analyzed, providing the regional political contextualization, which entails on consideration of the lost-standing political narratives on state identity. These elements are evaluated in light of the happening of 9/11, focusing on the governments in power on the occurrence.¹¹ This enables to pinpoint the main national discursive behavior of the political elites and highlight, which changes took place in light of September 11 and in view of the contemporary political populist stances of the two states.

¹⁰ This stance is inspired by the constructivist approach put forward partly by Alexander Wendt – who, however, mainly utilizes a one-sided international approach to theorize on the concept of the state and its sovereignty.

Alexander Wendt, "Why A World State Is Inevitable", *European Journal Of International Relations* 9, no. 4 (2003): 491-542.

¹¹ The whole mandate of the government in power is considered, still focusing on the most salient points connected with 9/11.

Chapter 1: Meaning making and connecting the dots in the post-9/11 world

This is a moment to seize. The kaleidoscope has been shaken.
The prices are in flux. Soon they will settle again.
Before you do, let us reorder the world around us
-Tony Blair, speech at the Labour Party conference, 2001

Events do not speak for themselves. They may inherently carry meanings but the ways in which these are framed and made sense of, represent what the whole world makes of it. Within this perspective, the 11th of September 2001 is an event, which still raises a general sense of unease. The emotional ties related to this event are based on the strength of unpredictability, vagueness and the feeling of constant threat. Following the philosophical evaluations of Derrida and Habermas in regard to 9/11, the rise of something new and different had to be contextualize along the boundaries of intelligibility and thus this ungraspable ‘new’ is labelled as an event subjected to different interpretations.¹² From this perspective, the discursive explanation provided by Western democracies, especially the affected U.S., represented the leading line that influenced the whole interpretation of September 11. The fall of the Twin Towers and the Pentagon attack leave a legacy of memories, stories and images, which gain crucial consideration when put in conversation with the political level.

¹² Nick Smith, "Giovanna Borradori, Philosophy In A Time Of Terror: Dialogues With Jürgen Habermas And Jacques Derrida", *Continental Philosophy Review* 36, no. 3 (2003): 344.

The leading political discourse was centered around the traditional concept of the nation-state, since ‘the resolve of the American nation was tested.’¹³ Moreover, the nation hit by terrorists had clear characteristics as outlined by former President George W. Bush’s speeches in the following days of the aftermath. Christian and Jewish religion.¹⁴ Freedom and the symbolic democratic values of the U.S., as the pinnacle of all world’s democracies, were the main concepts reiterated as the reason behind the attacks, which created the strong patriotic stance adopted by President Bush.¹⁵ American identity was hurt and in a state of flux and had to be re-established.¹⁶

However, it was not evident that the American political near would have focused the narrative around concepts of a Christian and democratic nation. Therefore, the question naturally arises: why did the U.S. -and then Western democracies - choose to center their reactionary political discourse of 9/11 on the paradigms of culture, ethnicity and Christian religion? This first part outlines how the American post-9/11 narrative was centered around the importance of the nation state, which raises further points on how September 11 modulated - or modified - the interaction between nation states and the international level. As a

¹³ "George W. Bush: Remarks At Barksdale AFB On 9-11-01 - The Rhetoric Of 9/11", Americanrhetoric.Com, Last modified 2019, <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911barksdale.htm>.

¹⁴ More on the role of religion in response to 9/11: Wilfred M. McClay, "The Soul Of A Nation", *National Affairs* 39, no. 155 (2004).

¹⁵ See: Address At The Episcopal National Cathedral On The National Day Of Prayer And Remembrance (9-14-01)"Americanrhetoric.Com", Last modified 2019, <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911prayer&memorialaddress.htm>.

Address To Joint Session Of Congress And The American People (9-20-01), Americanrhetoric.Com, Last modified 2019, <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911jointsessionspeech.htm>.

¹⁶ Qiong Li and Marilyn B. Brewer, "What Does It Mean To Be An American? Patriotism, Nationalism, And American Identity After 9/11", *Political Psychology* 25, no. 5 (2004): 729.

first step, it is necessary to present a general depiction of how the event as a whole was framed and consider the implications and possibilities that these created for specific policy implementation and ways of ‘doing politics’.

1.1. September 11: from 1,360 feet to ground zero

Crucial events function as impulses setting in motion political processes that may last in the long term. The direction and duration of these profoundly depends on their conceptualization, narration and perpetuation. Political elites have a crucial role in forming the discourses and the parameters for understanding an event. As a matter of fact, the framing process by the political sphere involves a consciously and rational selection that offers specific meanings of “facets of events or issues and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution.”¹⁷

The political use of specific words and imaginaries are not accidental. How the events have been perceived unpacks further consideration on Western thinking about globalization, security, and the nation-state.¹⁸ Within this perspective, September 11 does not simply reflect a revolutionary event, but an overwhelming crisis with a strong symbolic power. The latter was centered on the sentiments of an unprovoked and unjustifiable attack through a sense of vulnerability and threat culminated in patriotic outrage.¹⁹

¹⁷ Arjen Boin, Allan McConnell and Paul 't Hart, *Governing After Crisis: The Politics of Investigation, Accountability and Learning* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 64.

¹⁸ Ersel Aydinli and James N. Rosenau, *Globalization, Security, And the Nation-State: Paradigms in Transition* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005, 40.

¹⁹ Boin, McConnell and 't Hart, *Governing After Crisis: The Politics of Investigation, Accountability and Learning*, 64.

Chaos propagated, and confusion needed to be substituted with clarity and rationale. An answer of comfort and reasoning was demanded by the political power. The strong emotions and memories tied to the event of 9/11 created a forceful reaction by the U.S. formalized in different domestic and foreign policies.

The attacks of September 11, 2001, gave President Bush an opportunity to propound a line designed to revive habits of patriotic deference and “to dampen elite dissent, dominate media texts, and reduce the threat of negative public reaction—to work just as the Cold War paradigm once did.”²⁰ In his 2002 State of the Union address, George W. Bush defined terrorism as a global threat requiring a unified front of “civilized” nations making war against an adversarial “axis of evil”.²¹ This discursive frame created a code of conduct for the U.S. but also formed global and interconnected security crisis that Western states were witnessing.²²

If events seem to support this Manichean division of the world into enemy and friend, evil and good, U.S. elites might together once again sustain an anchoring paradigm comparable to the Cold War—particularly if the United States remains “at war” against terrorism indefinitely.²³ On the one hand, the

²⁰ Robert M. Entman, "Cascading Activation: Contesting the White House's Frame After 9/11", *Political Communication* 20, no. 4 (2003): 424.

²¹ "Text Of President Bush's 2002 State Of The Union Address", The Washington Post, Last modified 2002, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/transcripts/sou012902.htm>.

²² Robert Jackson, "Sovereignty and Its Presuppositions: Before 9/11 And After", *Political Studies* 55, no. 2 (2007): 297.

²³ Steven Livingston, *The Terrorism Spectacle* Boulder: Westview Press, 1994 in Robert M. Entman, "Cascading Activation: Contesting the White House's Frame After 9/11", *Political Communication* 20, no. 4 (2003): 424.

terrorist hijackings of 9/11 are structured as an act of war against the U.S.²⁴ This led to the primary response of targeting Iraq and Afghanistan as the states harboring terrorists, described with strong-emotional drivers of evilness.²⁵ On the other, an underlying ideational narrative was formed to restore legitimate political rules, which – for its part - necessitated “an agreement of hearts and minds.”²⁶ In this case, national identification and American patriotism embodied an effective tool.²⁷ The latter did not only create consent by the public opinion but led to a general political cohesion also among political parties.²⁸ The attack was perceived as a threat to the institutions of the state and a weakening of thereof.²⁹

Meaning making and providing an intelligibly consistent plan was the main aim in light of a crisis, which was incomprehensible and difficulty manageable.³⁰ The discourses established relied on the one hand, on the clear-cut militaristic attitude realized with the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, while on the other hand, forged the narrative of the “war on terror” founded on concepts of exceptionalism and othering.³¹ Moreover, this

²⁴ Cristina Archetti, "Are the Media Globalising Political Discourse? The War On Terrorism Case Study", *The International Journal Of The Humanities: Annual Review* 2, no. 2 (2006), 1.

²⁵ Address to the nation on the September 11 attacks”. The Oval Office. Washington D.C..11 September 2001. Speech.

²⁶ Anthony F Lang and Amanda Russell Beattie, *War, Torture and Terrorism*, London: Routledge, 2009, 179.

²⁷ Since both nationalism and patriotism are not entities of fixed nature and thus belong to shifting political framework, I do not assume that these conceptually overlap. However, both belong to a specific configuration of the nation that acquired importance in the case of 9/11.

²⁸ Li and Brewer, "What Does It Mean to Be An American? Patriotism, Nationalism, And American Identity After 9/11”, 728.

See also: Ronald R. Krebs and Jennifer K. Lobasz, "Fixing The Meaning Of 9/11: Hegemony, Coercion, And The Road To War In Iraq", *Security Studies* 16, no. 3 (2007): 409-451.

²⁹ Ulrich Beck, The Silence of Words: On Terror and War, *Security Dialogue*, 34(3), (2003), 257.

³⁰ Boin, McConnell and 't Hart, *Governing After Crisis: The Politics Of Investigation, Accountability And Learning*, 289.

³¹ Didier Bigo and Anastassia Tsoukala, *Terror, Insecurity And Liberty* Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2014; Giorgio Agamben, *State Of Exception* University of Chicago Press, 2003.

concept was constructed as a matter of high-politics. Therefore, according to the political discourses of Bush, terrorist did not simply attack New York, but perpetuated an aggression to the authority of the American state as representative of the Western liberal values and principles.³² The culmination of the American political narrative was encapsulated by the project of the GWoT.³³ War was waged not only to the specific states harboring terrorists, but a global campaign of war was initiated for the demise of this threat.

The narrative of GWoT may be framed and established following two complementary directions. The deepness within the context of the American public was supplemented with the breath of the scope of the narrative extended on a global dimension and described as a “civilization's fight”.³⁴ This enabled the American government to engage in the discourse of ‘war’ in the name of the common good and of the protection of democracy and security. The discourse was centered around the agency of the nation state by adopting a logic of exclusion and differentiation based on the “friend and foe” approach.³⁵ Namely, the ‘self’ of the nation-states, represented by democratic and liberal values and institutions, was opposed to the ‘abnormal’ “other” threatening the existence of the Western

³² Gillian Youngs, "The 'New Home Front' And The War On Terror: Ethical And Political Reframing Of National And International Politics", *International Affairs* 86, no. 4, 2010, 929.

³³ Ulrich Beck, The Silence of Words: On Terror and War, *Security Dialogue*, 34(3), (2003), 256.

³⁴ Address to the nation on the September 11 attacks”. The Oval Office. Washington D.C..11 September 2001. Speech.
https://georgewbushwhitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/bushrecord/documents/Selected_Speeches_George_W_Bush.pdf

³⁵ Andreas Behnke, "Terrorising The Political: 9/11 Within The Context Of The Globalisation Of Violence", *Millennium: Journal Of International Studies* 33, no. 2 (2004): 281.

See also: Michael Ignatieff, "It's War - But It Doesn't Have To Be Dirty", *The Guardian*, Last modified 2001, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/oct/01/afghanistan.terrorism9>.

system.³⁶ This created a specific concept and image of the GWoT. On the one hand, this acted as the founding and legitimizing layer for the adoption of counterterrorist measures still in place today. On the other, the strong emotions tied to 9/11 created a political narrative enhancing the feeling of ‘insecurity’, ‘unsafety’ of the nation-state.

In the post-9/11 narrative, in the context of globalization, the liberal democratic system was perceived as “[...] a worldwide community of destiny confronted with violent, destructive obsession.”³⁷ Politics had to confront transnational violence and the perception of danger intensified, emphasizing the heterogenous and changing nature of the international system exceeding the power of control of nation-states. In this sense, fear cultivated a quasi-revolutionary situation, which admittedly can be used in quite different ways.³⁸

With the beginning of the GWoT, war was waged against an undefinable enemy as indefinite was when this war could have ended and how could it be resolved.³⁹ The speeches given by political representative, such as Bush , Tony Blair and others had the clear intention of defeating the threat of terrorism through the promotion of democratic values as “as part of a ‘muscular patriotism’ based upon ‘freedom and greatness’”.⁴⁰ Moreover, the GWoT was justified the idea of moral responsiveness and democratic

³⁶ Phillip M. Bratta, "Flag Display Post-9/11: A Discourse On American Nationalism", *The Journal Of American Culture* 32, no. 3 (2009): 240.

³⁷ Ulrich Beck, The Silence of Words: On Terror and War, *Security Dialogue*, 34(3), (2003), 258.

³⁸ Ibid., 258.

³⁹ Gillian Youngs, "The ‘New Home Front’ And The War On Terror: Ethical And Political Reframing Of National And International Politics", *International Affairs* 86, no. 4, 2010, 934.

⁴⁰ Michael C Williams, *Culture And Security* London: Routledge, 2005, 102.

intentionality as a way of justifying forms of violence enacted with moral righteousness.⁴¹

The clear moral purpose of the benevolent hegemony reestablished an international order of values enabled the adoption of policies and the commencement of wars and allowed the adoption of policies at national level that dismantled important liberties, renewing the vibe of protectionism and nationalism while demonizing cultural and ethnical others.⁴² Nevertheless, a lack of clarity in the development of the GWoT and the repeated references of 9/11 created a vicious circle of “impending danger”.⁴³ Such a vagueness and elusive sense of danger settled around clear ethnical markers of the Islamic world. Even though, on the one hand, political representatives, such as Bush, have officially underlined the importance of not mistaking Islamic extremism with the Muslim religion. On the other, the political framing of clashing cultures contributed to create political syllogisms between terrorism and the Islamic and Arab world as a whole.⁴⁴

Even though these dialectical mechanisms did not define the event in its essence, what is said and perpetuated on the latter, profoundly influences what the general public makes of it and how the political elites and personalities involved in the position of meaning-making create a framework of interpretation, which is reiterated and promulgated in the long distance.⁴⁵ A global discourse and policies

⁴¹ Judith Butler, *Frames Of War: When Is Life Grievable?* London: Verso, 2016, 49.

⁴² Beck, *The Silence of Words: On Terror and War*, 258.

⁴³ Janne Flyghed, "Normalising The Exceptional: The Case Of Political Violence", *Policing And Society* 13, no. 1 (2002): 30.

⁴⁴ Douglas Kellner, "September 11, The Media, And War Fever", *Television & New Media* 3, no. 2 (2002): 143.

⁴⁵ Boin, McConnell and 't Hart, *Governing After Crisis: The Politics Of Investigation, Accountability And Learning*, 181.

of enmity has been put in place. The effective success of such is clearly debatable, nevertheless researching the potential effect – often unexpected – in the long-term draws further conclusions on how these tales of enmity could be further perpetrated and employed in different situations that exceeded strictly war policies through ‘thin’ ideologies employed by political leadership at will.⁴⁶

As a domino effect, the narrative around this event and the political decisions adopted within the U.S. and in the Western world created political voids. From this perspective, a spill-over effect arose following the lines of the discourses on September 11. The dialectical techniques adopted for the rationalization of September 11 rooted in the dyadic process of embedding the exceptional at the level of the normal and ordinary.⁴⁷ The symbolic context of these frames remained firmly entrenched within the international and national matrixes, which were contextualized and modified according to the different political domestic situations and opportunities.

The existing discourses were reactivated through the strategic decisions of the political discourses “to recall or direct the attention [of the audience] to some person, object, idea, event or projected activity [...]”.⁴⁸ Exactly the symbolic content of these discourses enabled the aggregation and articulation of interest and mobilization of supporters through an “ever-renewed juxtaposition and dualism of “us” (the Americans,

⁴⁶ In this regard, the concept of ‘thin ideology’ is often automatically connected with populism as being one of its main characteristics. Nevertheless, within this context, I use the idea of ‘thin’ ideology to highlight how the general discursive framework can be changed and adjusted with changing political stances and ideologies.

⁴⁷ Flyghed, "Normalising The Exceptional: The Case Of Political Violence", 30.

⁴⁸ Edward Sapir, ‘Symbolism’, in *Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*. London: Macmillan, 1934, 492.

the Germans, etc.) versus “them” (the immigrants, the Muslims, etc.) which is both deeply regressive and pervasive in a globalizing society.”⁴⁹

1.2. The nation-state: implications and the political elites

September 11 embodied a moment of crisis for the liberal Western world as a moment of rupture that questioned the legitimacy of the political institutions in The inherent patriotic and nationalist *leitmotiv* was consciously included in the discourses following September 11. The value driven discourse enabled the legitimate implementation of specific foreign and domestic policies. This opened up Pandora’s box and unleashed tensions and aspirations, which were already present but still limited by ongoing process of supra-nationalization, which gave more prominence to those forces weakening national boundaries in favor of international institutions.⁵¹

A non-governmental organization, such as al-Qaeda, stroke a deep and harming attack against the leader of the international system, providing “the ultimate contradiction to the argument for a sovereign state.”⁵² The power of the state was thus weakened and in danger. The borders of a state could be infiltrated to hit at the heart of it and even the leader of the international system did not seem capable of preventing such a tragedy. Therefore, the latter was the victim of 9/11 as seen in the political speeches of Bush. Along this line, worldwide narrative also

⁴⁹ Thomas Faist, ““Extension Du Domaine De La Lutte”: International Migration And Security Before And After September 11, 2001”, *International Migration Review* 36, no. 1 (2006): 11.

⁵⁰ Adam Hodges and Chad Nilep, *Discourse, War And Terrorism* USA: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007.

⁵¹ Robert J Jackson and Philip Towle, *Temptations Of Power* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, 7.

⁵² Deni Elliott, “Terrorism, Global Journalism, And The Myth Of The Nation State”, *Journal Of Mass Media Ethics* 19, no. 1 (2004), 39.

centered the whole discussion around the identity of democratic states.⁵³ The power of the state has been shaken, broader questions were raised on the very essence of democracies and of its actual capability of protecting itself and its citizens.

September 11 resembled a change for the power of the state within the international order, producing a new set of constraints and opportunities. Namely, governments had to re-enter domains from which they had withdrawn in light of the processes of globalization through the renationalization of territories.⁵⁴ The decision of adopting a policy of intervention through the lenses of national security was an important step to safeguard the sanctity of the Westphalian order, as fighting conventional aggression to preserve territorial integrity.⁵⁵ This narrative was framed as legitimate in light of the idea of moral responsiveness as a way of justifying forms of violence enacted when considering the threat posed by terrorist organizations and networks to sovereignty.⁵⁶ Similarly, these could be justified through the Machiavellian approach of ‘ends justify the means’ for engaging “[...]in doing things often termed unscrupulous”.⁵⁷

The post-9/11 condition required political leadership to manage and reassemble the shaken structure of the state. They had to “give ‘meaning’ to the unfolding crisis in order to gain legitimacy for their crisis management efforts.”⁵⁸ In relation to this, the main

⁵³ Ken Booth and Timothy Dunne, *Terror And The Future Of Global Order* New York: Palgrave, 2002, 16.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 320.

⁵⁵ Amitav Acharya, "State Sovereignty After 9/11: Disorganised Hypocrisy", *Political Studies* 55, no. 2 (2007): 281.

⁵⁶ Judith Butler, *Frames Of War: When Is Life Grievable?* London: Verso, 2016, 49;

Amitav Acharya, "State Sovereignty After 9/11: Disorganised Hypocrisy", *Political Studies* 55, no. 2 (2007): 281.

⁵⁷ Kenneth Waltz, *Man, The State And War* New York, NY [u.a.]: Columbia Univ. Press, 1959, 212.

⁵⁸ Arjen Boin, Paul Hart, Allan McConnell, “Coping with unscheduled events: the challenges of crisis leadership” In *Political and Civic Leadership: a reference handbook*, SAGE Reference Series on Leadership, 2010, 16.

discourse established was centered around the concepts of the nation as herald of the Western civilization with clearly identified characteristics. The way in which this concept was used by the political realm did not refer directly to an ethnocultural fact but utilized the idea of the nation as a political idiom.⁵⁹ Therefore, this concept of the nation as an entity, recalls the classical Weberian theorization of the nation as *Wertbegriff*, i.e. as the values bound to this, which embodied a crucial point of reference for politics.⁶⁰

Moreover, the unity of this organismic state is not only sustained by the inherent definition of the ‘self’, instead it acquires value when confronted and opposed to other national entities.⁶¹ Within this scope, the political narrative put forward after 9/11 did contribute to re-define the national self of Western democracies in terms of its founding values, changing “the way people see themselves, to mobilize loyalties, kindle energies, and articulate demands.”⁶² Nevertheless, at the same time, these values and identities gained importance in opposition to a culturally and religiously different ‘other’ threatening the existence of the nation-state as the ultimate representative of it.

If on the one hand, the narrative framework reformed national identities in reaction to the weakening state’s power in light of 9/11. On the other one, we should acknowledge how moment of crisis opened up “semantic and political space for actors to redefine issues, propose new policies, foster public reflection,

⁵⁹ Rogers Brubaker, "In The Name Of The Nation: Reflections On Nationalism And Patriotism", *Citizenship Studies* 8, no. 2 (2004): 115.

⁶⁰ Hartmut Behr, *Entterritoriale Politik* Wiesbaden: VS, Verl. für Sozialwiss., 2004, 90-91.

⁶¹ Kenneth Waltz, *Man, The State And War* New York, NY [u.a.]: Columbia Univ. Press, 1959, 179.

⁶² Rogers Brubaker, "In The Name Of The Nation: Reflections On Nationalism And Patriotism", 116.

or simply to gain popularity and strike at opponents.”⁶³ These moments of redefinition at the political level represent ‘windows of action’ to reestablish a specific system or completely subvert it.⁶⁴

A crucial aspect is to look at how the emotional driver of the post-9/11 frame combined with the revival or constant maintenance of such a sense of danger has been within the political discourse of Western countries leading to the re-use of such interpretative frames at the rise of new threats as an empty box filled with new dangers, threats and meanings. Namely, the exceptionalism of September 11 has been put in practice through the implementation of policies and responses. We are in an era when there seems to be a growing tendency for people(s) to reject reason in favor of fundamentalism, extremism, or hate.⁶⁵ These attitudes were already present. However, September 11 gave the final motivation to raise central consideration on the future of global security and nation-states.⁶⁶

What remains open to discussion is to see how this reactionary frame of 9/11 could have exerted an influence on the domestic realm of other countries in order to investigate “how the ‘punctuations’ that crises cause in political life may transform it in fundamental and enduring ways.”⁶⁷ Shaking the political infrastructure of the state

⁶³ Boin, McConnell and 't Hart, *Governing After Crisis: The Politics Of Investigation, Accountability And Learning*, 287.

⁶⁴ Arjen Boin, Paul 't Hart and Allan McConnell, "Crisis Exploitation: Political And Policy Impacts Of Framing Contests", *Journal Of European Public Policy* 16, no. 1 (2009), 82. See also: Keeler, J. (1993) 'Opening the window for reform: mandates, crises, and extraordinary policy-making', *Comparative Political Studies* 25(1): 433–86 ; Naomi Wolf, *The End Of America: Letter of Warning to a Young Patriot* Carlton North, Vic.: Scribe, 2007.

⁶⁵ Ersel Aydinli and James N. Rosenau, *Globalization, Security, And The Nation-State : Paradigms In Transition* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005, 38.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁶⁷ Boin, McConnell and 't Hart, *Governing After Crisis: The Politics Of Investigation, Accountability And Learning*, 313.

inherently requires a reaction of the political leadership that sheds light on how the latter approached, framed and dealt with such a crisis. As a matter of fact, the American response founded on the narrative on the GWoT reshaped the world order, such as the ushering of a clash of civilization.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, the U.S. led narrative and policy making particularly affected the regional dimension of Europe, considering the common identity of ‘Western civilization’ impacted Western societies and democracies.⁶⁹ “To revive myths of absolute sovereignty and border impenetrability, or to pretend that technical solutions can completely prevent new attacks, is to ignore the powerful trends in contemporary societies toward the multiplication of flows (capital, ideas, information, goods, people) and the growing speed of their circulation. Not only are attempts to reverse these trends likely to fail, they also jeopardize important liberties by suggesting a hierarchy of rights and invite a situation in which limits imposed by extraordinary laws become increasingly portrayed as ordinary.”⁷⁰

These changes occurred at the international level after September 11 were visible through the modifications affecting the structure of the state. While this did not happen uniformly in every country, a surprising range of states initiated such changes, including many states that had little or nothing to do with the front lines of the GWoT.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Booth and Dunne, *Terror And The Future Of Global Order*, 196.

⁶⁹ See Acharya description on how Asia’s reaction to 9/11 has been different, reflecting more convergence among governments positions in Booth and Dunne, *Terror And The Future Of Global Order*, 2002.

⁷⁰ Didier Bigo, “To Reassure, and Protect, After September 11”, *Social Science Research Council After September 11 Archive*, 2001.

⁷¹ Kim Lane Scheppele, "The International State Of Emergency: Challenges To Constitutionalism After September 11", Yale Legal Theory Workshop, 21 September 2006, 1-2.

In this regard, the discursive framework contributed in reforming national imaginaries when confronted with moments of rupture on the international level. Nevertheless, these also represented room for political maneuver in the different domestic context. Thus, at the political level, what represents a crisis for some, could reflect opportunities for others. As a matter of fact, this particular narrative takes different shapes and is implemented according to the heterogenous domestic conditions and factors. The ways in which it is deal with are crucial especially in occasion of incomprehensible crises, which nurture not only the figure of the state but also the political elites sustaining it. Therefore, the formation of a specific set of values and ideals of the nation-state could potentially contribute in the reinvigoration of the elites in positions of authority and reinforced by generic public solidarity at times of deep social trauma, and even genuine appreciation of their crisis performance.⁷²

9/11 and the way it was treated by the American government propagated and took shape differently within the national realms of each country. Nevertheless, the common post-9/11 thread is still present in many national political situations in the current state of affairs. More and more European government seem to converge towards ever stronger nationalistic and populist sentiments claiming for a strengthening of the agency of the state - often at the expenses of supranational integration and integration. Therefore, if today we may witness a convergence in a growing nationalistic behavior throughout Europe. At this point, the main concern is how did 9/11, if at all, contributed to the domestic implementations in question? What opportunities has 9/11 opened up in the

⁷² Boin, McConnell and 't Hart, *Governing After Crisis: The Politics Of Investigation, Accountability And Learning*, 294.

realm of politics? How are these opportunities different within the different national dimensions?

Within this perspective, the next two sections will present two less-evident instances, which investigate the potential influence of 9/11 within the national political situations. Hungary and Italy and Hungary represent at the moment two of the most outstanding examples of strong nationalist and populist governments, which seem to share commonalities in terms of political framing and narrative. The main point of the following section considers how the relative position of these countries in the international system combined with the receptivity of the discursive frame of 9/11 may have influenced the domestic political atmosphere enabling the creation of narratives, which reutilize the same discursive frame with regard to changing issues and threats. In conclusion, the following part will look into the discursive commonalities of 9/11 and the differences of the developments of thereof.

Chapter 2: Hungary

International events resonate in the global system and represent potential areas of change. Such changes do not homogenously occur in the domestic field of states but are implemented and take shape depending on the peculiarities of the different regional and national dimensions they find themselves in. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to trace the heterogenous and intricate process of political change started within Hungarian politics in light of 9/11 and unpack how the narrative was incorporated within this national and regional dimension.

Political windows of opportunity are created and sustained by political elites, which aim at gaining or sustaining their power through specific frames of discursive mechanisms. These are implemented through official discourses and the adoption of specific foreign policies. Here, the intention is not to assume a direct causal link between September 11 and the rise of the nationalist and populist Hungarian governments. Conversely, the aim is to pinpoint the spaces of opportunity opened up after 9/11 that rendered legitimate the national discourses on the centrality of the state. In this regard, the latter seems to be confirmed as opposed as to ethnic and religious ‘others’.

This chapter touches upon the main moments of change of the Hungarian political narrative in reaction to the terrorist attacks of 2001, while contextualizing these changes within the regional and domestic dimensions, which have intensified or given more prominence to these discourses in Hungary. International subverting events reflect spaces of opportunities for political agents within countries in the prosecution of its own goals

and projects.⁷³ The specificities of these narratives reveal how powerful the ways in which events can be declined and conceptualized are on the base of the different national interests and lead to wider political implications at the domestic level.

In the specific case of Europe, September 11 resonates and takes different shapes within different states in light of the end of the Cold War period and the expansion of the European Union. In fact, the latter is not simply a commercial and economic community but a cultural alliance among states sharing the same frameworks of values and ideals. In order to effectively understand the evolution of the Hungarian context, these different variables have to be taken into account in order to address how the process since 9/11 has taken specific turns and have intensified with contextual events as in the case of the 2008 financial crisis and, later, during the migration crisis in 2015. This tortuous path has given space to the legitimacy of the national politics of hostility and through the construction and perpetration of particular narratives.

2.1. The ‘day after’ from the European lens:

September 11 takes place in a fluid international system, which assisted to the change of a clear-cut finite Cold War system and the rise of different state – and non-state – agents, who have been directly involved in the international realm.⁷⁴ The terrorist threat targeted the normative system of the Western world. Western democracies themselves, led by the U.S., framed such an attack as a

⁷³ András Körösenyi, Csaba Tóth and Gábor Török, *A Magyar Politikai Rendszer* Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2003, 356.

⁷⁴ Ken Booth, Timothy Dunne and Michael Cox, *Empires, Systems And States* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 14.

matter of civilization, culture and nations. On the one hand, Europe adopted a less preemptive conduct in light of the September 11 attacks, favoring policies that put more emphasis on the human rights implications of the GWoT.⁷⁵

On the other, the Western ideal and selfhood threatened by an unidentifiable agent, had a long-term affect at least at the level of domestic politics of some European countries. Along this line, the national discourses were mainly centered around the importance of the ideals and values represented by the U.S. as the fulcrum of the newly established system after the demise of the Communist threat.⁷⁶ Consequently, a cultural and identity discussion was set up, which was then reconducted to the advocates and protectors of these, namely the state itself. Nevertheless, even at the level of the European Union, an idea of cultural friction and opposition was framed – even if unconsciously. For instance, the European Council Strategy for Combating Radicalization and Recruitment to Terrorism adopted in 2005 raised concerns with regard to the underlying language adopted, which reiterated the ‘us’/‘them’ opposition on ethnic and religious lines.⁷⁷ Within this regard, this framework is also contextualized in the potential rising connections between terrorist and the threat of illegal migration in the European territories.⁷⁸

The international system and its members had to come to terms with an ever-changing system. The end of the polarized, clear-cut international system demanded from

⁷⁵ Marieke De Goede, "The Politics Of Preemption And The War On Terror In Europe", *European Journal Of International Relations* 14, no. 1 (2008): 167. See also: Joan Fitzpatrick, "Speaking Law To Power: The War Against Terrorism And Human Rights", *European Journal Of International Law* 14, no. 2 (2003): 262.

⁷⁶ Barry Buzan, "Will The ‘Global War On Terrorism’ Be The New Cold War?", *International Affairs* 82, no. 6 (2006): 1101.

⁷⁷ Marieke De Goede, "The Politics Of Preemption And The War On Terror In Europe", *European Journal Of International Relations* 14, no. 1 (2008): 170.

⁷⁸ Buzan, "Will The ‘Global War On Terrorism’ Be The New Cold War?", 1105.

the state a new ability to adapt to altering situations. The newly established international system was in a flux and new unclear threats were rising, menacing the agency of the state. Within this perspective, September 11 embodied the pinnacle of the inherent need to re-establish and revitalize the centrality of the state, its borders and its specific identities, which raised new points of discussion within domestic political discourses.⁷⁹ As a matter of fact, even though Hungary was not directly exposed to actual terrorist threats, it was still of crucial importance for the state to assure protection, since the threat of terrorism had no borders and predictability in light of September 11.⁸⁰

The focus shifted thus towards the cultural imperatives behind state decision-making and within this perspective it is of fundamental importance to understand why cultural tropes became crucial and central in certain historical periods and not in others.⁸¹ In the case of Hungary, the first-hand reaction of the leading political right-wing party was to manifest support for the U.S. but mainly underlined the safety and strength of the Hungarian state in light of the attacks of September 11. This unity in name of the shared values and ideals was still framed along the lines of nation-states, which are the first, and foremost actors involved in protecting the Western liberal values and the identity of the state itself. This

⁷⁹ Zsolt Rostoványi, "Civilizációk a civilizáció ellen? A hidegháború utáni nemzetközi rendszer antinómiái", *Külügyi Szemle 2002 (1. évfolyam)* 2002 / 1. Szám, 42.

⁸⁰ Dávid Lóránt et al., "Biztonság, Terrorizmus, Turizmus", *Gazdálkodás* 20, no. 51 (2007): 162. **160-166.**

⁸¹ Paul Rich, "European Identity And The Myth Of Islam: A Reassessment", *Review Of International Studies* 25, no. 3 (1999): 435-436.

leitmotiv identified how regional events are ideologically associated and linked to wider discourses.⁸²

The importance of national identity is of crucial importance in Central and Eastern Europe, especially after the fall of the iron curtain, which opened up opportunities for national self-determination to countries that were subjugated for more than forty years to the control of an ‘external’ power. This aspect, together with the progressive withdrawal of the two contrasting superpowers created space for a new debate over European identity in a post-Cold War world.⁸³

The 1990s mirrored a crucial time for the revival of culturalism and particularism, which focuses on the paradigms of culture and civilization as seen by the heterogenous Huntingtonian perspective of clash of civilization.⁸⁴ Within this perspective, the forces of integration in place after the demise of the Soviet Union were also juxtaposed to the ‘fragmenting’ forces “resurrecting barriers between nations and peoples and creating ones even as others are tumbling, [...] manifested as nationalism.”⁸⁵ Consequently, everything that could potentially threaten the uniqueness of the state started to be framed as an existential threat to the very survival of a conceptualized self.⁸⁶

The national realm thus does not simply exist in parallel and independently from the international, but is in connection and contrast through discourses claim for the re-establishment of nation-states both in its spirit through identity and in its quintessential

⁸² Karmen Erjavec and Zala Volčič, "'War On Terrorism' As A Discursive Battleground: Serbian Recontextualization Of G.W. Bush's Discourse", *Discourse & Society* 18, no. 2 (2007): 124.

⁸³ Rich, "European Identity And The Myth Of Islam: A Reassessment", 435.

⁸⁴ Samuel Huntington, *The Clash Of Civilizations?* New York, NY: Foreign Affairs, 1996.

⁸⁵ John Lewis Gaddis, "Toward The Post-Cold War World", *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 2 (1991): 105. **102-122.**

⁸⁶ Zsolt Rostoványi, *Civilizációk a civilizáció ellen? A hidegháború utáni nemzetközi rendszer antinómiái*, *Külügyi Szemle* 2002 (1. évfolyam) 2002 / 1. Szám, 43.

manifestation through clear-cut borders.⁸⁷ The post-Cold War period and specifically the early 2000s represent the revival of ethnic and cultural identities, which had been repressed by the Soviet homogenization, leading to the revitalization of regional territorial processes, which inherently carry in themselves a political nature, which gained crucial importance in this specific period.⁸⁸ In this regard, consensus was created through the notion of unity, which is represented in language in the form of the pronouns ‘we’ and ‘us’, and only one perspective on events.⁸⁹

These identity issues thus operated on the regional level of Europe as well as on the national particularities, which gained more predominance and legitimacy when confronted with the attacks of 9/11. With the discursive framework started by the U.S. and propagated in the European region, the necessity of defining and consequently protecting the ideational ‘self’ was crucial, especially in situations of threat. The eagerness for protection of such identity values acquired much more strength when contextualized in the Central and Eastern European area, where independence and self-assertion represented newly reached objectives, since the end of the cold war clouded the clarity of a divide between the ‘self’ and others.⁹⁰ As a result, every country was potentially called

⁸⁷ Ibid..

⁸⁸ Krisztina Varró, "Changing Narratives On EU Multi-Level Space In A Globalizing Era: How Hungary As A National Space Became Part Of The Story", *European Planning Studies* 16, no. 7 (2008): 955.

⁸⁹ Karmen Erjavec, "Media Construction Of Identity Through Moral Panics: Discourses Of Immigration In Slovenia", *Journal Of Ethnic And Migration Studies* 29, no. 1 (2003): 91.

⁹⁰ John O'loughlin, "Ordering The ‘Crush Zone’: Geopolitical Games In Post-Cold War Eastern Europe", *Geopolitics* 4, no. 1 (1999): 52.

to confront with issues of national identity definition as well as facing its own inner threats and enemies.⁹¹

2.2. The Hungarian state between European inspirations and domestic identity

Hungary tackled its inner dangers using the frame of ethnicity and culture. Comprehensively, the Hungarian political reaction developed in two directions: targeting Roma minority as the first-hand “threat” to be managed, while engaging in strong statutory reforms and foreign policies aimed at securing Hungarian minorities in the nearby regions.⁹² In this respect, the discursive framework adopted by Hungary following the incipit of the American stance reflects a use of 9/11 and of the threat of terrorism as the litmus paper for the government to explain any restrictive policy adopted.⁹³

Since politicians are considered key actors for ethnicity formation, their narratives could contribute to elevate minor cultural differences to an essential status.⁹⁴ In this light, the legitimizing underlying narrative adopted, created connections, which constantly re-enforced Hungarian identity not by itself but in opposition with contrasting and differing identities reassumed in the concept of the ‘other’.⁹⁵ The latter took different shapes and

⁹¹ Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier, *The Europeanization Of Central And Eastern Europe* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005. See also: Andrea Krizsa, "The Hungarian Minority Protection System: A Flexible Approach To The Adjudication Of Ethnic Claims", *Journal Of Ethnic And Migration Studies* 26, no. 2 (2000): 247-262.

⁹² Ferenc Köszeg, "From The Cold War To The War On Terrorism: Did September 11 Have An Impact On Hungarian Law Enforcement?", *Fundamentum* 9, no. 5 (2005).

⁹³ Ádám Földes, "Tough Liberties: Perplexed About Terrorism", *Fundamentum* 9, no. 5 (2005).

⁹⁴ Surdu, Mihai, and Martin Kovats. "Roma Identity As An Expert-Political Construction". *Social Inclusion* 3, no. 5 (2015):9.

⁹⁵ Ágnes Kende, "The Hungary Of Otherness: The Roma (Gypsies) Of Hungary", *Journal Of European Area Studies* 8, no. 2 (2000): 190.

names with the development of Hungarian politics, specifically in the political rhetoric of right-wing parties in particular with Fidesz.⁹⁶

By drawing a general line of connection in the enemy framing of Hungarian politics, Fidesz-led governments selected a wide range of enemies throughout time, from the threat of Roma minority through the issue of Islam migration, until the menace embodied by supranational agencies, such as the European Union, as well as targeting specific figures as the well-known anti-Soros narrative. Nevertheless, these narratives and different mechanisms of meaning-making within the framework of Hungarian national identity do not appear out of the blue, but rather are the result of a political domestic process.

The self-perception of the Hungarian state in relation to its historical experiences was reiterated. For instance, right after the post-Cold War period, Hungary, together with the other Central European countries, had the main aim of rejecting the old political system to develop their own self national consciousness.⁹⁷ This may fell into the wider project of Europeanisation.⁹⁸ On the one hand, this revealed the will of establishing and affirming Hungary's position among the strong countries of Europe and especially, to emerge as the 'best student' in respect to the other fellow Central European countries engaged in a

⁹⁶ David Boromisza-Habashi, *Speaking Hatefully* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013. Gergely Egedy, "Political Conservatism In Post-Communist Hungary", *Problems Of Post-Communism* 56, no. 3 (2009): 42-53.

⁹⁷ Martin Mevius, "A Kommunizmus És A Nacionalizmus Viszonyának Újraértékelése", *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 37, No. 4, July 2009 37, no. 4 (2009), 5-6.

⁹⁸ Nicole Gallina, "Political Elites In Eastern Central Europe: Paving The Way For 'Negative Europeanisation?'" , *Contemporary European Studies* 2 (2007), 77-78.

similar process.⁹⁹ This referred to the popular strategy of distinguishing Hungary from the other candidate states within specific policy fields, and more generally, by referring to Hungary's "preparedness" and its leading role in post-socialist transformation. To quote the Prime Minister, "Hungary has played a determining role in the process, which required deep changes from the peoples of East-Central Europe" (Népszava, 1 May 2004)

However, the will of becoming part of this European community only partly mirrored the actual will of adopting those liberal values founding the European identity. This could be considered much more functional in light of the restoration of Hungarian political credibility at European level.¹⁰⁰ With September 11, further legitimacy and saliency was given to discussions on the very meaning of identity, taking place on three levels of interacting realities.¹⁰¹ The international level ignited an impetus of identity discussions - framed with the help of the U.S. around the identity of the state – that took its own turns and developments when put in conversation with the already existing dialogues between European regionality and state-centered identities, which were especially vigorous and important in the area of Central and Eastern Europe.

From a regional perspective, Europe is confronted with the internal expansion through globalization and the rise of its regional identities happening along with the federal inspirations of the early 2000s towards a European 'union'.¹⁰² At the same time,

⁹⁹ Krisztina Varró, "Changing Narratives On EU Multi-Level Space In A Globalizing Era: How Hungary As A National Space Became Part Of The Story", *European Planning Studies* 16, no. 7 (2008): 962. See also: Merje Kuus, "Europe's Eastern Expansion And The Reinscription Of Otherness In East-Central Europe", *Progress In Human Geography* 28, no. 4 (2004): 472-489.

¹⁰⁰ Nicole Gallina, "Political Elites In Eastern Central Europe: Paving The Way For 'Negative Europeanisation?'" , *Contemporary European Studies* 2 (2007).

¹⁰¹ Paul Rich, "European Identity And The Myth Of Islam: A Reassessment", *Review Of International Studies* 25, no. 3 (1999): 435.

¹⁰² Michael Burgess, *Federalism And European Union: The Building Of Europe, 1950-2000*, 1st ed. London: Routledge, 2000.

the regional level is confronted with a parallel process of national revitalization at states level, which were shaped on cultural, ethnical and religious lines.¹⁰³ Within this perspective, culture is significant in understanding how such processes of self-definition both as international, supranational and especially at national level interact and led to the rising strengthening of the authority of the state as a reaction to the potential weakening of thereof.

Hungary's socialist legacies rendered the new political agents focused on a "return to Europe" to finally dismantle the communist domination in the region and finally construct freely its own identity. At the level of political elites, Hungary envisaged a vibrant political elite willing to establish a new democratic state to erase the fights of the past for good, while being conscious of the hardships for reaching freedom.¹⁰⁴ This particular aspect of 'fighting of themselves' will be extensively reiterated to highlight the strength of Hungarian national identity by the leader of Fidesz, Orbán Viktor.¹⁰⁵

Hungary's 'integration'-focused political attitude in the early 2000s was concretized with the project of accession to the European Union. EU admission was considered a further step to return legitimacy to the Hungarian state and contributed in expanding the role of Hungary in the international realm.¹⁰⁶ However, this attitude was mainly inspirational than factual. Namely, it was seen

¹⁰³ Rostoványi, *Civilizációk a civilizáció ellen? A hidegháború utáni nemzetközi rendszer antinómiái*, 47.

¹⁰⁴ Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham (eds), *Challenging Immigration and Ethnic Relations Politics: Comparative European Perspectives*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. 2000, 83.

¹⁰⁵ "A Szabadságért Újra, Meg Újra Meg Kell Harcolni", Fidesz.Hu, Last modified 2019, <https://fidesz.hu/hirek/a-szabadsagert-ujra-meg-ujra-meg-kell-harcolni>.

¹⁰⁶ Szájer József and Herczeg Zsuzsanna, *Szabad Magyarország, Szabad Európa* Budapest: [Szájer J.], 2014. 198.

as a functional tool enabling the reawake of the Hungarian state within the prospering European states as also shown by the inconsistent Hungarian political narrative, shifting between the willingness of becoming part of the EU and the domestic political narrative of “there is life outside the EU” in case the Hungarian interests were not safeguarded.¹⁰⁷ This indeed signaled a political hesitation as well as uncertainty of the national identity between acquiring international relevance through the European Union or sustaining the newly formed national characteristics and boundaries.

The Fidesz government promulgated a narrative, which highlighted the commonalities of cultural harmony based on religious and cultural values typical of the Western civilization.¹⁰⁸ Within this perspective, Western Christian values are historically strongly rooted and could survive considering the several ‘contrasts’ it had to face with other civilizations and cultures.¹⁰⁹ As a matter of fact, Orban claimed “We are not Europeans for the geographical space we belong to but we are Europeans because we are Christians.”¹¹⁰

The national liberation and independence which Hungary has gained since 1989 provided the impetus to ‘fetishize the national state’ and the ‘people’¹¹¹. The dimension

¹⁰⁷ "Orbán Viktor Az Uniós Csatlakozásról (2. Rész)", Politicalcapital.Hu, Last modified 2002, https://politicalcapital.hu/konyvtar.php?article_read=1&article_id=814.

¹⁰⁸ "Magyarország Az EU-Csatlakozás Előtt (1. Rész)", Politicalcapital.Hu, Last modified 2002, https://politicalcapital.hu/konyvtar.php?article_read=1&article_id=857.

¹⁰⁹ József Szájer and Zsuzsanna Herczeg, Szabad Magyarország, Szabad Európa Budapest: [Szájer J.], 2014. 198.

¹¹⁰ "Orbán Viktor Sajtónyilatkozata A Kocsis Fülöp Görögkatolikus Metropolitával Kötött Elvi Megállapodás Aláírását Követően", Kormányzat, Last modified 2015, <https://www.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk/orban-viktor-sajtonyilatkozata-a-kocsis-fulop-gorogkatolikus-metropolitaval-kotott-elvi-megallapodas-alairasat-kovetoen>.

¹¹¹ Elżbieta M. Goździak and Péter Márton, "Where The Wild Things Are: Fear Of Islam And The Anti-Refugee Rhetoric In Hungary And In Poland", Central And Eastern European Migration Review 7, no. 2 (2018), Örkény A. (2005). Hungarian National Identity. Old and New Challenges. International Journal of Sociology 35(4): 28–48, Erin K. Jenne (2016). How Populist Governments Rewrite Sovereignty and Why. Online: <https://www.ceu.edu/sites/default/files/attachment/event/15587/erinjennepolberg-consec-2016.pdf>

of the ‘self’ was threatened by culturally and religiously different others – mainly referring to Muslims but still sustaining the long-standing hostility against Roma minority—underpinned much of the thesis of clashing civilizations’ view which, suggests that some of the most significant cultural divides for regional political stability occurred within Europe.¹¹²

The establishment of a consistent biographical and national identity was indeed crucial in terms of self-perception, since these provide “a core conception of self-claims to be and are important as they establish expectations about the nature of the environment within which they exist and provide a sense of orientation for the self in respect of its behaviors with others.”¹¹³ Therefore, the role of the international and of the European integration process were modulated and always refers to the dimension of state as subject of supremacy.¹¹⁴

The legitimacy of the nationalist identity framework and political narrative deriving from it was further intensified and strengthened when contextualized in the process of accession to the European Union. Viktor Orbán has always had a clear idea about the kind of Europe Hungary should join: ‘We would like to see a union based on nations’ [...] rejecting the idea of a ‘European super-state’ or ‘a European United States.’”¹¹⁵ Being part of the EU represented a part of the

¹¹² Rich, "European Identity And The Myth Of Islam: A Reassessment", 436.

¹¹³ Christopher S. Browning, "Geostrategies, Geopolitics And Ontological Security In The Eastern Neighbourhood: The European Union And The ‘New Cold War’", *Political Geography* 62 (2018): 109.

¹¹⁴ András Körösi, Csaba Tóth and Gábor Török, *A Magyar Politikai Rendszer Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2003*, 356.

¹¹⁵ ‘Orbán describes his vision for Europe’, Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty Newline, 12 July 2001; ‘Nem kell európai szuperállam – mondta Münchenben Orbán, Schlössl és Stoiber’ (We don’t want a European super-state – say Orbán, Schlössl and Stoiber in Munich), *Népszabadság*, 20 November 2000.

successful plan of the Hungarian state, in respect of its lengthily fight for freedom.

Aspirations to become a fully European modern state underlay the narrative of accession in Hungary and forged the idea of the nation as a unified socio-spatial community. They entered the EU as part of a national community united to achieve its historical aspirations, but these were only and exclusively seen and considered in light of the primacy of the national frame of reference in the run-up to Hungary's accession.¹¹⁶ The domestic discourse therefore remained on a general level, focusing on symbolic or geopolitical arguments supporting Hungary's 'return to Europe'.¹¹⁷ The changing approach of the Hungarian government towards the EU changed from pro-membership discourses, giving prominence to the value-oriented power of Europe to more instrumental consideration that envisaged EU as the stepping stone for national success.¹¹⁸

The case of Hungary shows how these EU narratives interacted with domestic narratives to reinforce the dominance of national space and community—paradoxically also when their aim was to promote regionalism.¹¹⁹ Orbán emphasized that there was life outside the Union.¹²⁰ Moreover, he claimed that Hungary should become part of the EU only if the state would have some gain from it. Indeed, the main claim in his work refers

¹¹⁶ Varró, "Changing Narratives On EU Multi-Level Space In A Globalizing Era: How Hungary As A National Space Became Part Of The Story", 965-966.

¹¹⁷ "Magyarország Az EU-Csatlakozás Előtt (1. Rész)", Politicalcapital.Hu, Last modified 2002, https://politicalcapital.hu/konyvtar.php?article_read=1&article_id=857

¹¹⁸ Agnes Bathory, "The Political Context of EU Accession in Hungary" Briefing Paper November 2002, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 3.

¹¹⁹ Varró, "Changing Narratives On EU Multi-Level Space In A Globalizing Era: How Hungary As A National Space Became Part Of The Story", 962.

¹²⁰ Bathory, "The Political Context of EU Accession in Hungary", 4-5.

to the “national prosperity does not come from the foreign diplomatic saloons but in the domestic economic field.”¹²¹

The discrepancies of the Fidesz government, in light of Orbán’s statements, sheds light on how the European Union was and still is conceived as a hurdle for the complete manifestation of the national state identity, since the civilian and normative scope of the latter “aimed precisely at overcoming the militarism and nationalism, historically associated with classical geopolitical thought that had plagued Europe’s early twentieth century.”¹²² Generally, the EU and the whole international system had started to shift between the enemy-friend pendulum depending on the extent to which supranational institutions and orders could contribute in sustaining the Hungarian national development or could hinder it. If on the one hand, the EU accession narrative was mainly founded on enforcing the national dimension of Hungary.

2.3. The political dimension and the rhetoric of terrorism vs. migration

Following 9/11, the behavior adopted by the ruling party of Fidesz-KNDP was mainly centered around reassuring its citizens of the state’s strength and control of the situation.¹²³ The most outstanding reaction took place along the lines of ethnicity and identity matters, which consisted in ethnic profiling and targeting of the Roma minority, particularly by the police.¹²⁴ As everywhere in the Western world, general issues of terrorism had been on the agenda of Hungarian

¹²¹ Orbán Viktor, Magyar Nemzet, 2002. szeptember 18.
https://www.politicalcapital.hu/konyvtar.php?article_read=1&article_id=814

¹²² Stefano Guzzini, *The Return Of Geopolitics In Europe?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 62.

¹²³ Szájer and Herczeg, *Szabad Magyarország, Szabad Európa*, 185.

¹²⁴ See Lilla Farkas, Gábor Kézdi, Sándor Loss and Zsolt Zádori: A rendőrség etnikai profilalkotásának mai gyakorlata, *Belügyi Szemle*, Nr. 2–3, 2004; András Kádár and András Pap, "Police Ethnic Profiling In Hungary — An Empirical Research", *Acta Juridica Hungarica* 50, no. 3 (2009): 253-267.

public, academic and media forums. However, the debate on Islam or Muslim communities had not been a dominant issue in the Hungarian political discourse from the beginning.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, growing law enforcements have been targeting Muslims in light of the fight against terrorism since the migration crisis of 2015.¹²⁶ In an interview with a journalist of the German *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Orbán addressed the concept of ‘multiculturalism’ as a challenging project, especially when it refers to Christian and Muslim coexistence.¹²⁷

Even though actual discrimination is not that evident towards Muslim communities, while leaving Roma minorities still mainly targeted as subjects of discrimination, what is important to address is the effect of that political narrative *per se*. The identity framework of the Hungarian state gains significant incidence and force when confronted with the constant fear of the ‘ontological threat’ specifically developed in relation to other civilizations, cultures and religions. Understanding that even though clear-cut discrimination may not be found in the laws adopted, words and discursive rhetoric had an effect on a wider scale within the specific political project of the ruling government and the role of the state and what the latter has made of revolutionary events such as 9/11.

Moreover, the state acquires importance not only in the protection of this institution but becomes an instrument of political rhetoric. Namely, the Fidesz government took the opportunity of denouncing those domestic parties (MSZP), which

¹²⁵ András László Pap, "Ethnic Discrimination And The War Against Terrorism: The Case Of Hungary", *Fundamentum* 9 (2005), 39.

¹²⁶ András L. Pap, "Olice Ethnic Profiling In Hungary – Lessons From An International Research", *MTA Társadalomtudományi Kutatóközpont Kisebbségkutató Intézet*, no. 1 (2007), 117.

¹²⁷ "Nem Akarunk Multikulturális Társadalmat", Kormányzat, Last modified 2015, <https://www.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk/nem-akarunk-multikulturalis-tarsadalmat>.

were in connection and support of terrorist-supporting countries as in the case of the Iraqi regime.¹²⁸ As a result, the narrative generating from 9/11 encapsulates the ‘excuse’ for political actions against subjects within and outside the domestic political level, which may have threatened Hungarian nationality.

Within this regard, September 11 and the nation-state identity discourse had indeed opened up opportunities and legitimacy at the political level to readapt such a framework to new threats as in the case of the migration crisis of 2015. This showed the hostility embedded in the Hungarian government towards every potential actor, who could put in danger Hungarian identity with its ‘otherness’. In this regard, migration was seen as an element disturbing “the congruencies central to the idealized model of the nation-state.”¹²⁹

In response to the extensive opposition of the international community, European institutions and political representatives, Hungarian right-wing government did not need to provide significant justification for its behavior, if not redirecting the whole issue to the self-interest of the state, which is put ahead everything else.¹³⁰ Fidesz has shown a clear-cut position towards the issues of ethnicity and later on towards migration by following a specific line of othering. Hungary has been depicted as a homogenous national identity and the maintenance of this unity belongs to the main goals pursued by the ruling right-wing party. In a nutshell, the political strategy of Viktor Orbán is founded on

¹²⁸ Szájer and Herczeg, *Szabad Magyarország*, 185.

¹²⁹ Brubaker, "Migration, Membership, And The Modern Nation-State: Internal And External Dimensions Of The Politics Of Belonging", 68.

¹³⁰ Interview with Péter Boross in *Belügyi Szemle* (Review of the Ministry of Interior) 2000/1., 94.

bolstering and strengthening the Hungarian identity while representing as a threat any other ‘others’ in Hungarian territory.¹³¹

From a wider perspective, this process ignited by the harsh political rhetoric bolsters cultural homogeneity *within* states but sharpens cultural boundaries *between* them and also between national and supra- and international orders and agencies.¹³² The political narratives adopted enabled insights into the *modus operandi* of nationalist political actors, with regard to the political rhetoric used to form of myths and narratives related to nation-building processes, providing “a basis for the legitimization of ideological programs, the integration of supporters and the mobilization.”¹³³

The thread of this process tracing with the start of 9/11 inherently requires contextualizing the case study. Namely, the potential opportunities opened up with September 11 are to be read in the light of other events, which directed the process towards nationalist policies. In the specific case of Hungary, the narratives put in place after 2001 should be considered and analyzed in light of several and crucial drivers, which moved the state’s discourses in different directions. The EU access process, the 2008 crisis, the terrorist attacks in Europe and the pinnacle of the migration crisis in 2015 played indeed crucial roles, creating additional windows of opportunity to further

¹³¹ Bartek Pytlas, "Radical-Right Narratives In Slovakia And Hungary: Historical Legacies, Mythic Overlaying And Contemporary Politics", *Patterns Of Prejudice* 47, no. 2 (2013): 164.

¹³² Brubaker, "Migration, Membership, And The Modern Nation-State: Internal And External Dimensions Of The Politics Of Belonging", 63.

¹³³ Pytlas, "Radical-Right Narratives In Slovakia And Hungary: Historical Legacies, Mythic Overlaying And Contemporary Politics", 165.

intensify the role of the state by dismantling the institutions limiting the power of the central government.¹³⁴

The core drivers of the whole narrative relied and still today rely on the centrality of the nation-state. The latter become even more persuasive and effective when contextualized in the process of self-identification that Hungary experienced in the post-Cold War period. Apart from this, a domestic polarized political reality did not indeed help in blocking the ever-radicalizing stances on national identities, especially when constantly reaffirmed and sustained through the rhetoric of ontological anxiety.¹³⁵ The latter spread especially in light of 9/11 and in the alleged incapability of the state in reaffirming its geopolitical boundaries as fulcrum of the nation state, since ‘blocked’ by supranational institutions, such as the process of accession to the European Union.

The regional threat, as the migration crisis, which had further intensified the whole rush of right-wing governments from 2001 onwards to pursue contrasting and inherently contradictory political stances and discourses.¹³⁶ In fact, collective action frames and discursive constructions work as vehicles that transfer the identity tropes of the past to contemporary debates and issues.¹³⁷ This perspective acquires much more validity if considered through the spreading

¹³⁴ Dorottya Szikra, "Democracy And Welfare In Hard Times: The Social Policy Of The Orbán Government In Hungary Between 2010 And 2014", *Journal Of European Social Policy* 24, no. 5 (2014): 488..

¹³⁵ Christopher S. Browning, "Geostrategies, Geopolitics And Ontological Security In The Eastern Neighbourhood: The European Union And The ‘New Cold War’", *Political Geography* 62 (2018): 107.

¹³⁶ Annasstiiiana Kallius, Daniel Monterescu and Prem Kumer Rajaram, "Immobilizing Mobility: Border Ethnography, Illiberal Democracy, And The Politics Of The “Refugee Crisis” In Hungary", *American Ethnologist* 43, no. 1 (2016): 27.

¹³⁷ Pytlas, "Radical-Right Narratives In Slovakia And Hungary: Historical Legacies, Mythic Overlaying And Contemporary Politics", 166.

feeling of anxiety relating to the survival of national identities, which leads governments to pursue nationalistic policies, directly confronting the institutions of the European Union.

Chapter 3: Italy

The Italian political system has profoundly changed in form and content since the establishment of the Second Republic in the early 1990s.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, the aim of this chapter is to look into the political traditions remained present in Italian politics since the pre-Second World War and significantly intensified in the early 2000s starting with the second Berlusconi government in reaction to the events of 9/11. Following the general leading discourse of this thesis, the intention of analyzing a ‘middle-power’ in the context of Europe. This has the aim of shedding light on the incorporation of the discursive framework established by the U.S after September 11 and unpacking the differences, through which these narratives were incorporated in the domestic realms.

In this part, more prominence is to foreign policy as the actual manifestation of Italy’s national identity – considering the wider political influence of the latter as compared to the case of Hungary. From this perspective, in the post-9/11 international system, tensions at domestic level were unleashed and gave space of action to pursue nationalist policies and an ever-intensifying nationalist and populist government. As already underlined in the previous chapters, September 11 functions as a catalyst of processes, which were already in motion at regional and national level.

¹³⁸ The term ‘Second Republic’ does not refer to an actual institutional change but the political overture after the *Tangetopoli* scandal and the election of Silvio Berlusconi in his first term.

3.1. *Old traditions, new challenges: moral geopolitics*

Italy is often confronted with its fascist past. Mussolini pursued a foreign policy of personalism and presentism that still recalls Italy's aspirations in terms of foreign affairs.¹³⁹ The same characteristics have often been pinned to the politics of Silvio Berlusconi.¹⁴⁰ If on the one hand, Berlusconism put forward more classical and traditional neo-nationalist policies both in terms of domestic and foreign policy, partly pursued by today's ruling government. On the other one, these should not be interpreted as the mere byproduct of a changing and polarizing Italian political leadership but a transient development, shedding light a long tradition of Italian nationalism lost between Italy 's expansionist ambitions and its limited leverage as a middle-power state.¹⁴¹ Since its reunification, Italy has employed a pendular approach between the need for alliance with stronger powers and strived to play a decisive role in international politics.¹⁴²

Italian foreign policy does not seem to have dramatically changed throughout the years and different political governments. Three main lines of action could be highlighted as the traditional code of conduct employed by different Italian governments in foreign policy: Berlusconi pursued a moderate version of nationalism, "a staunchly professed Atlanticism and a contradictory Euro-realism".¹⁴³ From this perspective, Italy has always

¹³⁹ Gaetano Salvemini, *Prelude to World War II*, London, Gollancz, 1953, pp. 10;119.

¹⁴⁰ Elisabetta Brighi, "'One Man Alone'? A Longue Durée Approach To Italy's Foreign Policy Under Berlusconi", *Government And Opposition* 41, no. 2 (2006), 278.

¹⁴¹ Brighi, "'One Man Alone'? A Longue Durée Approach To Italy's Foreign Policy Under Berlusconi", 286.

¹⁴² Raffaella A. Del Sarto and Nathalie Tocci, "Italy's Politics Without Policy: Balancing Atlanticism And Europeanism In The Middle East", *Modern Italy* 13, no. 2 (2008): 135.

¹⁴³ Brighi, "'One Man Alone'? A Longue Durée Approach To Italy's Foreign Policy Under Berlusconi", 281-282.

struggled with the dilemma of being perceived as a small or middle power; lost in the predicament between the search for autonomy and the need for protection and alliance with stronger forces.¹⁴⁴ Especially, during the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, matters of national interest in terms of geopolitics gained prominence in reaction to international changes.¹⁴⁵ These national interests stretched between Atlanticism and reaching an influential role within Europe, giving more importance to the ideas of borders and territoriality.¹⁴⁶

Geopolitical and revisionist matters were not new but were unleashed with the demise of the polarized and fixed international system, revitalizing the dilemmas of status and prestige, which have characterized Italian politics even before World War Two. The geopolitical concerns crystallized around a contrast between internationalism from the postwar experience, and a range of diverse political tendencies towards re-nationalizing foreign policy or adopting more stringent and assertive forms of nationalism.¹⁴⁷

The problematic national identity of Italy has been and is of geopolitical significance.¹⁴⁸ The fear of marginalization, the anxiety regarding the country's status in world politics was widely implemented through bandwagoning behaviors.¹⁴⁹ This represented rather traditional concerns of Italian foreign policy, "manifesting themselves once again today and calling for a discursive

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 280.

¹⁴⁵ Christopher S. Browning, "Geostrategies, Geopolitics And Ontological Security In The Eastern Neighbourhood: The European Union And The 'New Cold War'", *Political Geography* 62 (2018): 106-115.

¹⁴⁶ Guzzini, *The Return Of Geopolitics In Europe?*, 133.

¹⁴⁷ Roberto Aliboni and Ettore Greco, "Foreign Policy Re-Nationalization And Internationalism In The Italian Debate", *International Affairs* 72, no. 1 (1996): 44.

¹⁴⁸ Graziano Manlio, *The Failure Of Italian Nationhood* New York (N.Y.): Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 11.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 4.

apparatus and security imaginary able to devise strategies to enhance and secure the country's role in world politics.”¹⁵⁰ In the scope of the post-Cold War period, problematic questions relating the concepts of nation, identity and nationalism were reintroduced in the public discourse.¹⁵¹ Within this perspective, post-Cold War situation underpinned a gradual awakening of the national environments, which inherently also questioned the very identity of nations, which had to be promptly reassessed through strategic and diplomatic mechanisms.¹⁵²

The affirmation of new political actors was instrumental in legitimizing the rise of neo-nationalist discourses in the political arena, and re-legitimizing geopolitics as part of that discourse as well as re-emergence of a series of questions pertaining to the idea of ‘nation’ in post-1989 Italy. The issues of ‘national identity’ at the level of political discourse culminated in ‘new’ foreign policy practices.¹⁵³ These policies operated outside the domestic area and were not strategical in light of Italy's potential alliances. Namely, Italian foreign policy should have naturally tended towards multilateralism and towards its most immediate representative and ally Europe, which did not occur so evidently, considering the contrasting position of Italian right-wing governments.¹⁵⁴

The pro-Atlantic and Eurosceptic Italian foreign policy was reinforced in the early 2000s Italy was subjected to a crisis of legitimacy of its institutions and shed light on the

¹⁵⁰ Guzzini, *The Return Of Geopolitics In Europe?*, 144.

¹⁵¹ Elisabetta Brighi and Fabio Petito, "The Renaissance Of Geopolitics In Post-1989 Italy", *Geopolitics* 16, no. 4 (2011): 821.

¹⁵² Guzzini, *The Return Of Geopolitics In Europe?*, 142-143.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 145-146.

¹⁵⁴ Brighi and Petito, "The Renaissance Of Geopolitics In Post-1989 Italy", 833.

changing and chameleonic self-perception in the state itself.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, weaknesses of the Italian national identity traceable back to the past together with its incomplete nation-building process of the nineteenth-century “still plunges the country into cyclical phases of self-doubt and inquiry into its identity and, even more significantly, its ‘status’.”¹⁵⁶

For these reasons, Berlusconi attempted to “unchain” Italy from external constraints and to foster the national interests. At the beginning of its political career, Berlusconi did not interpret the independence of Italy in nationalist terms and the concept of the “nation” was almost absent in his discourse in the first years of his government. This completely changed with 9/11, when Italy was confronted again with matters of national identity, which reactivated the uncertainties of the past as also its weak national self.¹⁵⁷

With the beginning of the 2000s and crucial structural changes, the traditions and issues of the past have come back with much strength. 2001 marked a turning point for Berlusconi and for the political vision of the center-right. From a few years, the optimistic forecast on the capacity of the international system to evolve in a peaceful and constructive way was replaced by the Huntingtonian scenario of cultural clashes and political regionalization. Berlusconi was in office from a few months when the attack on the Twin Towers occurred. The events accelerated the shift in the center-right foreign policy from a liberal-democratic

¹⁵⁵ Brighi, “‘One Man Alone’? A Longue Durée Approach To Italy's Foreign Policy Under Berlusconi”, 291-292.

¹⁵⁶ Guzzini, *The Return Of Geopolitics In Europe?* -143.

¹⁵⁷ Emidio Diodato and Federico Niglia, *Berlusconi 'The Diplomat'* Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018, 64.

standing to a more conservative one.¹⁵⁸ The malleable nature of the international system legitimized the need of pursuing the three-sided Italian foreign policy as seen by the strong ties established with U.S.A following the post-9/11 bilateral relations.¹⁵⁹

2001 generally required the establishment of strong leaderships capable of handling moments of crisis and uncertainty of the self. In the changed political landscape, European leaders were challenged with a number of critical decisions that would have an impact on the life of their citizens and on the entity of the state within the international system, which was pursued by Berlusconi by establishing a stronger connection with ‘the people’ through discourses of the nation.¹⁶⁰ The idea that the Western world was called to restore its values.¹⁶¹ It gathered momentum and became a stable component of the center-right culture after 2001.¹⁶²

3.2. Confronting the anxiety of migration

Questions on the nation identity were also put forward in the realm of political rhetoric as in occasion of a press conference in Germany on the 26th of September, during which Berlusconi claimed for the “superiority of Western culture on Islam”.¹⁶³ Within this scope, Italian national identity kept on struggling in its definition but still relied on paradigms of geopolitics. These were then recontextualized in the post-9/11 period. Namely, the sustainment of the nation-state was maintained through territorial

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 69.

¹⁵⁹ Guzzini, *The Return Of Geopolitics In Europe?*, 139.

¹⁶⁰ Diodato and Niglia, *Berlusconi 'The Diplomat'*, 55.

¹⁶¹ Luiza Bialasiewicz, “‘The Death Of The West’: Samuel Huntington, Oriana Fallaci And A New ‘Moral’ Geopolitics Of Births And Bodies”, *Geopolitics* 11, no. 4 (2006): 703.

¹⁶² Diodato and Niglia, *Berlusconi 'The Diplomat'*, 71.

¹⁶³ “Corriere Della Sera - Berlusconi: «Occidente, Civiltà Superiore»”, Corriere.It, Last modified 2001, https://www.corriere.it/Primo_Piano/Esteri/09_Settembre/26/berlusconi.shtml.

This statement was then retreated a few days later in light of the uncomfortable implications it would have with the strategic allies of the Maghreb.

and power-centric matters. However, the idea of a communal of Western society added the value of morality that underlined such policies and narratives.¹⁶⁴

One of the main concerns following the crisis of the international system of 9/11 was enhancing the prestige of the country – struggling between its inspirations of further expanding its space of influence and its need for coalition with stronger states. Berlusconi's inaugural speech of his interim mandate as foreign minister in January 2002 gave one clear example. The discursive frame was centered around the paradigm of the country resembling a clear culture and civilization, which acquires value in opposition to different 'others'.¹⁶⁵ Berlusconi indeed claimed for Italy's right to 'decide over the direction of its foreign policy in absolute autonomy'; 'Italy will make its voice heard in order to protect its national interest alongside the common interest'.¹⁶⁶

Along this line, the adoption of a value-based Western identity led to a number of political initiatives, which received coverage from both single intellectuals and cultural institutions. The first consequence was the emergence of an anti-Islam rhetoric, along with an increasing support for the cause of Israel in the Middle East.¹⁶⁷ Italian public discourse after September 11 has defined Arabs as public enemies, threatening the West and the Christian and Jewish religious

¹⁶⁴ Bialasiewicz, "'The Death Of The West': Samuel Huntington, Oriana Fallaci And A New 'Moral' Geopolitics Of Births And Bodies", 702.

¹⁶⁵ Monica Colombo, "Discourse And Politics Of Migration In Italy", *Discourse And Politics Of Migration In Italy* 12, no. 2 (2012): 162-163.

¹⁶⁶ See Silvio Berlusconi, 'Discorso del Presidente del Consiglio e Ministro degli Affari Esteri ad interim Berlusconi alla Camera dei Deputati', 14 January 2002, <http://www.esteri.it/attualita/2002/ita/interventi/i020114am.htm> (accessed 20 February 2004), my translation in Brighi, "'One Man Alone'? A Longue Durée Approach To Italy's Foreign Policy Under Berlusconi", *Government And Opposition* 41, no. 2 (2006), 282.

¹⁶⁷ Carlo Ruzza and Stefano Fella, *Re-Inventing The Italian Right* London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2010, 10.

values.¹⁶⁸ In the Italian case, main media platforms were also part in sustaining the political discourse promulgated by political elites when addressing 9/11 as a threat to the nation and to its territorial premises. This stance could be pinpointed in the headlines of the most widely distributed, which promulgate concepts of: ‘the start of World War Three’; ‘and the world got to know terror’; ‘the war started on the 11th of September 2001 is not concluded’. Similarly, this conduct was also followed by academic journals, such as *Limes*, recalled geopolitical tropes by stating: ‘Geopolitical started the 9th of November 1989 has ended today’.¹⁶⁹

Anti-Islamism embodied the pinnacle on the fear of terrorism and of the cultural challenge brought by Muslim migrants in Italy.¹⁷⁰ This was seen as a controversial stance between 2001 and 2006, when Berlusconi showed a strong discontinuity with the traditional foreign policy of the republican age, which always fostered a privileged dialogue with the Arab world.¹⁷¹ In this tumultuous domestic and international situation, certain political parties had the opportunity to gain momentum within the window of opportunity opened up with the development of hostility against Muslims and Arabs. For instance, Lega Nord (LN) gained indeed prominence in the political discourse, putting emphasis on cultural roots has been revitalized by September 11, finally legitimatizing

¹⁶⁸ Paolo Villano, Stefano Passini and Davide Morselli, "Discorso E Terrorismo: La Rappresentazione Degli Arabi Nella Stampa Italiana E Internazionale Dopo L'11 Settembre 2001", *Psicologia Sociale*, no. 32, (2010), 443, my translation.

¹⁶⁹ "L'editoriale Di Limes Dopo L'11 Settembre 2001", *Limes*, Last modified 2001, <http://www.limesonline.com/cartaceo/11-settembre-2001-editoriale-la-nostra-parte>.

¹⁷⁰ Stefano Allievi, "Immigration, Religious Diversity And Recognition Of Differences: The Italian Way To Multiculturalism", *Identities* 21, no. 6 (2013): 728.

¹⁷¹ Raffaella A. Del Sarto and Nathalie Tocci, "Italy's Politics Without Policy: Balancing Atlanticism And Europeanism In The Middle East", *Modern Italy* 13, no. 2 (2008): 135.

the so far strident anti-Islamic campaign accompanied by calls to restore the primacy of ‘Christian civilization’ and attachment to ‘Western values’.¹⁷²

Within this perspective, Italy was already struggling with the matter of migration since the demise of Yugoslavia that continued during the EU Enlargement process in Central and Eastern European countries, which was seen again as a potential threat to enhance Italy’s porous borders.¹⁷³ Even though following narratives of hostility against Eastern European and Balkan people, these did not take clear-cut opposition in terms of cultural and religious insurmountable differences as it happened after 9/11 with the Arab world.¹⁷⁴

In this regard, Italian political discourse and policies framed migration as a problem from different perspective, such as threat to ethno-national identity; a cause of criminality and unemployment.¹⁷⁵ Hostility was indeed present but framed more along the lines of criminality and not cultural invasion.¹⁷⁶ This inherently led up to the formation of the politically promulgated syllogism of migration with terrorism, which if it only represented the vision of a radical party in the early 1990s, it become more and more shared as seen by rampant spread of

¹⁷² Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell, *Twenty-First Century Populism* Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire [England]: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 91.

¹⁷³ Giuseppe Sciortino and Asher Colombo, "The Flows And The Flood: The Public Discourse On Immigration In Italy, 1969–2001", *Journal Of Modern Italian Studies* 9, no. 1 (2004): 106-107.

See also: Giovanna Zincone, "The Making Of Policies: Immigration And Immigrants In Italy", *Journal Of Ethnic And Migration Studies* 32, no. 3 (2006): 347-375 ; Marco Antonsich et al., *Europe Between Political Geography And Geopolitics* Roma: Società geografica italiana, 2001.

¹⁷⁴ Ferruccio Pastore, "A Community Out Of Balance: Nationality Law And Migration Politics In The History Of Post-Unification Italy", *Journal Of Modern Italian Studies* 9, no. 1 (2004): 27;

¹⁷⁵ Jens Rydgren, "Meso-level Reasons for Racism and Xenophobia: Some Converging and Diverging Effects of Radical Right Populism in France and Sweden", *European Journal of Social Theory*, 6(1), 2003, 45–68.

¹⁷⁶ Andrew Geddes and Peter Scholten, *The Politics Of Migration And Immigration In Europe* London: SAGE Publications, 2016, 25.

hostility manifestation throughout the country. After 9/11, there was a constant confusion and combination between the idea of Islam as a threat of international politics and local Arab migration, presupposing that all Arabs are inherently Muslims.¹⁷⁷

These narratives of hostility were sustained by the religious institutions in Italy. For instance, the alarmist declarations of some Church members and representatives that opened a wide debate on the difficulty of the integration of the Islamic religion as well as the supremacy of Christianity implemented in the *Dominis Iesus* Declaration in 2000.¹⁷⁸ Therefore, also spiritual institutions were putting forward the plan to evangelize and sustain the Catholic church as the only complete confession. In September 2000, Cardinal Biffi of Bologna suggested that the government should let in only immigrants capable of being integrated into Italian society. He mentioned Christians Asians, but not Muslims, whose culture “was considered ‘incompatible’ with Western/Christian values.”¹⁷⁹

3.3. Italy in the mirror: hostility under new frames

Even though with changing facets, Italy has sustained a pretty consistent line of conduct of politics, especially during right-wing administrations. The attack on the Twin Towers had an impact on the strategy of the Italian government as well as on the cultural orientation of the center-right.¹⁸⁰ The structural crisis affected Italian foreign policy to its

¹⁷⁷ Villano, Passini and Morselli, "Discorso E Terrorismo: La Rappresentazione Degli Arabi Nella Stampa Italiana E Internazionale Dopo L'11 Settembre 2001", 446, my translation.

¹⁷⁸a group of theologists led also by the future Pope Ratzinger, doubted the efficacy of the ideology of dialogue among religions and culture as the backlash of the relativist culture. "Dominus Iesus", Vatican.Va, Last modified 2000, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html.

¹⁷⁹ Stefano Allievi, "Sociology Of A Newcomer: Muslim Migration To Italy – Religious Visibility, Cultural And Political Reactions", *Immigrants & Minorities* 22, no. 2-3 (2003): 150.

¹⁸⁰ Diodato and Niglia, *Berlusconi 'The Diplomat'*, 69-70.

core as a momentous catalyst for precipitating the advance of Berlusconi's Atlanticism into a policy priority.¹⁸¹

Berlusconi's governments have been widely defined as populist.¹⁸² However, he may have discovered the potential for populism in Italy and amplified it, but he did not create Italian populism.¹⁸³ Therefore, even though the issue of the theme treated is not establishing whether Berlusconi's politics should be actually called populist. It is important to acknowledge differences in light on today's Italian government, which potentially resembles a more 'classical' version of populist activity as a result of the gained political preponderance of LN and the Five Star Movement.

With regard to today's situation, the leading political alliance sustains a political narrative which is slightly verging away from Berlusconisms. It may recall the same national and identity values, but mainly focuses on the prominence of domestic issues, reassumed with the widely used slogan of "Italians first". Thus, in the spotlight, there is not Italy as a nation and its role in the international community, but Italians as the people facing the threats and attempts of outside control by the EU, the international system. When contextualized with today's political spectrum, Italy is represented by a government, which still strongly uses the same buzzwords and policies started with the nationalist stance of Berlusconi.

¹⁸¹ Brighi, "'One Man Alone'? A Longue Durée Approach To Italy's Foreign Policy Under Berlusconi", 286- 287.

¹⁸² Bobba and McDonnell, "Different Types Of Right-Wing Populist Discourse In Government And Opposition: The Case Of Italy", 281; Francesco Raniolo, 'Forza Italia: a leader with a party', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 11, no. 3-4, (2006), 439-455.

¹⁸³ Diodato and Niglia, *Berlusconi 'The Diplomat'*, 27.

Phil Edwards, "The Berlusconi Anomaly: Populism and Patrimony in Italy's Long Transition" in Jocelyn A.J Evans, *The South European Right In The 21St Century* Abingdon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2005.

These words and statements belong to the political rhetoric in strategic times as Italian and European elections. Nevertheless, what remains relevant is that it is still legitimate to put forward such discourses and rhetoric in the scope of political re-election, which still remain re-producible frames years after the aftermath of 9/11. Almost twenty years later, addressing the hostility against the ‘cultural other’ in terms of national threat is still vivid and legitimate to gain prominence in the political competition and in the message promulgated by public opinion and media frames.

Looking at the current Italian political debate, the political fracture is no longer between left and right as it was during the Second Republic. The factors that were distinctive of a political identity do not play the same role as in the past. From this perspective, the malleable identity of Italian society follows the thin nature of populism and the different ways in which it has manifested. However, the underlying sentiment is not new. On the contrary, this was already present in the easily changeable Italian identity.

From the early stages of Berlusconiisms, Italy confronted and still today faces the legacies of a difficultly definable ‘self’. Its territorial and power inspiration, typical of this middle-power, enabled the creation of a national identity strongly tied to geopolitical tropes. These were contextualized and further legitimated by discursive frames around ethnic and religious lines. If on the one hand, these identity tropes maintained consistency through different governments. On the other, the lack of an actual rooted national self-definition created opportunities for the Italian political rhetoric to mobilize narratives of hostility, especially in light of the attacks of September 11.

Conclusions

9/11 represents a widely debated event, discussed under several perspectives. Nevertheless, it exerted a crucial influence on the agency of nation-states. This outcome was consequential to the American narrative started with the Bush administration. The decision of establishing narratives of identity and culture revolving around the cruciality of the state, enabled legitimacy in the foreign actions and plans in fighting terrorism but also opened up spaces of political actions, while re-enforcing the power of the nation-state, which was gradually fading when confronted with the ever-changing international order. Obviously, such words gained great prominence in the context of the process started with the end of the Cold War. As a matter of fact, the binary and polarized system left space to the rise of actor multiplicities within the international order. This was representing a potential weakening for the classical entity and status of the nation-state.

With September 11, the multipolar system was reorganized through the action of states, which have gradually started revitalizing the national conceptual and territorial borders. Nevertheless, this common start was implemented and has developed differently in the different domestic realities. The difference of such mechanisms relies primarily on the singularity of the state and depends on its power position within the wider scope of the international order. Within this case, Hungary and Italy thus recall different cases, which have reacted to the threat of terrorism after 9/11 by adopting the leading discourse of the U.S. and then adapting it to their own specific political situation. Therefore, 9/11 and the

narrative tied to it was not incorporated equally. Respectively, Hungary – in the process of constructing a new national identity – and Italy – as a middle-power struggling for more international leverage - recur to the cultural and civilization frames of interpretation of the state.

Nevertheless, the windows of political opportunities created were taken up by already existing right-wing and nationalist parties, which had the opportunity to take specific political actions. Hungary and its right-wing government gave space to framing a newly national narrative, thus providing more opportunities of action to the political elites in pursuing ever nationalist and then populist policies. Within Italian politics, the long-standing nationalist aspirations have been brought back and adapted through the changing conditions of the international system.

At the present state of affairs of the international system and of the two cases considered, the crucial lynchpin to at least address the issue of 9/11 is to acknowledge how international event can lead to lasting changes at the national level, especially when some events are framed and conceptualized through specific narratives and lenses of interpretation. As a matter of fact, it was not evident that the national discourse of many Western countries could have developed more and more in favor of nationalist and populist stances, which defined themselves very often in opposition to a constructed ‘other’.

The power of the narrative established after September 11 relies on the compelling frames of interpretation, which speak to the hearts and minds of many. This had crucial political implications in the case of political competition, particularly in favor of right-wing parties, which saw in 9/11 an opportunity to successfully pursue policies

and political narratives, which could be previously present but could not gain momentum effectively. Therefore, what international politics is witnessing today is the result of a process set in motion firstly since the end of the Cold War, and further intensified and polarized when confronted with the international threat of September 11, which did not only re-stated the importance of national identity boundaries but also the protection of such at every cost.

Today the international system is still subjected to profound changes, which seem directed towards the supremacy of the nations composing it. However, it remains questionable if the nationalist and populist politics simply mirrors a dangerous political rhetoric, which will be subverted by other non-national agencies. Nevertheless, recognizing the cruciality played by the role of the nation-state especially after 9/11 is the outcome of political windows of opportunity, which envisage an effective political strategy of domestic political parties in combination to the historical national drivers of single countries.

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