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**(RE)CONSTRUCTING EUROPE IN THE MIGRANT CRISIS: GERMANY,
HUNGARY, AND RUSSIA**

MA Thesis

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I have written this Master's thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors,
literary
sources and data from elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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Abstract

This thesis uses Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's discourse theory to analyse the construction of European identity by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Russian President Vladimir Putin in the context of the European migrant crisis of 2015-2016. By analysing the politicians' speeches and interviews, the thesis argues that the European migrant crisis is rooted in an underlying European identity crisis. With the help of, among others, Ivan Krastev's analysis of the migrant crisis, this thesis demonstrates that Merkel, Orbán and Putin construct three competing conceptualisations of Europe that can be called, respectively, "Europe of universal human rights", "Christian and ethnic Europe", and "Europe of sovereign nation-states". All three Europes entail their own, often contradicting, policies in response to the challenges of mass migration and refugees: respectively, the establishment of an EU-based compulsory migration quota system, a closure of the EU's external borders for non-European migrants and refugees, and strategic cooperation between Russia and the West to combat terrorism and restore statehood in the Middle East. The thesis maintains that the inability to construct a European identity beyond the national discursive spaces lies at the core of this political crisis, by demonstrating that all three Europes are based on memory narratives and blueprints for the future which are highly intertwined with the three respective national identities. Following Chantal Mouffe's theory of agonism, the antagonisation of competing national and European identities forms the major obstacle in establishing a pan-European identity. Merkel and Orbán's antagonistic discourses seem, from this perspective, irreconcilable, so that the construction of a pan-European identity, as a legitimising force to outline pan-European policies, is hardly possible. Putin, on the other hand, brings in the migrant crisis that aspires to create a common cause for Russia and the West, combatting terrorism, which demands a consistent geopolitical strategy beyond internal European issues.

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Introduction

Central to my thesis is the research question: “How do the political elites construct their Europes in the context of the migrant crisis?”. Thus, my thesis is focussed on understanding the construction of Europes in different national contexts that are affected by the European migrant crisis. In doing so, the (pan-)European migrant crisis is understood as a calamity forcing political elites across Europe to define and redefine who belongs to the Us and who is considered the Other. This proposition is in line with the discourse theory by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Mouffe, 2013; Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002). I also rely on political scientists who help situate the thesis within the context of studies on European identity (Bottici & Challand, 2013; Hansen & Wæver, 2002; Malmborg & Stråth, 2002; Neumann, 1996) and the European migrant crisis (Hansen & Gordon, 2014; Krastev, 2017; Selby, Dahi, Fröhlich, & Hulme, 2016; Zoomers et al., 2018).

By using discourse analysis, I demonstrate how the respective Europes constructed by these political leaders allow them to formulate and defend their political strategies and decisions in the migrant crisis. The reverse is also true: my analysis demonstrates how the decisions of the political elites are reflected in the constructions of their respective Europes. The construction of these Europes is a multi-layered process, that consists of articulating discourses in the context of the crisis, articulating different identities for Europe, which go hand in hand with the construction of national identities. In analysing and outlining these discursive constructions, I pay special attention to the extent to which these Europes conflict with each other.

In line with Ivan Krastev’s claim (2017) that a clash of European solidarities stands at the core of this crisis, the thesis highlights the idea that it would be misleading to understand the European migrant crisis as a crisis produced by a lack of European identity. Instead, it is argued that the question of how to define European identity is at the centre of this political calamity. In practical terms, the issue of European identity and solidarity leads to the question: How to define a pan-European solution to a pan-European crisis? The thesis draws upon Chiara Bottici and Benoît Challand’s critical theory of European identity (2013), as it is based on the notion that identity can only derive from a broadly agreed construction of a shared past and a shared blueprint of the future. Not only

is this necessary to construct a common identity, but it also allows political actors to create discourses in which a (pan-European) community can act consistently and collectively (most importantly, in times of political crisis). In this thesis, I have sampled and analysed public texts (speeches, interviews) which focus on three national cases of constructing Europes: those by German chancellor Angela Merkel, Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán, and Russian President Vladimir Putin. The choice to analyse European identity within national spaces coincides, firstly, with Mikael Malmberg and Bo Stråth's understanding that European identity has only been successfully constructed in the realms of the nation-state (2002) and, secondly, with Lene Hansen and Ole Wæver's notion of European identity as a political concept stabilised by its connections with more powerful "we" constructions that are linked to the nation-state.

I differentiate my thesis, firstly, from the research done on the material causes behind the European migrant crisis. I do not wish to downplay major causes of this crisis, like the EU's population decline (Hansen & Gordon, 2014) or climate change and the Syrian civil war (Selby, Dahi, Fröhlich, & Hulme, 2016). Rather than focussing on the reasons why refugees and migrants come to Europe, my focus is on the reaction to their arrival and the resulting crisis in European identity. From this focus, I argue that the calamity can be analysed as a crisis of European identity. Indeed, the European migrant crisis is not only about large-scale movements of people, it is also about how these movements are interpreted and linked with identity issues.

By conducting discourse analysis of Orbán, Merkel and Putin's speeches in the context of the migrant crisis, I demonstrate that different clashing European identities are constructed that produce different contradictory solutions to the pan-European challenges of mass migration and refugees. Secondly, this thesis is not written to downplay the importance of positioning the crisis in the EU's institutional and humanitarian context. The failure of the Union to meet its normative demands in taking in refugees has undermined the legitimacy of the EU among many of its supporters (Zoomers et al., 2018). Rather than underlining EU's normative responsibilities as a given, I argue that the clash of European solidarity precisely is located here: in the disagreement whether the EU and Europeans as a group-identity are responsible at all for non-European refugees and migrants. Thirdly, this thesis differentiates from studies concerned with the British case in the European migrant crisis. Although I acknowledge that the UK is an important

case in the context of the crisis, as the latter arguably has been one of the major reasons for its planned withdrawal from the EU (Nugent, 2018), my thesis is not concerned with desires to *withdraw from* European solidarity. Instead, the thesis' focus is on how the migrant crisis has brought to the fore already existing clashing understandings of Europe, producing clashing understandings of pan-European identity, solidarity, and solutions to the crisis.

I collected the analysed sources within the timeframe 2015-2016, as I demonstrate in my methodology that those two years embody the core of the migrant crisis. The timeline starts with a European Parliament speech by Viktor Orbán, on 19 May 2015, before the migrant crisis would escalate that summer. The timeline ends at the end of 2016, during the aftermath of the EU-Turkey statement (or EU-Turkey migration deal), which resulted in a severe decline of migrants and refugees entering the EU. I have collected a total of 22 primary sources (statements, interviews and speeches by Orbán, Merkel and Putin) within this timeline that were based on keywords related to the crisis (e.g. migrants, refugees, Islam, terrorism) and on their points of release in relation to key events of the crisis.

The first chapter (*I. The European Migrant Crisis as an Identity Crisis*) is a somewhat unconventional chapter, as it sets the problem of the European migrant crisis in general terms. It is therefore not theoretical, methodological, nor empirical. Rather, it places the thesis within a larger scholarly and media debate on the nature of the crisis. In this chapter, I explain why the migrant crisis is essentially part of an overarching European identity crisis. Thus, in this chapter, it becomes more evident why discourse analysis serves as a useful way to understand the nature of the crisis better. In *II. Theoretical Framework*, I outline the discourse theory in which my thesis' discourse analysis is conducted. In *III. Methodology*, I explain how I collected and mapped the primary sources subject to my discourse analysis within my theoretical framework and how I conducted the discourse analysis. As is explained in the chapter on methodology, *IV. Discourse Analysis of Official Speeches* is divided into seven thematic sections which embody different perspectives on the analysis of European identity-construction in the politicians' speeches.

Finally, I want to thank my supervisor and co-supervisor. Without the professional guidance, patience and support from Prof Viatcheslav Morozov from the Johan Skytte

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I. The European Migrant Crisis as an Identity Crisis

The European migrant crisis or European refugee crisis is most often described as a period beginning in the late spring and early summer of 2015 (Asylum and Migration, 2017; Migration Crisis: Migration, 2016). One can argue when the crisis ended if it ended at all. There exists, however, a broad recognition that the crisis culminated in late 2016, and the situation started to normalise after the signature of the EU-Turkey statement (also known as the EU-Turkey migration agreement) on 18 March 2016 (Concilium, 2016). The crisis was characterised by record-high numbers of non-European refugees and migrants entering the EU via the Mediterranean Sea and the Balkans (Asylum and Migration, 2017; Migrant Crisis: Migration, 2016). The arrival of over one million asylum seekers to the EU in 2015 revealed the inability of the European asylum system to accommodate large numbers of migrants (Asylum and migration, 2017). This system is chiefly built on the Dublin regulation, which determines that the member state receiving an asylum application is responsible for asylum-seekers' well-being. The largest group of new arrivals were Syrian refugees fleeing from the Syrian Civil War (more than 350,000 in 2015), while others (e.g. 200,000 Afghani and 125,000 Iraqi) followed suit. In 2016, the number of illegal crossings increased to more than 2.3 million (Asylum and Migration, 2017). The EU member states were affected by the crisis to different degrees. While Hungary received in 2015 the highest number of asylum applications per 100,000 local citizens (1,799), Croatia received the lowest (5) (Migrant Crisis: Migration, 2016). The resulting political tensions within the EU (between and inside the member states) were rooted in disagreements on how to solve the crisis. On 22 September 2015, the EU managed to arrive at a common solution, as a majority of interior ministers agreed on establishing a migrant quota system that would distribute migrants fairly across the member states (based on the respective member state's population size and GDP). But after the Visegrád governments (Poland, Hungary, Czechia and Slovakia) expressed their unwillingness to cooperate, the quota system was abandoned by September 2016 (Maurice, 2016).

The mass migration was not simply of a humanitarian nature. It crucially impacted European public opinion too, becoming a pivotal issue in politics. According to the bi-

annual European Commission's questionnaire *Eurobarometer* of 2019, non-EU migration remained a top priority of concern for EU citizens for three years (2017: 39%; 2018: 38%; 2019: 34%), while climate change only came second (22%) (Europa, 2018; Migration more worrying, 2019).

Ivan Krastev (2017) argues that the migrant crisis should not be seen as caused by a conflict between pro-EU and anti-EU forces, but instead as a crisis of European solidarities:

What we are seeing in Europe today is not what Brussels likes to describe as a lack of solidarity, but it's rather a clash of solidarities: national, ethnic, and religious solidarities are chafing against our obligations as human beings. And this clash of solidarities plays out not only within societies but also among nation states. (Krastev, 2017, p. 43).

Krastev argues that the traditionally dominant European solidarity expressed in EU politics is rooted in universal human rights and liberal democracy. Consequently, it would be crucial that the member states provide aid to refugees and migrants to meet the demands of European solidarity. Another traditional understanding of European solidarity is rooted in European nativism (expressed through ethnicity, religion or culture), which demands that a purer version of Europe needs to be defended against non-Europeans (e.g. non-European migrants and refugees) (2017, pp. 43-45, 50, 91-92). European and EU identity is for this reason in a crisis that has pushed the European project to a position in which its future legitimacy can no longer be taken for granted (2017, pp. 13-14).

Rather than undermining European identity as such, the European migrant crisis has put forward the question how European identity, and its resulting European solidarity, *should be* interpreted: should Europeans identify with a human-rights based liberal-democratic Europe, thus opening the borders for refugees and migrants in need? Or should one identify with a nativist Europe, thus defending Europe against non-Europeans (e.g. people of colour, non-Christians, non-EU citizens)?

Thus, the debate on European identity overarches not only the European migrant crisis but has been part of earlier discussions related to the EU's migration policies, which is particularly visible in the debate on the notion of "fortress Europe". Andrew Geddes argued in 2000 that this concept was not as much a reality at the borders, as it was

associated with a political discourse underpinning two questions for the EU's future of migration: How to control migration, and how to integrate migrants into European society (Geddes, 2008, p. 12-14)? Later, in 2009, Castan Pinos argued that "fortress Europe" had become more materialised, particularly at the EU's external borders between Morocco and the Spanish enclaves (Pinos, 2009, p. 6). Pinos argues that "Fortress Europe" had become not so much a notion that politicians would identify their migration policies with, but a concept that was predominantly used by left-wing NGOs, political parties and human rights activists as a way to criticise the inhumane conditions of non-EU migrants at the EU's external borders (2009, p. 5) and the risk of turning the Schengen-area into "a European-wide repressive system" (2009, p. 12).

Undoubtedly, the migrant crisis could be analysed throughout many areas beyond the EU's political sphere, such as pressing demographic trends in Western Europe, economic inequality between the EU and the Middle East (Hansen & Gordon, 2014), or climate change in Syria that led to food shortages, revolution and eventually civil war (Selby, Dahi, Fröhlich, & Hulme, 2016). But this thesis follows Krastev's statement that the European migrant crisis is fundamentally a European identity crisis, forcing politicians and citizens, more than before, to define and redefine their visions of Europe and its shared values. The crisis is for Krastev not merely an influx of migrants, but a "migration of arguments, emotions, political identities, and votes" (2017, p. 19).

Moreover, I also follow Krastev's notion of a new East-West division at the centre of this identity crisis that, differently from the Eurozone crisis, turns the different understandings of European solidarity into a political clash that "threatens the future survival of the Union itself" (2017, p. 44). Accordingly, while Central and Eastern European EU-governments are inclined to close the EU's external borders for refugees and migrants, among Western European governments there exists a tendency to support an open border quota system. While the limited scope of this thesis does not allow us to follow Krastev's constructed historical framework for this geographical division (2017, pp. 44-56), it is important to note that the idea of a re-emerging post-Cold War West-East division, caused by the European migrant crisis, is also prevalent among other scholars and prominent media (Dempsey, 2016; Hungary's Orban accuses, 2015; Grzymala-Busse, 2016; Rupnik, 2016).

I analyse two prominent opponents in the European migrant crisis, who represent these “Western” and “Eastern” points of view within the EU: Angela Merkel and Viktor Orbán. As is evident in my discourse analysis, Merkel tends to construct a German-European identity that allows her to argue in favour of letting non-European migrants and refugees into the EU through an EU-based migrant quota system. Orbán, conversely, constructs a Hungarian-European identity that allows him to argue against letting non-European migrants and refugees in, thus closing Hungary’s external Schengen-borders.

Vladimir Putin takes, as an institutional outsider, a more ambiguous role in this question of European solidarity in the European migrant crisis. After all, the question of European solidarity is predominantly asked within the EU’s framework. Four reasons can be outlined why Putin’s statements need to be analysed in this thesis. First of all, the inclusion of Vladimir Putin brings to the fore the question whether someone outside of the European Union and NATO, potentially part of “Europe”, but not an EU member, can be defined by the East-West dichotomy and can be positioned in the context of European solidarity clashes. It is safe to assume that Russia, as an institutional outsider, is not expected to meet the demands of European solidarity as much as EU member states, but it is equally evident that Russian political actors do attempt to define and redefine their notion of European solidarity.

Second of all, the decision to examine Putin’s statements also derives from an understanding about another East-West division, based on a potential Cold War between Russia and the West in which the EU is expected to stand united as a block within the Western camp (Kalb, 2015; McLaughlin, 2018; Polyakova, 2019). Here, the question arises whether the EU (i.e. Merkel and Orbán) is indeed united on a discursive level, which, *inter alia*, implies a clear differentiation from Putin’s discourse.

Third of all, in Putin’s discourse, the notion of “Europe” is most of the time synonymous to “the West”. This notion underlines yet another crucial difference between Merkel and Orbán and Putin: Putin introduces a geopolitical, beyond European, dimension, while he also constructs himself as a world leader – an identity that is absent in Merkel and Orbán’s discourses.

Finally, the inclusion of Putin can also be defended by underlining Russia’s political interests in the European migrant crisis. As outlined by Stefano Braghiroli and Andrey Makarychev (2018), the position of Russia in the European migrant crisis is

ambiguous, but it is undeniable that the Kremlin has great interests in having a say in it. On the one hand, at least since 2013, the Kremlin has aspired to develop a “common policy towards migration as one of pivots for cooperation with the EU” (2018, p. 830). There has been a broad understanding in the Kremlin that the challenges presented to the EU and Russia by mass migration are somehow similar, and therefore a shared policy framework for migration would strengthen EU-Russia relations. Braghiroli and Makarychev point out that this can at least partly explain the Kremlin’s close cooperation with the EU border security authorities during the migrant crisis (2018, pp. 830-831). On the other hand, the Kremlin has been widely blamed in the EU, both by scholars, media and politicians, for being at least part of the problem for the European migrant crisis by intervening in Syria and supporting the Assad-regime. Some political figures in Europe and the West (e.g. NATO’s Supreme Commander in Europe, Philip Breedlove) have gone as far as to label the migrant crisis as, not only beneficial to the Kremlin, but caused by the Kremlin’s supposed weaponisation of migration as a way to destabilise the EU internally (2018, pp. 831-832). This thesis’ discourse analysis can shed some light on the ambiguous political position of the Russian government in the context of the European migrant crisis. As ambiguous as the Kremlin’s position may be in terms of their political interests in wishing to both strengthen EU-Russia relations and destabilise the EU, it will be demonstrated in the discourse analysis that Putin does articulate a fairly coherent discourse, which allows him to construct his own version of European identity. The same applies for Putin’s proposed policies in solving the European migrant crisis.

By comparing the three competing Europes (German, Hungarian and Russian) in the context of the European migrant crisis, one may consider this thesis as a follow-up to Ole Wæver’s *Three Competing Europes: German, French, Russian* (1990). In this paper, Wæver argues that three competing versions of an all-European future had unfolded with the planned German unity: a Western Europe of the European Community (led by the French), an all-European disarmament project (led by the Soviets), and Germany’s rising Central-European economic and political power as a challenge to balance between the former two versions of Europe. There are two crucial differences in comparison to the context of that 1990 paper. First of all, the aforementioned clash of European solidarities indicates that not one, but at least two competing Europes are in this case in favour of EU-integration: Germany and Hungary. Thus, what has changed is that the division

between competing Europes is no longer located between pro-EU and anti-EU forces, but between two different visions of what the EU should be (embodied by Germany and Hungary). Secondly, a French Europe, in this regard, is therefore no longer as pivotal to analyse as in the context of the Cold War aftermath. I acknowledge that there have been recent observations in media and academics based on which one could argue that French president Emmanuel Macron attempts to reclaim French leadership in Europe, particularly in the EU's geopolitical dimension and its migration policies (Erlanger, 2019; Rushworth, 2019). However, within my timeframe (the European migrant crisis, 2015-2016), the three Europes I analyse are the most clearly articulated versions.

One may argue that the EU's clashes of solidarity should be analysed on a level higher than the nation-state, e.g. analysing discourses within EU-institutions. However, Mikael Malmberg and Bo Stråth offer a useful perspective on the above by arguing that, in order to understand the discursive constructions of European identities, one must begin from the context of the nation-state: "The nations, although partly constructed and imagined, emerge in this view as deeper, more real, and more essential entities than Europe" (2002, p. 9). From this perspective, the European migrant crisis underlines a pan-European event and a pan-European problem – mass migration – in need of pan-European solutions, while relying on governments that construct their European identities within a national context that is highly intertwined with the respective politicians' constructions of their own nation-states.

It would be a mistake to understand the national identities constructed by European leaders as concepts that contradict or threaten their constructions of European identity. Rather, the European identity constructed by national politicians is rooted in their envisioned national identity. Lene Hansen and Ole Wæver (2002) demonstrate that discourse analysis of European identity in national debates underlines this proposition. The analysing of identity construction is, therefore, not meant to understand who "we" are but to understand the ways how the "we" is constructed through political concepts of the nation-state and Europe. Europe is then a "politically real concept" stabilised by its inner connections to other more powerful "we" identities, such as the nation-state (2002, p. 25).

So far, it has become clear that, firstly, the question of *whether* European solidarity exists is not the most pivotal question of the migrant crisis but rather, following

Krastev, the central question is: What *does* European solidarity indicate? Moreover, this chapter has clarified that clashing notions of European solidarity are first and foremost defined on the national, not the supranational, level. What this indicates for European identity can be best understood by positioning this thesis in Chiara Bottici and Benoît Challand's line of reasoning (2013). From their perspective, European identity is, like any political identity, built on myths located on three time-bounded levels: past, present and future. In Bottici and Challand's words, a European myth "is therefore the connection between the question of what we have been as Europeans and that of who we want to be" (Bottici & Challand, 2013, p. 47). This indicates that identity is partly the product of a certain set of memories from which a certain set of narratives is created. Through collective memory, identity presents a blueprint for the future, in which it allows people to politically act in line with existing narratives: "*Who we have been* as Europeans is not as crucial as answering the question of *who we want to be*" (Bottici & Challand, 2013, p. 37; their italics; see also Bottici, 2009).

Bottici and Challand show why it is crucial to analyse the political constructing of European discourses and identities if one wants to understand the migrant crisis better. *For European leaders to construct a pan-European solution to a pan-European crisis, European leaders need a pan-European construction of European identity.* Hence, it is no longer enough to construct a national identity which dictates a national history and future that can overcome the crisis – as nation-states alone are no longer expected to solve this crisis by themselves. Neither is it enough for European leaders to construct an identity of Europe that is limited to a nation-state (e.g. a German constructing of Europe that is unable to penetrate the dominant discourses of other member states). The reveals the core problem posed by the crisis. Following Bottici and Challand, in order to solve the pan-European crisis, a pan-European blueprint for the future, and therefore a pan-European identity is needed. However, by positioning Bottici and Challand next to Malmberg and Stråth (2002) and Hansen and Wæver (2002), it becomes apparent how difficult it is to construct a much-needed pan-European identity beyond the national realms, and thus to construct pan-European solutions to the crisis. In line with Krastev's clash of European solidarities, the European migrant crisis becomes a crisis of national constructions of Europe, which have now come to clash on a supranational level. This thesis does not answer the question of whether European leaders can offer this European blueprint for

the future. My ambition is more limited and simply points out that, to understand the underlying political struggle with the migrant crisis, one has to become aware of what “Europes”, and which proposed European solutions, are offered by the dominant political players in this crisis.

II. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

The research question (How do political elites construct their own “Europes” in the context of the migrant crisis?) is answered by performing a discourse analysis on speeches and interviews by Angela Merkel, Viktor Orbán, and Vladimir Putin. My research focusses on a specific timeframe, from May 2015 until the end of 2016, which is based on key events of the European migrant crisis. The decision to focus my research on this timeline is explained in the next chapter, on methodology.

The thesis’ research question can be more closely observed by introducing the discourse analysis theory around which this thesis revolves. This theory is predominantly based on Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s discourse theory, as presented in their book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985), and to a lesser extent Laclau's *Emancipations* (1996). I have also used Marianne Jørgensen and Louise J. Phillips’ *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (2002) as a comparative source, as they offer a more practical method for Laclau and Mouffe’s theory. Furthermore, I integrated Chantal Mouffe’s *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically* (2013) into the framework, in which she introduces a conceptual distinction between antagonists and agonists as part of her and Laclau’s theory. Finally, I have included Iver B. Neumann’s understanding of the relational nature of identity from the perspective of the Self-Other nexus, as described in *Self and Other in International Relations* (1996), in order to position this thesis in the field of international relations.

2.2 The Concept of Discourse

In Laclau and Mouffe’s theory, politics is analysed as a space in which actors aspire to gain *hegemony*, which requires *negotiation* among “contradictory discursive surfaces” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 93). This reveals the underlying idea of their theory, namely the notion that “social phenomena are never finished or total”. Meaning is never completely fixed, allowing for “constant social struggles about definitions of society and identity”. Accordingly, discourse analysis is aimed at plotting the course of social

struggles to fix the meaning of certain social phenomena (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 24). Laclau and Mouffe centralise the notion of *articulation* to describe this struggle; they argue that “political meaning [...] is not given from the beginning: it crucially depends upon its hegemonic articulation with other struggles and demands” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 87).

Thus, negotiation in the context of Laclau and Mouffe is connected with the notion of *articulation* as a linguistic *practice*, that is meant to influence the debate. This practice uses already existing (linguistic) elements, originally specified as fragments of a lost structured totality (1985, p. 93). Articulation, quite literally whatever is articulated, establishes “a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice”. The “structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice” is what Laclau and Mouffe call *discourse*; the “differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse”, are called *moments* (1985, p. 105). The concept of discourse presupposes that the meaning linguistic signs within a certain domain is relatively fixed through their differential positions in relation to one another. The fixation is only relative because moments are never completely pinned down to their positions in relation to each other. Elements are constantly at risk of being re-articulated into moments in other discourses, therefore never gaining a definitively fixed meaning (1985, p. 110). In other words, moments only contain partial meaning (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 26).

Each discourse produces a certain set of identities - for instance, a European identity, defined in relation to a national identity, to certain visions of the past and the future, and so on. This European identity is thus linked to certain moments (e.g. “liberty”, “equality”, “human rights”), while excluding others (e.g. “whiteness”, “ethnicity” or “national sovereignty”). Meanwhile, competing discourses produce other European identities (e.g. one that includes moments like “ethnicity”). Therefore, discourses are never stable, often ending up in a struggle with one another in articulating “Europe”. To understand how Orbán, Merkel and Putin construct their Europes, it is, therefore, crucial to analyse what moments they articulate and how they are interconnected, hence how they attempt to fix the meaning of European identity and its moments.

The very fact that meaning is never fixed, is exactly why discourses are produced in struggles. This is where Laclau and Mouffe’s notion of *hegemony* becomes useful.

While hegemony and discourse are somehow similar terms (they both denote a temporary fixation of elements into moments), *hegemony* symbolises the struggle of discourses. In this conflict, one discourse is undermined when another discourse overpowers it by rearticulating elements into new moments. Consequently, the hegemonic discourse reveals that the meaning of the competing discourse is not fixed at all. Jørgensen and Phillips provide the example of hegemonic struggle at the beginning of World War I, when the outbreak of hostilities revealed that the socialist articulation of people as “workers” had been undermined by the hegemonic nationalist articulation of people as “Germans”, “Frenchmen” and “Britons” (2002, p. 48).

Indeed, “hegemonic intervention” is a process of struggle, with a new discourse as a result. However, once again, the fixation of meaning within this new discourse is always relative and temporary, thus always at risk to be rearticulated in another hegemonic intervention.

By only analysing Merkel, Orbán and Putin’s discourses, one cannot conclude whether a successful hegemonic intervention took place within the pan-European space during the crisis. Instead, for this thesis, it is simply important to keep hegemony in mind, as hegemony is not only the pivot of the entire conceptual framework that I use, it also accentuates the importance of analysing discourses that articulate different European identities. Hegemony denotes the struggle of European leaders to articulate “Europe” in the migrant crisis differently, as a means to create a relatively fixed political reality in which some crisis-solutions are acceptable, and others are not.

When acknowledging this struggle to establish one discourse that dominates all others, one has to highlight those signs that are placed in a particularly privileged position in each discourse’s net of different interconnected moments. Privileged signs, those interconnected with a high degree of other moments, are called *nodal points*. As every discourse aims to dominate the field of discursivity (i.e. to fix meaning), the practice of articulation is largely focused on constructing central signs, nodal points, which have the greatest impact on the partial fixation of meaning (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, pp. 112-113).

Although the closure of meaning is never fully reached, such closure is the ultimate destination of any discourse. Putin, Orbán and Merkel articulate their discourses as respective attempts to fix the meaning of Europe. Like any articulator, they do this by reducing the polysemic character of elements through articulation, thus turning them into

moments, while attributing multiple relations between moments and a few nodal points that gain a central position in the discourse's network (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 28). For instance, “liberty” arguably serves as a moment in a nationalist discourse by linking it to the nodal point “fatherland”, meaning that liberty only gains meaning in the nationalist discourse as long as it serves the fatherland. The moment-nodal point relation is arguably reversed in the liberal discourse, meaning that the fatherland can only be meaningful as long it serves freedom. Consequently, nationalist and liberal discourses are in a constant struggle to define “fatherland” and “liberty” according to their political interests. This discursive struggle is what Laclau and Mouffe link to Antonio Gramsci's concept of “war of position”. A notion that implies that there is “a radical ambiguity into the social which prevents it from being fixed” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 137).

Thus, it is of key importance for my discourse analysis to identify the nodal points (i.e. concepts with a high density of interconnected moments) that are articulated and linked with “Europe” in Putin, Orbán and Merkel’s discourses. By demonstrating where the nodal points are positioned, one can reveal the fundamental discursive difference between the three politicians, as well as the concepts that are at stake the most in their struggle to fixate the meaning of Europe – particularly, the struggle to fixate European identity and its produced solidarities and solutions in the European migrant crisis.

Although all moments are, in principle, always under threat of losing their meaning, some moments are more fixed in their meaning than others. There may exist a relative *common sense* about how certain moments are articulated (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 31-33). National languages, for instance, are in most cases fixed to a high degree in their connection to national identity.

Other moments, however, are particularly vulnerable for re-articulation. Those signs are related to very few other moments. Such a sign is called a *floating signifier* – a sign that is hollow enough to be attributed to many different (often contradictory) meanings in different discourses, whereas it has just enough meaning to stimulate actors and audiences to act in a specific direction (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, pp. 134-141, 172-173; Oxford Reference, 2010). Floating signifiers are therefore particularly useful in revealing where “ongoing struggle between different discourses to fix the meaning of important signs” is located (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 28).

In the discourse analysis of this thesis, it becomes evident that “Europe” is a floating signifier, hence the discourses continue to compete in giving different meanings to “Europe”. “Europe” is constantly threatened to be constructed in connection with different nodal points: whereas one actor may construct “Europe” as a signifier that is connected with the nodal point “universal human rights”, the other constructs “Europe” as linked to the nodal points of “Christendom” and “ethnicity”. “Europe” is therefore positioned at the centre of the discursive struggle, where it is connected with respectively different, contradicting nodal points. In fact, “Europe” is not just a floating, but *empty signifier*. This means that “Europe” signifies the community as a whole and, in more technical terms, the system of signification as such (Laclau, 1996, pp. 38-40). To understand which other signs in the leaders' discourses are particularly open for re-articulation, part of the discourse analysis is focussed on tracking floating signifiers other than “Europe”.

2.3 Conceptual Difference Between Antagonism and Agonism

It is crucial for this thesis' discourse theory to separate two different strategies on how to *other* certain signs and identities from the *Self* via either antagonism or agonism. In *Agonistics* (2013), Chantal Mouffe makes precisely this separation in her argument that, instead of old-fashioned cosmopolitan attempts to overcome world's hegemonies and sovereignties, more equal relations between regional poles and identities have to be created. Democratisation, then, can only flourish when global and local politics are organised around agonistic, rather than antagonistic relations (2013, pp. xiii; 19-22). In Laclau and Mouffe's original theory, moments are articulated to construct different identities of which some mutually exclude each other (e.g. liberalism and fascism): these relations are *antagonistic* (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 47; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, pp. 138-139; Mouffe, 2013, pp. 1-2). However, other moments construct identities that may clash with each other, but do not necessarily mutually exclude each other and can co-exist in a *field of discursivity* (e.g. liberalism and social democracy). Mouffe calls these identity-relations *agonistic* and argues that, while these relations can be mutually *othering*, they are based on two acknowledgements that are absent in antagonistic relations. Firstly, these identities acknowledge that they are each other's “adversaries whose ideas might be fought, even fiercely, but whose right to defend those ideas is not

to be questioned”, rather than “enemies to be destroyed” (Mouffe, 2013, p. 7). Secondly, this mutual acknowledgement is based on a shared understanding that “[conflict] cannot and should not be eradicated”. Mouffe calls this “conflictual consensus” (2013, pp. 6, 55). Consequently, this conflictual consensus produces an ideal world that is radically multipolar (without unipolar ambitions) (2013, pp. 22-23) and is built on a radical democratic model (“a radicalisation, not a rejection, of liberal democratic institutions”) (2013, p. xvii). The agonist is therefore not constructed as a *threat* towards discourses but as an *addition* to the discursive field. Radical democracy is, from this viewpoint, based on and legitimised through the mutual existence and promotion of a plurality of agonists.

It is therefore important to pinpoint in the discourse analysis which Others are constructed as antagonistic: Others that are excluded and constructed as threats towards the Self constructed by the respective discourse. Equally, it is crucial to point out which Others are constructed as agonistic: Others that are constructed as different from the discourse’s constructed Self, but not as a threat to it. Instead, they add meaning to, as well as legitimise, the discourse, by being different but part of the shared discursive field.

Additionally, this thesis relies on Iver B. Neumann’s Self-Other notion, as a helpful perspective for the empirical application of Mouffe’s framework. For this thesis, it suffices to underline three misunderstandings of the Self-Other nexus as pointed out by Neumann (1996). Firstly, Neumann relies on Tzvetan Todorov’s understanding of alterity when defining the Other, insisting that the Other and Self are constructed through, at least, three relational constructions: value judgement (to what extent the other is good/bad), rapprochement (how distant the Self thinks of itself from the Other), and knowledge (how much the Self knows of the Other) (1996, p. 154). This allows Neumann to dispute Alexander Wendt’s claim that the decrease of global heterogeneity (as a result of globalisation) brings along the decline of othering – a claim that is solely based on one of the three Other-relations (namely knowledge) (1996, p. 166). Indeed, while European national leaders and the societies they claim to represent are more than ever aware and knowledgeable of Others, Neumann’s 1996 position already pointed out that integration of EU member states, as well as increasing interdependence between countries through globalisation (e.g. Russia), do not necessarily decrease othering in international politics. Second, Neumann insists that the degree of othering does not depend on one’s power over another. Neumann gives as an example, not alien to this thesis’ topic, Central European

identity, which is based on a self-understanding of relative weakness vis-à-vis the “Eastern Other” and “Western Other” (1996, p. 159). Third, in line with Malmborg and Stråth (2002) and Hansen and Wæver (2002), Neumann argues that the Self and Other are chiefly constructed on the nation-state’s level. From this position, Neumann explains that “the realm of the international” came to be institutionalised by the 19th-century state system as the primary “realm of difference”, while 20th-century nationalism further strengthened this institutionalisation.

In sum, in discourse analysis, texts are understood as different *articulations*, i.e. practices aspiring to influence a pan-European debate on European identity, as a means to offer different solutions for the migrant crisis. Firstly, these articulatory practices are done by turning *elements* (already existing signs) into *moments*, by positioning them in a totality, called *discourse*. I analyse which moments are articulated in Putin, Merkel and Orbán's discourses, concerning their constructions of “Europe”. Which moments are (not) shared by the articulators? Which shared moments are positioned differently in the articulators' discourses? Indeed, how do their attempts to fix the meaning of Europe differ from one another? Secondly, *nodal points*, as privileged, highly intertwined signs in a discourse, crucially demonstrate what concepts are at stake the most in the struggle to fixate European identity during the crisis: What are the nodal points in the articulators’ discourses? How do they differ from one another? Thirdly, *floating signifiers*, as signs with a low degree of interconnection that are particularly open for re-articulation, crucially demonstrate that “Europe” (as a floating and empty signifier) is central to the discursive struggle in the crisis. Other floating signifiers of the articulators reveal supplementary points of discursive struggle and vulnerability. Fourthly, in the struggle of discourses, the politicians articulate certain moments that are *othered*: these reveal what their *Others* are, what their *Selves* are not, and whether “Europe” is always part of the Us or not. Finally, one should ask where these Self-Other oppositions are *antagonistic* (i.e. threats undermining the respective discourse and identity) and where *agonistic* (i.e. different from the articulator's Self, but not an undermining force). To what degree are the articulators othered by each other? When are Putin, Orbán or Merkel constructed as agonists or antagonists by one another? And when are their nodal points articulated as agonistic or antagonistic moments by one another?

III. Methodology

In the empirical part of this thesis, I analyse 22 primary sources: nine statements by Orbán, seven by Merkel, five by Putin, and one joint by Orbán and Putin. The sources are transcripts available from their respective governmental websites: *Website of the Hungarian Government* (www.kormany.hu), *Official Internet Resources of the President of Russia* (en.kremlin.ru), and *Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung (BPA)* (www.bundesregierung.de). The former two offer a wide range of speeches translated in English. The German website, however, only offers 64 English speeches. This is why I have collected German sources in the original language, while Russian and Hungarian speeches are collected in their official English translations. Most of the sources are speeches, while others are interviews. Importantly, the interviews are, like the speeches, governmentally approved transcripts. They are published with the same intention: as expressing the views of the speakers.

In this chapter, the sources are presented chronologically. This is not the case in my discourse analysis. By mapping each source, I outlined the moments, nodal points and floating signifiers connected to “Europe”, and illustrated how they are connected, or not, with one another. By applying this method of mapping as a technical tool in the preliminary stage of discourse analysis, I have also detected themes that the chosen speeches of the three politicians have in common, which allowed me to divide the analysis into seven thematic sections. This allowed me to avoid the risk of analysing the texts too chronologically. This method of underlining and mapping discursive themes is inspired by Ted Hopf’s *Social Construction of International Politics* (2002). The maps are not presented in this thesis, but I have mentioned them here to underline how I have come to present a coherent, theme-based analysis chapter.

Importantly, not all thematic sections necessarily refer to nodal points. For instance, in *4.5 Christianity, Ethnicity, Culture and Islam*, it becomes evident that “Christendom” serves as a nodal point in Orbán’s discourse, whereas it is virtually absent in Merkel’s discourse. This is a crucial difference by itself. Differently, *4.1 A Shifting Us* does not revolve around a nodal point at all. Instead, here I focus on how the articulators construct their own “Us” and “Them”, i.e. Self and Other.

By mapping the terms that are articulated by the politicians, in connection with their constructions of “Europe”, I have come to understand which *elements* are turned into *moments*, and how they are positioned. By doing so, I produce a two-dimensional comparison of the discourse. On the one hand, I look at how politicians choose moments in their articulations; on the other hand, I compare how they position those moments in their respective articulations. Which moments linked to Europe are shared, and which are not? How are these moments positioned? How do their attempts to fix Europe differ from one another? The themes that revealed the starkest differences in terms of positioning moments have been picked out as analytical sections. The analysis ends with a summary of how these three articulators differ from one another, and to some extent share discursivity.

Through the mapping of these speeches, it has become clear which signs have a high degree of interconnectivity, thus which *nodal points* are articulated. They highlight the most significant differences between the three discourses. The signs in the texts that reveal little connections with other moments are revealed as *floating signifiers*: they are particularly open for re-articulation. Certain moments are positioned to construct the *Other*; they underline what “Europe” or the *Self* is not. Sometimes “Europe” is itself *othered* by opposing it to the *Self*. Moreover, the discursive practice of *othering* is often shifting between *antagonism* and *agonism*. This difference is stark between articulators. Therefore, one entire thematic section is dedicated to this discursive practice (*4.1 A Shifting Us*). Additionally, it is important to ask which articulations of othering are *antagonistic* (i.e. threats undermining the respective identity) and which are *agonistic* (i.e. different from the articulator's *Self*, but not an undermining force).

All sources are collected according to two criteria. Firstly, I have been searching for, respectively in English and German, different terms related to the migrant crisis (e.g. “refugee crisis”, “migrant crisis”, “immigrants”, “Europe”, but also “terrorism”) in the online archives. Secondly, I have been listing events of the migrant crisis that had a considerable impact on at least one of the three countries.

The sources are predominantly part of a specific timeline, 2015-2016. The starting point is a European Parliament (EP) speech of Orbán on 19 May 2015, in which he argues against letting refugees into the EU. The timeline stops by the end of 2016, along with the direct consequences produced by the migration agreement made between the EU and

Turkey (officially known as the EU-Turkey statement, 18 March 2016; Concilium, 2016). The EU-Turkey agreement is considered a key moment that allowed the crisis to de-escalate and become less of a political emergency. One of the agreement's main conditions was that refugees and migrants arriving on the Greek islands would be detained and sent back to Turkey unless they qualified for asylum in Greece. The agreement succeeded in its aim to drastically reduce the number of asylum-seekers entering the EU's mainland. The number went down from 1.2 million in 2015 and roughly the same number in 2016, to just over 654,000 in 2017, and around 580,000 in 2018 (Becatoros, 2019).

Scholars who criticise the EU-Turkey agreement do this mostly from the normative perspective: the wider EU trend of externalising migration policies, placing responsibilities on third countries, stands in stark contrast to the Union's self-declared normative responsibilities towards migrants and refugees (Zoomers et al., 2018). However, Zoomers' claim that the agreement has "not been successful in [solving] the migration 'crisis'", simply because migrants are still arriving on the Greek islands (2018, p. 3), denies the fact that the primary goal of the EU's national leaders in solving the crisis – severely reducing the number of asylum seekers– was achieved. Whether this criterion to solve the crisis is morally condemnable is a different question. With the de-escalation of mass migration and the EU-Turkey agreement as at least a temporary solution to limit mass migration, the underlying European identity question is still present but is no longer as pivotal in the pan-European debate.

One source is positioned outside the thesis' timeline: a speech by Merkel on 4 July 2018. I have chosen to include this source, because it most evidently demonstrates Merkel's construction of a human rights-based European identity linked to the post-World War II era and the migrant crisis. As will be evident in the analysis, she does this in other sources too, but in a less explicit manner.

Orbán's EP speech on 19 May 2015 (2015a) came after he was invited to defend against the EP's accusations that Budapest's stances in favour of the death penalty and against taking in migrants and refugees would be a violation of universal human rights. The speech serves as a demonstration that Orbán was already constructing a specific European identity before the migrant crisis would escalate during that year's summer. It took place eight days after the European Commission proposed that EU member states

should take in refugees under a quota scheme, which was opposed by Hungary (Mediterranean migrant crisis, 2015). This speech is followed by Merkel's summer press conference on 31 August, when she pronounced her famous *Wir schaffen das* ("We can do it" or "We can manage it") slogan, arguing that it is Europe and Germany's responsibility to defend universal human rights and let refugees in (Merkel, 2015a). This speech is often coined, both in media and academics, as a crucial change in the discourses that have shaped the migrant crisis (Delcker, 2016; Karnitsching, 2018; Mushaben, 2017; Smykała, 2016). The speech was overshadowed by a series of violent crimes in Germany committed by immigrants with an Islamic background: the Munich shooting, the Ansbach bombing, and the Würzburg train attack (After rampages, Merkel, 2016). The speech also underlines that, from the start, a stark contrast existed between Orbán and Merkel in regard to universal human rights and European identity.

One day after Merkel's speech, thousands of migrants gathered outside a Budapest railway station, planning to catch trains heading towards Austria and Germany. The Hungarian police closed down the terminal, arguing that they followed EU regulations (Migrants arrive in, 2015). In reaction, Viktor Orbán joined journalist Éva Kocsis for an interview on the (pro-government) state-radio channel *Kossuth rádió* on 4 September 2015 (Orbán, 2015b). A governmentally organised interview organised with Merkel (Merkel, 2015b) took place one day later when Berlin announced that it would not apply limits on the number of asylum seekers entering Germany (Germany's Angela Merkel, 2015).

On 7 September, Orbán explained at a meeting of the heads of Hungary's diplomatic missions abroad why Hungary's political stance towards migrants differ from that of Western Europeans. It is the first time Orbán does not only articulate migrants and refugees, but also Islam's position in Europe (Orbán, 2015c).

On 15 September, Hungary decided to close its border with Serbia and declared a state of emergency: new laws came into force that criminalised the act of entering Hungary illegally (Migrant crisis: Hungary, 2015). A television debate between Orbán and TV-host Csaba Azurák, in which he defended the state of emergency, serves as the second text in which he articulates "migrants" and "refugees" together with "Islam" (Orbán, 2015d).

On 22 September, a majority of EU interior ministers voted to relocate 120,000 refugees EU-wide. Although Hungary voted along with Czechia, Romania and Slovakia against the plan, they were overruled (Migrant crisis: why, 2015). One day later, Orbán explained in the Hungarian Parliament why he opposed the quota system (Orbán, 2015e).

The first international speech given during the crisis in which Putin mentions “refugees” and “migrants”, is during the 70th session of the UN General Assembly in New York City (Putin, 2015a). This speech was held four days after Russia declared to establish a joint information centre with Iran, Iraq and Syria in Baghdad to coordinate their operations against the Islamic State (IS), and two days before the Russian air force entered Syrian airspace to combat IS and support Assad’s regime. Both the EU and the USA had immediately expressed their disapproval of Russia’s support for Assad (Bassam & Perry, 2015; Russia, Iran, Iraq, 2015). The context of the speech can, therefore, be understood as a confrontational situation between Russia and the West.

Putin mentions “refugees” and “migrants” for the second time during the Valdai Meeting on 24 October 2015 (Putin, 2015b). On 5 January 2016, in Putin’s interview with German newspaper *Bild*, he argues for the first time that Europe’s inability to fix the migrant crisis is at least partly caused by the failure to overcome Europe’s post-Cold War East-West division (Putin, 2016a).

On 11 January 2016, Merkel held a speech that was largely a reaction against the New Year’s crimes in Cologne, among other German cities, where hundreds of sexual assaults and at least five rapes were reported (Merkel, 2016a). The overwhelming majority of the suspects turned out to be North African and Middle Eastern asylum seekers and immigrants. The attacks led to a hardening of attitudes against mass immigration and fuelled debate about Germany's asylum policy sustainability and differences between European and Islamic cultures. The government also proposed changing the law to make it easier to deport immigrants convicted of crimes (Hewitt, 2016).

A joint news conference by Putin and Orbán on 17 February serves as a useful discursive comparison between the two leaders in their different articulations of “Europe” in relation to “migrants” and “refugees” (Orbán & Putin, 2016).

On 24 February, Orbán’s government announced that a referendum would be organised on 2 October in which citizens could vote on the EU's mandatory migrant

quotas (EU's Schulz slams, 2016). In a press conference, Orbán explained why Hungarians needed to speak out against this system (Orbán, 2016a).

Four speeches are collected based on their articulation of the EU-Turkey migration deal in 2016: a TV-interview with Orbán on 4 March (Orbán, 2016b), a press conference of Putin and the Finnish government on 22 March (Putin, 2016b), another TV-interview with Orbán on 8 April (Orbán, 2016c), a press conference of Merkel in Vienna on 24 September (Merkel, 2016b), and another press conference of Merkel with the Maltese prime-minister on 29 November (Merkel, 2016c).

In Merkel's joint press conference with then French president François Hollande, on 17 September 2016, she expressed her concerns about the upcoming Hungarian referendum on EU quotas (Merkel, 2016d). On 4 October 2016, Orbán addressed the parliament by talking about the ambiguous referendum outcome (Orbán, 2016d). Although an overwhelming majority of the voters rejected the EU's quotas system, the voter turnout was too low to ratify the referendum outcome (Kingsley, 2016).

On 23 December 2016, during Putin's annual news conference, his discourse is largely focused on articulating Europe (partly by comparing its mechanisms with that of the Soviet Union, partly by articulating geopolitical solutions for the migrant crisis) (Putin, 2016c).

In sum, I have outlined in this chapter how I decided on 22 primary sources (speeches and interviews by Orbán, Merkel and Putin), based on keywords and key events, within the timeframe 2015-2016. Moreover, I explained how I have come to divide the discourse analysis into different thematic sections which are not necessarily synonymous to nodal points or moments that can be traced in the analysed texts. Instead, the thematic sections allowed me to separate the analysis in such a way that the most crucial differences and similarities between the articulators' discourses, in their attempts to construct Europe differently, become apparent. In the next chapter I will thus start with this discourse analysis.

IV. Discourse Analysis of Official Speeches

Before presenting the findings of my discourse analysis, I need to explain how I came to focus upon the following themes. These themes were chosen because they underline crucial differences and similarities between the three politicians' texts. By analysing the speeches and interviews according to these themes, it became most apparent which moments, nodal points and floating signifiers are shared by or differentiate between the Orbán, Merkel and Putin's discourses.

The discourse analysis' first section, *4.1 A Shifting Us*, is focussed on underscoring the different ways the articulators identify with "Europe". Answering the question "How does the articulator identify her- or himself with Europe?" provides a way to understand which *moments* (or already articulated signs with a certain position in a given discourse) are "othered" in the texts, and which *moments* help constructing the Us. Although constructions of the Other and the Self differ not only between but even within primary sources, all three politicians construct discourses in which the other actors can potentially be(come) part of Us. Laclau and Mouffe's theoretical starting point, in which they argue that discourses are never completely stable and can always be contested, can, therefore, be turned into a guideline that proposes the following questions: Which Us and which Other are constructed in these differently constructed realities? How do Us and the Other relate to Europe in these discourses?

What is demonstrated in *4.1 A Shifting Us*, is that Hansen and Wæver's line of reasoning mirrors the analysed politicians' constructions of the Self and the Other: European identity is part of the Self when it is in accordance with the respectively constructed national identity. Whenever there is a conflict between the two identities, Orbán and Merkel construct a European Other. Similarly, when Europe is not in line with Putin's Russian identity, Europe is articulated as an antagonist that threatens the Russian Self, rather than an agonist that is part of a broader global force in which Russia is an equal participator. Indeed, there are European identities the articulators identify with, and there are identities with which they do not. The question which European identities are constructed as the Self and which are not is what is at the centre of this thesis and are

differentiated by dividing the remaining parts of the discourse analysis into the following thematic sections.

4.2 Rule of Law, Law and Order and Constitution in Europe revolves around the politicians' articulations of moments that underscore the legal foundations of their respective nation-states. *4.3 Universal Human Rights and Europe* is a section that predominantly emphasises the politicians' constructions of a relationship between one or more universal human rights and European identity. In *4.4 Europe, Sovereignty and Nation-States*, the emphasis is on the nation of "national sovereignty" and what role it plays in the different discursive attempts to fix the meaning of Europe. The section *4.5 Ethnicity, Culture, Christianity and Islam* outlines how the articulators relate their own national identities and European identities with notions that are often labelled as nativist European concepts, such as ethnicity, traditional culture, Christianity and Christendom. The section also centralises how the articulation of these concepts allows for certain discursive relations with the construction of Islam. In *4.6 A Democratic Europe* it is demonstrated how the three politicians construct the relationship between Europe and democracy differently. This section allows us to place the previous section into a new context, which underscores the question of how the articulators' respective European identities allow for different understandings of liberal-democracy and the place of democracy in Europe. Section *4.7 20th-Century History and Europe: Fascism, Communism and War* highlights how the politicians place their constructions of Europe in different memory-constructions of European and national history. Moreover, it allows the analysis to be positioned in the theory of Bottici and Challand. As explained in the first chapter, this theory is based on a notion of political myth that is divided into three time-bounded understandings: A common past that underlines where "we" come from; a blueprint for the common future that underline where "we" are going to; and a common present, rooted in a shared past and focussed on a shared future, that helps to understand how "we" should act politically. Thus, based on the politicians' constructions of Europe, what political myths of Europe are constructed? How does the memory-construction of a national and common European past, allows the politicians to strengthen his/her construction of European identity? How does his/her construction of a blueprint for a common European future relate to this? The final section, *4.8 Results of the Discourse Analysis*, is a summary on the findings of the complete discourse analysis and allows for

a more detailed comparison: both a comparison between the sections as well as an overall comparison between the three European leaders.

4.1 A Shifting Us

Throughout Orbán's texts, *Us* frequently shifts between "Hungary" or "us Hungarians" on the one hand, to "Europe" or "us Europeans" on the other. Even within one source, it is common that Orbán's *Us* shifts constantly. In his EP speech on 19 May 2015, Orbán constructs an explicit role for himself as representative of Hungary and "us, Hungarians":

I see it as my bounden duty to speak on behalf of my country, Hungary, and the Hungarian people. I would remind you that the Hungarian people decided in a referendum to join the European Union, and we have been proud of this decision. (Orbán, 2015a; Italics are mine unless otherwise indicated)

The articulation of the Hungarian people is monolithic, constructing them as having a single voice (e.g. the Hungarians' uniform will to join the EU) and having a given set of characteristics: "[T]he *Hungarian people like to talk about difficult issues in a straightforward manner. This is our nature; we do not like empty talk*" (Orbán, 2015a). By constructing a straightforward Hungarian people, Orbán turns the migration question into a wholly different debate – one that is not concerned with migrants, but with straightforwardness and an EU core value, freedom of speech:

Hungary has not signed any agreement or treaty with anyone on what we are allowed to talk about in Hungary [...]. Therefore, we see it as a violation of the core treaty of the European Union for anyone to try to tell us what we Hungarians may or may not voice our views about [...]. In fact, this debate is [...] about the issue of freedom of thought, opinion and speech. (Orbán, 2015a)

Orbán strengthens this discourse at a meeting with the heads of Hungary's diplomatic missions abroad, on 9 September 2015. Here, he constructs Hungary's uniform character more visibly, by contrasting the apparent political consensus among Hungarian people with the lack of agreement in Western European societies: "There is *no agreement in the countries of Western Europe – unlike Hungary, where surveys show people's views with perfect clarity*" (Orbán, 2015c).

Through Orbán's texts, "Europe" may be constructed differently from "us Hungarians". In his Strasbourg speech on 19 May 2015, Orbán constructs a "Hungarian people" who are straightforward, suggesting that the EU often acts as the opposite of straightforward: evasive and disingenuous. This construction is more explicitly visible in Orbán's above-mentioned speech on 9 September, where he encourages Hungarian diplomats to follow the country's national interests, because "Europe" and the rest of the world are dishonest and hypocritical, particularly when it concerns migration policies:

We live in a hypocritical world [...]. The French foreign minister attacks us because of our fence, while the French prime minister erects one [...]. The Austrians say that more of us go to their country than might be desirable; but if we look at the figures, we see that far more Austrians go to Germany than Hungarians to Austria. If we said something similar, we would feel ashamed: we would say that we had been found out, that our words and deeds were at odds [...]. But they are not bothered. (Orbán, 2015c)

"Europe" is constructed as an actor that is not interested in the Hungarians' achievements, but only in their issues:

It would be logical to assume that we are here today because Europe is curious about the achievements of the Hungarians [...]. You have, however, convened this debate [...] to talk about political issues – in particular, the question of immigrations. (Orbán, 2015a)

Nonetheless, the Us can shift swiftly from referring to Hungarians only to Europeans as a whole even within one sentence: "*We [Hungarians] talk straight about the death penalty and migration, and we also see that the discourse we have been engaged in so far [...] has not taken us Europeans any closer to a solution*" (Orbán, 2015a).

Indeed, while constructing "us Hungarians" as straightforward and honest people, this time, Europeans are not constructed as the opposite of that. "Us Europeans" are a larger identity to which "us Hungarians" belong, while Europe can learn a great deal from the Hungarian people's ability to speak honestly and straightforward. In that same speech, Orbán creates a clear discursive link between his envisioned Hungarian society as similar to his envisioned European society: "*We are a frank and open people, and we are speaking our mind when we say loud and clear that we Hungarians would like to keep Europe for the Europeans, and [...] Hungary as a Hungarian country*" (Orbán, 2015a).

At the beginning of a 4 September 2015 interview by journalist Éva Kocsis on pro-government state-owned channel *Kossuth rádió*, Orbán constructs an explicit difference between himself and European leaders: “There is a major difference of opinion between *Hungary* and *European leaders*. A great many *European leaders* believe that everyone should be allowed in” (Orbán, 2015b). Right thereafter, however, “us Europeans” continues to be articulated throughout the interview, whenever Orbán wants to defend his policy to close the European external borders for migrants (“[T]here is no point in burying *our* heads in the sand”; “Today *we* must concentrate all our strength [...]. Europe needs to be strong now”; “*We* agreed that the external borders of Europe [...] must be protected”; “*We* should send the message to those who want to come to Europe”; “People are worried and concerned – *not only in Hungary*, but in the *whole of Europe*”; Orbán, 2015b). However, whenever Orbán talks about EU-wide protests against his proposals, the discourse shifts back to othering Europe (“*They* say that *they* do not like the fence [...], this is the situation in *Europe*”; “*Europe* today is almost encouraging those who want to set out in the hope of a better life”) (Orbán, 2015b).

In line with Orbán’s discourse of “us Europeans” to strengthen pan-European border policies, constructing “us Europeans” continues during and after the EU-Turkey deal negotiations on keeping non-European migrants in Turkey:

Europe is underestimating itself. *We Europeans* number five hundred million, and this means that there are more of *us* than the Russians and the Americans combined. *We* are one of the world’s most developed economic regions. *Our* technological means, state of development and financial strength enable us to defend ourselves. In that case, why should *we* beg a country of seventy million or so for our security, instead of protecting *ourselves*? (Orbán, 2016b)

In another case, however, the shifting of Us does not depend on which policy is articulated. Orbán’s aforementioned speech in his meeting with Hungarian diplomats is for a great part preoccupied with positioning “honest Hungary” in “hypocritical Europe” (e.g. by referring to the French government erecting a fence while criticising Hungary for building its own; Orbán, 2015c). But halfway through the speech, Orbán constructs a different “honest us” vis-à-vis a “hypocritical world”. When pointing out that the EU is the only Western entity that has decided to take in refugees and migrants in the name of universal human rights, Orbán concludes:

International law applies to everyone: the refugee conventions are as binding on *them* as they are on *us*. Yet a number of countries, with Australia taking the lead, made it clear that they would not accept migrants or refugees. America took the same stance, and so did Israel [...]. There is a single exception: *we Europeans*. (Orbán, 2015c)

Indeed, not only “us Hungarians” are a victim of “hypocritical Europe”, so are “us Europeans” of the “hypocritical world”.

In an interview with TV-host Csaba Azurák on the commercial TV-channel *TV2*, Orbán consistently links Us to Hungary (e.g., “...*we* must find a solution, as the Germans and Austrians are trying to find a solution now”; “But when *they* criticised *us* for seeking to enforce the terms of an agreement which *we* all signed up to, it is unfair and unjust”) (Orbán, 2015d). A similar Us-construction is evident in Orbán’s press conference on 24 February 2016, where he presents the government’s decision to call a referendum on the quota system (“*We* Hungarians believe [...] that introducing compulsory resettlement quotas without the consent of the people is nothing less than an abuse of power”) (Orbán, 2016a), as well as in his joint news conference with Putin on 17 February 2016 (“Russia is not a threat to *our* country, but offers *us* a good partnership”; “Hungary has taken on the obligation to build a hospital in Syria [...]. And this way, *we* can help stabilise the situation in that country”) (Orbán & Putin, 2016). In Orbán’s address to the Hungarian parliament after the referendum outcome, the European Other (i.e. the anti-sovereign EU) is constructed almost antagonistically versus “we Hungarians” (For instance: “*We* have lodged a legal challenge to this *Brussels* decision, which *we* consider anti-democratic and unlawful”; “This is the *Brussels jaw of the pincers*”) (Orbán, 2016d).

However, in each of Orbán’s texts, also when “we Europeans” is not explicitly present and even when a certain European identity is othered, Orbán discursively constructs European identities to which “us Hungarians” belong. To this extent, even when Orbán explicitly only constructs “us Hungarians”, Us constantly shifts implicitly between the nation and “Europe” by constructing inclusive European identities.

Similarly, in Merkel’s discourse, there is a clear shifting Us. The nature of this shifting, however, is fundamentally different from that of Orbán’s. This is already evident in Merkel’s first analysed speech on the European migration crisis, on 31 August 2015, where she proclaimed: “Wir schaffen das”. The Us-shifting can be split into two levels.

Firstly, Merkel articulates a shifting Us geographically, that is either German (“*We* are facing a major national task; it is everybody’s business”) or European (“...it will no longer be the Europe that *we* imagine...”). On the other hand, Merkel articulates a shifting Us that is very different from Orbán’s monolithic Us. This is a “we Germans” or “we Europeans” that is, in its current state, morally good and linked to universal human rights and values. The other, potential side of that Us is morally bad, xenophobic, intolerant, clearly against universal human rights. Sometimes this intolerant Us refers to what “us Germans/Europeans” can potentially become soon:

The overwhelming majority of *our people* is world-open [...] When so many people take up this much to fulfil their dream of living in Germany, then this confirms that *we are not in the worst position* [...] The universal human rights have so far been closely linked to Europe and its history. That is one of the founding impulses of the European Union. If Europe will fail in answering the refugee question, it will no longer be the Europe that *we* imagine, and it will not be the Europe that *we* would call its founding myth – a founding myth *we* have to continue to work on today”. (Merkel, 2015a)

At other times, it is a bad Us that has existed in the past: “*Our* freedom, *our* rule of law [...]. The world sees *Germany* as a land of hope and of opportunities, and that has *not always been the case*” (Merkel, 2015a).

Merkel's shifting Us can, therefore, best be understood through two different constructions of Europe: “Europe of universal human rights” (see 4.3 *Universal human rights and Europe*), which is used to articulate the good Us, and “historical Europe” (see 4.7 *20th-Century History and Europe: Fascism, Communism and War*), which is used to articulate the potentially bad Us. In Merkel’s interview with the *Berliner Morgenpost* on 5 September 2015, a similar two-levelled us-shifting is visible. On the one hand, Merkel shifts from “us Germans” (“*We* are facing a *national* task [...]. *We* will manage it”) to “us Europeans” (“I am confident that *we* can master this challenge too, if we create a sense of shared responsibility across *Europe*”). On the other hand, Merkel constructs once again an “incoherent us”, being potentially good (“The Federal Government is committed to ensuring that *we live up to European human rights values...*”) or being a potentially bad (“There should be zero tolerance for hatred and xenophobia. That is not the Germany I want, not the humane and constitutional Germany and *fortunately not the Germany of*

the overwhelming majority of the citizens [...]. Attacks on refugees are incompatible with the values that underlie *our* country”) (Merkel, 2015b). “Good Germany” is articulated always in connection with “good Europe”: a Europe of universal human rights, as an antagonistic nodal point vis-à-vis a Europe from the Nazi past’s phantasm of a pure people (see 4.3 *Universal human rights and Europe* and 4.7 *20th-Century History and Europe: fascism, communism and war*).

Merkel’s annual reception’s speech on 11 January 2016, after hundreds of sexual assaults were reported in several German cities like Cologne, is an exception among the analysed texts. Here, Merkel’s discourse focuses mostly on “us Germans” versus “they refugees and migrants” and unambiguously constructs Germany as being rooted in constitutional rule of law and universal human rights:

We know since the terrible events on New Year’s Eve in Cologne that, in addition to the openness of society, refugees should also be prepared to adhere to *our* values [...] *We* have very strong constitutional procedures in Germany. *We* can be proud of that. *Those* who get a residence status at *ours* [...] *we* will also help to integrate [...]. But, ladies and gentlemen, if a procedure has turned out to be negative, if a residence permit cannot be granted, if this is confirmed by the courts, then *we* must also have the strength to tell people: you must leave *our* country so that *we* can truly afford to offer protection to those *who* are in need of protection.

That, too, belongs to a constitutional state. (Merkel, 2016a)

Putin’s Us is the most different from the others’ constructions, as it rarely refers to “us Europeans”. Putin’s Us is either articulated as “Russia” or as “us global leaders”. There exists a dominant difference between Us and “the West”, constructed sometimes as agonistic, sometimes as antagonistic. What can be observed in the analysed texts of Putin is that the shifts of Us-constructions change quicker than in the texts of Orbán’s and Merkel’s.

On 28 September 2015, Putin’s speech at the UN’s 70th-anniversary session starts with an Us that relates to those countries that defeated Nazism. Nazism, as the common antagonistic Other, allows Putin to go beyond the West-East dichotomy. One sentence later, however, Us has shifted to Russia:

The 70th anniversary of the United Nations is a good occasion to both take stock of history and talk about *our* common future. In 1945, the *countries that defeated*

Nazism joined their efforts to lay a solid foundation for the postwar world order. Let me remind you that key decisions on the principles defining interaction between states, as well as the decision to establish the UN, were made in *our* country, at the Yalta Conference of the leaders of the anti-Hitler coalition (Putin, 2015a).

Further on in the speech, Us relates to “us from the former USSR”. Putin connects Soviet social experiments and ideology to the Western Other:

We should all remember the lessons of the past. For example, *we* remember examples from *our* Soviet past, when the Soviet Union exported social experiments, pushing for changes in other countries for ideological reasons, and this often led to tragic consequences and caused degradation instead of progress. It seems, however, that instead of learning from other people’s mistakes, *some* prefer to repeat them and continue to export revolutions, only now these are “democratic” revolutions. (Putin, 2015a)

After that, the Other becomes bluntly antagonistic: “arrogant”, unwilling to learn from the Soviet past:

I’m urged to ask those who created this situation: do you at least realize now what you’ve done? But I’m afraid that this question will remain unanswered, because they have never abandoned their policy, which is based on arrogance, exceptionalism and impunity. (Putin, 2015a)

Thereafter, he shifts twice, from “we global leaders” to “we Russia”:

We should finally admit that President Assad’s government forces and the Kurdish militia are the only forces really fighting terrorists in Syria. Yes, *we* are aware of all the problems and conflicts in the region, but *we* definitely have to consider the actual situation on the ground. (Putin, 2015a)

By the end, his Self-Other construction becomes more open, by creating an agonistic relation based on a shimmering common task: “*We* hope that the *international community* will be able to develop a comprehensive strategy of political stabilization, as well as social and economic recovery in the Middle East” (Putin, 2015a).

At the 2015 meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club, an annual Kremlin-led gathering of politicians, journalists and intellectuals, Us predominantly refers to Russia:

We have an open discussion here; this is an open intellectual platform for an exchange of view [...] that are very important for *us here in Russia* [...]. As you know, *our* approach is different [from the West]. While creating the Eurasian Economic Union *we* tried to develop relations with our partners, including relations within the Chinese Silk Road Economic Belt initiative. *We* are actively working on the basis of equality in BRICS, APEC and the G20. (Putin, 2015b)

Us takes an interesting shift on 5 January 2016, when Putin is interviewed by two journalists of the German newspaper *Bild*. Here, Putin constructs an Us that can be interpreted as “us Europeans: “Last year, *we* witnessed a great number of wars and crises across the world, something that had not happened for many years. What did *we* do wrong? – *We did* everything wrong from the outset. *We* did not overcome Europe’s division” (Putin, 2016a). Later on, when Putin is asked about the current state of affairs in the Middle East, Us shifts back to Russia, while the West is constructed as an antagonistic Other that is naïve and needlessly suspicious of Russia, and the causer of chaos in the Middle East and the resulting European migrant crisis:

We strongly objected to developments taking place, say, in Iraq, Libya or some other countries. *We* said: “Don’t do this, don’t go there, and don’t make mistakes.” *Nobody* listened to *us*! On the contrary, *they* thought *we* took an anti-*Western* position [...]. And now, when *you* have hundreds of thousands, already one million of refugees, do *you* think our position was *anti-Western* or *pro-Western*? (Putin, 2016a)

Finally, Putin articulates the relation between “us Russians” and “the Western Other” again as agonistic, by constructing the shared nodal point “international law”:

You asked me if *I* was a friend or not. The relations between states are a little different from those between individuals. *I* am no *friend, bride or groom*; *I* am the President of the Russian Federation. That is 146 million people! *These people* have their own interests, and *I* must protect those interests. *We* are ready to do this in a nonconfrontational manner, to look for compromise but, of course, based on international law [...]. (Putin, 2016a)

Putin continues this blurry line between antagonism and agonism in his annual news conference, where he constructs “terrorism” as a moment linked to bad EU-Russia relations (terrorism remains an important nodal point in Putin’s discourse, see 4.2 *Rule of*

law, law and order and constitution in Europe). Note that in the quote's last sentence, "we" includes both Russia and Europe:

What kind of relations do *we* seek to build with Europe? *We* aim to resolve common problems, one of which is certainly the fight against terrorism. *We* express *our* condolences to the families of those killed in Berlin [... This] problem can be settled effectively only through *joint efforts*. But how can *we* join our efforts with *anti-Russian* sanctions [...] and all forms of cooperation scaled down? [...] So, can *we* talk about efficient work on the antiterrorist track? Absolutely not. So, as a result, *we* take hits, heavy and painful. I really hope that *our* cooperation will be restored. (Putin, 2016c)

This construction is also present in Putin's joint talks with Finish president Sauli Niinistö, on 22 March 2016, where he insists on the continuous importance in EU-Russian cooperation against terrorism:

We also talked about the current *instability in North Africa and the Middle East*. This is a major threat to all nations that have order. In the European Union, this phenomenon is also evident in the form of serious migration flows that continue to this day. It is very important for international cooperation in this area to function, so that we can jointly act to *stabilise the situation and fight terrorism*, which is highly important. (Putin, 2016b)

In the context of the EU-Turkey deal, Putin also constructs Russia as a country different from Turkey. Russia should not be concerned as a potentially unstable player along the European border, but as an equal player in the fight against terrorism: "While people may be coming from Turkey and Greece without any control or documents, foreigners can only enter Russia's territory with visas – except, of course, if they are from countries with which we have visa-free travel" (Putin, 2016b).

Putin's discourse is again not antagonistic in his joint news conference with Viktor Orbán on 17 February 2016. On the matter of EU-Russia relations, Putin says: "This noticeable decrease is due above all to the current circumstances, of course: exchange rate instability, volatile energy prices, and, it must be noted, the sanctions the EU has imposed against Russia. I am sure that with time, *we* will set our trade back on a steady growth track, which is in *our* common interest". When Putin and Orbán discuss the European migrant crisis, Putin constructs a strong connection between Hungary and

Russia's views on the European migrant crisis and on a monolithic cultural European identity that resonates with Orbán's "cultural Christian Europe" (see the discursive theme *Ethnicity, Culture, Christianity and Islam*):

We expressed *our* views on the causes of this crisis. I think that *our* views do largely coincide. But the refugee issue is the EU's internal affair. *We* do not interfere in such matters. *We* know that discussion on this issue is taking place inside the European Union. *Our* people has sympathy for the position taken by the Hungarian government and Prime Minister, the desire to defend European identity and Hungary's national identity. (Orbán & Putin, 2016)

The fact that Putin rarely identifies Russia with "Europe" does, however, not mean that Putin does not construct European identity – something that becomes clear in the following sections.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, whether the politicians self-identify with Europe depends on whether the respective European identity is in line with his/her national identity. The European identities Orbán, Merkel and Putin identify with, agonise or antagonise, are diverse, as became evident in this section. In the following sections, it is clarified which "Europes" are exactly constructed by the three actors as parts of the Self and as parts of the (agonistic or antagonistic) Other.

4.2 Rule of Law, Law and Order and Constitution in Europe

One of the more dominant nodal points that all analysed politicians construct, is "rule of law", or related, but not identical, moments "law and order", "constitution" and "constitutional state". In Orbán's case, the constructions of "rule of law Europe" and "law and order Europe" are almost mutually interchangeable. Predominantly, he constructs this "Europe" within the context of the crisis, by articulating the crisis with the moment "migration" and connecting it with moments like "chaos", "instability", "protection" and 'security". On 19 May 2015, before the crisis had escalated, Orbán already articulated such discourse. Sometimes, Europe is the nodal point, while at other times, Hungary gains this position: "I sincerely welcome the fact that you are placing on the agenda important issues which the *European people* are genuinely concerned about: *law and order, security and immigration*. These topics are some of the *key issues* of our *common future*". When Orbán focuses in this speech on Hungarians, not Europeans, he nonetheless articulates an

agonistic, harmonious relationship between Hungary and the EU: “We operate on a *constitutional basis* and, in Hungary also, the *relevant rules* can only be amended in *harmony with the European Union*” (Orbán, 2015a).

In his analysed texts, Hungary is often articulated as a moment closely connected to “rule of law Europe”, while the Other (other European countries, the EU) is not. In this case, Orbán’s message is that most member states are not obeying the EU’s legal framework, thus causing the European migrant crisis to escalate. “Borders” and “Schengen” are nodal points connected to Europe’s “rule of law” identity: “*Hungary must defend its rule of law, and also its borders*” (Orbán, 2015a). In this discourse, the Other (“the rest of the EU”) is sometimes constructed as one lacking in ideas, as is the case in this September 2015 state-TV interview:

We agreed that the external borders of Europe [...] must be protected under all circumstances, and all countries – including Hungary – must observe *the obligations placed on them by EU regulations*. I then asked *all my partners* whether they could offer me a better proposal than building a *physical border fence* [...]. They said *they* do not like the *fence*, but have no better ideas themselves. I thanked *them*. (Orbán, 2015b)

In his meeting with Hungarian diplomats, Orbán others fellow European leaders with legal arguments, by explaining what the Schengen Agreement implies:

If you took the time to look at the *Schengen Agreement* [...], you would find that this is clearly laid down. This is not a recommendation, or a humble request, but a *legal obligation*: a country which signs up to the *Schengen Agreement* [...] must agree in return to protect any of its *borders* which are also external *borders* of the Schengen Area. (Orbán, 2015c)

Regarding the newly built border fence on Hungary’s external EU borders, Orbán continues this discourse in another interview: “We have nonetheless solved three problems. We have complied with *European regulations*, we have *enforced the laws of Hungary*, and we have protected Hungarian interests. This is not a minor achievement” (Orbán, 2015d).

Greece plays a significant role in this discourse, as the ultimate Other: a member state that is constructed as an Other versus “Rule of Law Europe”, one of the causes of the European migrant crisis and one of the causes for the Union’s potential collapse.

Through this articulation, most evident in the above-mentioned state-channel's interview, Orbán plays with the fear that Hungary might turn into another Greece:

[It] is also true that as *Greece* is one of Europe's external borders, if Greece were to *meet its obligations – the obligations which it signed up to in the Schengen Agreement – there would be no problems in Hungary. Greece is Schengen's frontline country; we are not a frontline country, but Greece is. We became a frontline country because Greece is simply not observing the Schengen Agreement [...]. Well, if everyone behaves like this the Schengen system and the whole of the European Union will fall apart. The European Union is based on a mechanism whereby we adopt decisions, assume responsibilities and undertake obligations [...]. If we stop doing so, there is no point in talking about the European Union.* (Orbán, 2015b)

He continues in another interview that month: “If *Greece* had observed what we agreed on [in the Schengen agreement], and if they had fulfilled the obligations they were supposed to, we would not have any problems [...], and neither would the Austrians or Germans” (Orbán, 2015d). A similar construction is articulated in a speech that same month, where the moment “trust” allows him to construct Greece as untrustworthy:

Here I could mention *Greece* as the *focus of such a crisis of trust [...]. We would not have any problem at all if the Greeks duly performed the required registration and separated refugees from migrants [...]. However, the Greeks are not following the rules. We can now start wondering why Greece [...] does not follow the rules. Is it unable to follow the rules, or unwilling to? And so we see the beginnings of the erosion of trust, the very foundation of the European Union [...]. We cannot build, maintain or operate the European Union like this. In other words, if we have regulations – European regulations which are based on common agreements – they must be observed.* (Orbán, 2015c)

During the EU-Turkey talks that would lead to the migration deal, Orbán articulated “Greece” as a mysterious, rather than incompetent, Other. In this discourse, a mysterious force is accused of forcing Greece to act “incomprehensible”. The Other remains faceless, but is probably linked to Orbán's earlier articulation of the “liberal doctrine”:

Greece has been the *biggest mystery* of the past year. It is *incomprehensible why Greece* has tolerated the elimination of the Turkish-Greek border. Why did they

tolerate refugees in their millions entering Greek territory, the Greek islands, without any controls? And it is completely *incomprehensible* why *Greece* as a state transported these people from the islands to the Greek mainland by ferry [...]. These are *mysterious things* [...] And the most *mysterious* part of the whole *Greek affair* is the identity of the protector behind all this. Who could it be? *Greece* has continuously violated the Schengen Agreement, let asylum seekers in and sent them to us to cope with. And yet somebody, or some group... [(The journalist:)] Who? [(Orbán:)] ... has been continuously defending them. The Germans have been doing well in this department, but I think that there are others, too, behind the scenes. (Orbán, 2016b)

Moments other than “borders” and “Schengen” are rarely constructed to add meaning to “Rule of Law Europe”. The May 2015 speech in the EP serves as an exception, by articulating fundamental European freedoms, inherently part of the EU’s legal framework: “We see it as a *violation of the core treaty of the European Union* for anyone to try to tell us what we *Hungarians* may or may not voice our views about” (Orbán, 2015a). In one instance in that speech, Orbán surprisingly constructs a very different European identity, which is no longer as much based in solid rule of law as previously:

The *principles, treaties and rules of the European Union* are not carved in stone, they were not conceived by gods, or even inspired by them; they were created by human beings, and *people may, therefore, change them* at any time. This is *freedom*, and this is *democracy*. (Orbán, 2015a)

Importantly, Orbán ceases to articulate “rule of law Europe” in 2016. This can be explained by the fact that Orbán’s first analysed 2016 text is his 24 February speech (Orbán, 2016a), when he announced a referendum in which Hungarian citizens may vote against the EU’s *legally binding* migrant quotas. In what can be coined Orbán’s referendum-era discourse, the EU is still both othered and identified with. However, it is no longer articulated with legal vocabulary. Instead, the moments in these articulations are predominantly rooted in a democratic context (see 4.6 *A democratic Europe*) and a cultural-Christian or ethnic Europe (see 4.5 *Ethnicity, Culture, Christianity and Islam*).

Merkel also constructs a “rule of law Europe” in her discourse. However, I argue that Merkel’s “rule of law Europe” is typically no nodal point, but a moment connected to the nodal point “Europe of universal human rights”. Indeed, universal human rights are

most of the time the truly privileged moments in her discourse, whereas rule of law-related moments take a subordinated position (see 4.3 *Universal human rights and Europe*). In this section, I have therefore only looked at points among the analysed texts where “rule of law Europe” is privileged. Even here, universal human rights play an implicit role in her discourse. Only once this is discourse is present, namely in the aforementioned discursive turning point: her New Year's speech on 11 January 2016. Here, migrants become a potential threat to Germany's rule of law and constitutional state, albeit by carefully articulating this potential threat and still attributing the horrors migrants and refugees have been through, to avoid generalising all migrants:

Ladies and Gentlemen, last but not least, we have very *strong constitutional procedures* in Germany. We can be *proud* of that. Those who get a residence status at *ours* - we see how many *people* are among them, who *fled from war or terror* -, we will also help to integrate and gain a new or a piece of new home. But, ladies and gentlemen, if a *procedure* has turned out to be negative, if a *residence permit* cannot be granted, if this is *confirmed by the courts*, then *we* must also have the strength to tell people: you must leave *our* country so that *we* can truly afford to offer protection to those *who* are in need of protection. That, too, belongs to a *constitutional state*”; “It cannot be that theft, insults towards women and sexual intimidation occur dozens of times, while the *right for hospitality* is still not forfeited. (Merkel, 2016a)

Putin's articulation of “the rule of law” and “law and order” frequently relates to a construction of European identity, but his predominant concern is the construction of global cooperation, in which the West/Europe is given a privileged position as a nodal point. The West/Europe is sometimes constructed as an antagonistic Other that threatens a stable world ruled by law, rooted in the UN's post-WWII framework of international law. In Putin's 28 September 2015 speech, during the 70th session of the UN General Assembly, this discourse is constructed from the very beginning (Putin, 2015a). Afterwards, he connects this Western/European Other's unwillingness to observe international law as a result of the Western victory in the Cold War. The Cold War becomes a moment articulated in connection with Russia's world ruled by international law and stability:

The mission of the [UN] is to seek and reach compromises [...]. The decisions debated within the UN are either taken in the form of resolutions or not. [...]. Any action taken by circumventing this procedure is illegitimate and constitutes *a violation of the UN Charter and contemporary international law* [...]. We all know that after *the end of the Cold War* the world was left with *one centre of dominance*, and *those who found themselves* at the top of the pyramid were tempted to think that, since *they are so powerful and exceptional*, they know best what needs to be done and *thus they don't need to reckon with the UN*. (Putin, 2015a)

A similar discourse is articulated by Putin in his interview with *Bild* on 5 January 2016:

In the last 20–25 years, *especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union when the second centre of gravity in the world disappeared*, there was a desire to fully enjoy one's sole presence at the pinnacle of world fame, power and prosperity. There was absolutely *no desire to turn either to international law or to the United Nations Charter*. Wherever they became an obstacle, the UN was immediately declared outdated. (Putin, 2016a)

In the UN 2015 speech, immediately after Putin has articulated this antagonistic relationship between the West's post-UN lawless world and Russia's UN-led lawful world, he turns the antagonistic West-Russia relationship into an agonistic one, with a potential “basis of a broad consensus”:

Russia is ready to work together with its partners to develop the UN further on the basis of a broad consensus, but we consider any attempts to undermine *the legitimacy of the United Nations* as extremely dangerous. They may result in the collapse of the *entire architecture of international relations*, and then indeed there will be *no rules left except for the rule of force*. (Putin, 2015a)

Note that, for Putin, international relations (read, Russia-West relations) form a moment that is closely intertwined, almost synonymous, with the rule of law. In the sentence right afterwards, the West-Russia relationship becomes once again antagonistic, as “selfishness” and “dictate” become articulated moments connected to the nodal point of the West, while “collective effort”, “equality” and “liberty” are connected to nodal point “Russia”:

The world will be dominated by *selfishness* rather than *collective effort*, by *dictate* rather than *equality and liberty*, and instead of truly independent states we will have protectorates controlled from outside [...]. In *international law, international affairs*, every term has to be clearly defined, transparent and interpreted the same way by one and all. (Putin, 2015a)

Putin consistently articulates “the rule of law” in close connection with yet another, more important nodal point: state sovereignty. Putin's articulation of the two intertwined nodal points “UN-based international law” and “national sovereignty” allows him to construct a discursive framework which makes him conclude that the West and Russia should join forces to help Syria's Assad-regime to stop the European migrant crisis (Putin, 2015a; see also: *4.4 Europe, Sovereignty and Nation-States*).

Moreover, it demonstrates how different Merkel, Orbán and Putin’s constructions of the rule of law are from one another. While Merkel’s construction of the rule of law is intertwined with the nodal point “universal human rights”, Putin’s construction of the rule of law is linked to the nodal point “national sovereignty”. Orbán, in his turn, articulates an ambivalent “rule of law Europe”. As seen above, Orbán’s discourse sometimes shares characteristics with Merkel’s discourse, emphasising EU-regulations and agreements (particularly Schengen) as the only way to solve the migrant crisis. At the same time though, he rarely links this to universal human rights (see: *4.3 Universal human rights and Europe*). On the other hand, his discourse overlaps with Putin’s discourse at several points, particularly when he constructs the nodal point on national sovereignty. However, differently from Putin, and similar to Merkel, Orbán does not articulate “rule of law Europe” in a context of global international relations.

4.3 Universal Human Rights and Europe

In the analysed texts of Viktor Orbán, universal human rights are rarely articulated explicitly. In his Strasbourg speech on 20 May 2015, Orbán even questions the universality and unchangeability of the EU’s principles, linking the EU to the nodal point “democratic Europe” (see *4.2 A democratic Europe*) and the attached moments “freedom” and “democracy”. “The *principles [...] of the European Union* are not carved in stone, they were not conceived by gods, or even inspired by them; they were created by human beings, and people may therefore change them at any time. This is *freedom*, and this is

democracy” (Orbán, 2015a). Here, it becomes evident that Orbán’s discourse on “democracy” is much less attached to “principles” (i.e. human rights) as it is attached to “freedom” and, implicitly, “people’s will”. This coincides Orbán’s construction of “illiberal democracy” in 2014 – that is, a form of democracy that is more democratic than the liberal version, as it is concerned with the people’s demands, not with overarching principles and values (Rupnik, 2016; What is going, 2018; see 4.4 *Europe, Sovereignty and Nation-States*, and 4.2 *A Democratic Europe*). In his speech on the newly declared state of emergency, on 7 September 2015, he recognises the humanist foundation of Hungarian law but does not explain what this fundament entails, hence leaving universal human rights as a floating signifier: “The Hungarian government will not back down and will make progress step by step while enforcing international regulations as well as Hungarian laws, and while equally asserting fundamental moral and human values” (Orbán, 2015c).

The only point in the analysed texts when Orbán does articulate universal human rights, is at a meeting with Hungarian diplomats, on 7 September 2015. After having articulated “hypocritical Europe” and “hypocritical world” (see 4.1 *A Shifting Us*), Orbán continues by connecting “certain ideals of universal human rights” with “Western European and American interests” and linking these moments with the nodal point “a state of chaos”:

We send Gaddafi packing because he does not conform to certain *Western European and American interests* and does not conform to *certain ideals of universal human rights*. The world feels it has *the moral authority* – and we ourselves supported these measures – to remove him. In the wake of this a *state of chaos* emerges, because there is no longer any country holding back the masses setting out from the interior of Africa in the hope of a better life. And these people will come here, to Europe. (Orbán, 2015c)

While “universal human rights” only play a minor moment in Orbán’s discourse, in Merkel’s texts, “Germany and Europe of universal human rights” form a dominant nodal point. This is, as mentioned in the previous thematic section, due to the nodal point’s close connection with Merkel’s good Us in opposition to the potentially bad Us. This is most evident in her summer press conference speech in 2015, in which she explains why it is fundamental for Germany to take in refugees:

First. There is the *fundamental right* of the politically persecuted to asylum. We can be proud of the *humanity of our constitution*. In this article, we see something very special. We also provide protection to those who flee to us from wars [...]. The *second principle* underlines human dignity for everybody [... We] respect the *human dignity* of each individual, and we turn with the *entire heart of our constitutional state* against those people who scorn other, who attack other people, who want to set their homes on fire or want to use violence [...]. There is no tolerance for those who question the *dignity* of other people. (Merkel, 2015a)

Merkel also connects the nodal point “universal human rights” to European identity, and by doing so, she constructs an identity that one could call a “Europe of universal human rights”. Moreover, “European history” takes an important position as a moment in this discourse:

Europe as a whole should move forward. The member states have to share the responsibility for asylum desiring refugees. The *universal human rights* have so far been closely *linked to Europe and its history*. That is one of *the founding impulses of the European Union*. If Europe will fail in answering the refugee question, it will *no longer be the Europe that we imagine*, and it will *not be the Europe that we would call its founding myth – a founding myth we have to continue to work on today*. (Merkel, 2015a)

She constructs a similar “Europe of universal human rights” in her interview with *Berliner Morgenpost* on 5 September 2015, in which she articulates human rights as part of the solution for the crisis:

At present, European asylum policy is not working. The Federal Government is committed to ensuring that we live up to *the European humanist values and fairly distribute the tasks and burdens* so that not just a few countries continue to absorb most of the refugees. *All of Europe* is required to do so, according to economic capacity and population size of each country. (Merkel, 2015b)

In Merkel's speech on 11 January 2016, the significant discursive shift after the Cologne assaults brings forward a new moment in the discourse: dramatic challenge. Notably, she admits here that refugees and migrants cannot only be victims of a lack of universal human rights but potentially are at the heart of the problem. Human rights become first

and foremost “ours” – that is Germany’s – whereas the challenge is located in the fight to defend “our” values elsewhere in the world:

How does a continent answer to such a *dramatic challenge* [...]? I believe that, with our *value system*, with our *democracy*, what it says about *human rights/values*, we must offer a contribution, so one cannot push that - what we say about our values, about our interests, that what guides us – in the rest of the world as smoke and mirrors. (Merkel, 2016a)

Merkel links universal human rights not only with the moment “German openness”, but also with a responsibility or duty on the part of the refugees. She warns that refugees otherwise risk being sent out of the country:

We know since the *horrible events* on New Year’s Eve in Cologne that, in addition to *the integration of openness of the society* towards refugees, one also has to expect *refugees to be willing to adhere to our values* [...]. That’s why we, at the Federal Government, are thinking very intensively about what has happened in Cologne, where *so many young women* had to undergo horrible experiences, about what we may need to change [...]. It cannot be that *theft, insults towards women and sexual intimidation* occur dozens of times, while the *right for hospitality is still not forfeited*. (Merkel, 2016a)

In his UN speech on 28 September 2015, Putin often uses the floating signifier “common values” as a way to bridge the nodal points of Russia and the West. However, this signifier remains floating, as he does not clarify what these values exactly might be.

What we actually propose is to be guided by *common values and common interests rather than by ambitions*. Relying on *international law*, we must join efforts to address the problems that all of us are facing, and create a genuinely broad international coalition against terrorism. (Putin, 2015a)

Putin does the same quickly afterwards when he articulates the moment of “true humanist values” and attributes it to Islam. Here too, these values remain a floating signifier:

And of course, Muslim nations should play a key role in such a coalition, since Islamic State not only poses a direct threat to them, but also tarnishes one of the greatest world religions with its atrocities. The ideologues of these extremists make a mockery of Islam and subvert its *true humanist values*. (Putin, 2015a)

When Putin does articulate human rights, he uses it against the West and Europe. In this discourse, the West is constructed as an entity that intervenes in the Middle East in name of human rights, while causing chaos and the neglect of the first of human rights – the right to live:

Just look at the situation in the Middle East and Northern Africa [...]. Instead of bringing about reforms, aggressive intervention rashly destroyed government institutions and the local way of life. Instead of democracy and progress, there is now violence, poverty, social disasters and total disregard for *human rights, including even the right to life*. (Putin, 2015a)

At the Valdai Meeting on 22 October 2015, he speaks of another human right, free speech, and suggests that the West prevents Russia from speaking freely. By doing so, human rights become a floating signifier that he uses in an antagonistic discourse.

The authorities in countries that seemed to have always appealed to such values as freedom of speech and the free dissemination of information [...] are now trying to prevent the spreading of objective information and any opinion that differs from their own; they declare it hostile propaganda that needs to be combatted, clearly using undemocratic means. (Putin, 2015b)

Thus, universal human rights form a pivotal issue for all the three leaders in their sense-making of the European migrant crisis. Universal human rights are articulated by Merkel as a threatened nodal point. For her, this is the main concern of the European migrant crisis. Indeed, she articulates universal human rights as a solution to that same crisis. In Orbán and Putin's analysed texts, universal human rights are not constructed as a solution to the crisis, whereas international or European values form a floating signifier. For Putin, strengthening statehood and combatting terrorism in the Middle East are the solutions. For Orbán, the global question is of less importance. His main concerns are only of a local (that is national and European) nature and are somehow paradoxical: on the one hand, he wants to protect Hungarian sovereignty and its ethnic nationhood from EU policies that push for migrants and refugees to move to his country. On the other hand, he wants to protect Hungary and Europe's original cultural, Christian and ethnic composition through European cooperation (see 4.5 *Ethnicity, Culture, Christianity and Islam*).

4.4 Europe, Sovereignty and Nation-States

Whereas for Merkel, the real threat produced by the European migrant crisis is the destabilisation of universal human rights, for Orbán one of the threats is the undermining of national sovereignty through an EU-wide migration (quota) policy. Orbán does this either by asserting Hungary's wish to remain (ethnically) Hungarian or by constructing other countries' decision to take in people of other ethnic communities:

I personally believe in a *Europe* [...] which is a continuation of the one thousand-year tradition maintained by our parents, our grandparents and our great-grandparents [...]. I believe that we must respect *the decisions of countries which have already decided that they wish to live with large Muslim communities: the decisions of countries such as France or Germany*. We cannot criticise them – this was *their decision*. But *we, too, have the right to decide* whether we want to follow their example or not. (Orbán, 2015b)

In a speech on 23 September 2015, Orbán demonstrates that his discourse does not just attach “Europe of sovereign nation-states” to the nodal point “ethnic Europe”, but also to the nodal point “Christian Europe”. The Other, opposing Christian Europe, is constructed as “the left”:

I would like to make it clear that [*countries*] *have the right to desire this*. I believe that *every European nation state has the right to change according to their own free will*. They are also within their *rights to embrace large Muslim communities* and to conclude that they are not worried by the experience that we – *the European Christian cultural community* – have so far *been unable to integrate them*, and that therefore parallel societies are coming into being in a number of European countries, with declining Christian and increasing Muslim ratios. (Orbán, 2015e)

At the end of the speech, the Other is articulated as “Brussels” versus “Christian-cultural Europe”. Moreover, “Europe of sovereign nation-states” is once again linked to the “final debate” in this speech (as earlier mentioned on 9 September 2015; Orbán, 2015c). Finally, this speech's part reveals an articulation that connects “Christian and cultural Europe” with both “Europe of sovereign nation-states” and “Constitutional Hungary”:

And at the end of the day the question is *whether we in Hungary have the right to say that we do not want to change our cultural pattern at this speed*, and based on this logic. Is it *possible for us to not want this*, do we have *the right to not want*

this? [...There] are some – I believe from the *left* – who claim that this is not the right position, while from the *national* and *Christian* side we claim that they are wrong [...]. But the question is [...] whether Hungary has *the right to insist on what we ourselves want to decide*. This will then lead us on to the question of *whether any European nation state – including Hungary – has the right to decide* whom they will let into their countries, whom they wish to live together with, and whom they do not wish to be there. [...]. No one has authorised us to accept this; *the Hungarian people* did not entrust us with the task of generating or tolerating change in Hungary on such a scale. We were entrusted with the task of enforcing that which is laid down in the *Hungarian Constitution and in the laws of Hungary* [...]. This is our *own sovereign, national decision* [...]. This is a *Hungarian national duty, a constitutional duty*. *We Hungarians alone are able to decide* on this. This cannot be *dictated* from [...] the headquarters in *Brussels* (Orbán, 2015e).

At a meeting with Hungarian diplomats on 7 September 2015, Orbán's construction of an ethnically homogeneous Hungary and a multi-ethnic Western Europe is even taken further, by connecting the Other with the moment “the international liberal doctrine”. Here, he constructs a liberal Other that coincides with his 2014 construction of the “illiberal democracy” identity (as mentioned in 4.3 *Universal Human Rights and Europe*). The liberal-illiberal relationship could be interpreted as agonistic, for another nodal point in the discourse is the “single final debate”. This debate, which Orbán desires to conduct across the EU, divides ethnically homogeneous Hungary and multi-ethnic Western Europe in two opposing camps. As the emphasis shifts from “sovereignty” to “European final debate”, the identity construction of “Europe of sovereign nation-states” is becoming blurrier:

[T]he current debates about whether there should be quotas, whether one is allowed to build fences [...], will eventually be replaced by a *single final debate*. By this I do not want to say that the current issues are not important [...] The question is whether a country has the right to declare that it does not wish to change its own *ethnic-cultural composition* suddenly and dramatically as a result of external intervention. *Does a country have the right to say it does not want this?* Or do we have to subject ourselves to the *international liberal doctrine* (I

apologise for introducing ideology), which says that everyone is free to choose where they wish to live in the world? And that *those who already live somewhere do not have the right* to say whom they want to or do not want to live together with? (Orbán, 2015c)

It is important to note that “sovereignty” as a nodal point is not consistently linked to the nodal point “ethnic Hungary/Europe”. This is demonstrated in Orbán's speech on 3 October 2016, after the referendum outcome: “We tightened our regulations [...] and created new defence regulations [... Military and police personnel] protected the security of the people living there, *protected Hungary's constitutional order*, and *protected Hungary's sovereignty*” (Orbán, 2016d). In this speech, the EU is articulated as an Other that tends to move towards antagonism, more than in any European identity does in the other analysed texts of Orbán (indeed, in Orbán's analysed texts, European identities can be predominantly categorised as either the Self or the agonist). The EU becomes a direct threat against “Europe of sovereign nation-states”, “Europe of rule of law” and “democratic Europe”. Moreover, Brussels is articulated as having a “jaw of pincers”, while linked to the moments “revenge” and “blackmail”. Consequently, Orbán suggests some solutions while facing the Other's power, of which one is entering “into battle with Brussels” and the other one is to submit to the Brussels' “jaw of pincers”:

Hungary has, however, found itself caught between twin pincer jaws. A decision was made in Brussels to use a quota mechanism to distribute among the member states the illegal immigrants who have so far entered the European Union. This would even be enforced if the member states concerned do not agree to it [...]. This is the Brussels jaw of the pincers. [...]. What should Hungary do? Should it enter into battle with Brussels? Or should we resign ourselves to the fact that from now on we are not the ones who will decide on who we want to live together with and who we do not want to live together with? [... This] may have some unpleasant consequences – in the form of attacks against Hungary, for instance. At the same time, we can even expect revenge and blackmail from the Commission. (Orbán, 2016d)

In Orbán's TV interview on 4 March 2016, when negotiations were taking place that would eventually lead to the EU-Turkey agreement, sovereignty is constructed, not as an ultimate ideal, but as a necessity vis-à-vis the dysfunctional Other: “passive Europe”.

Through this articulation, Orbán indicates that, if Europe would be “active” and efficient in the crisis, there would be no need to talk about national sovereignty:

[T]he *European Union is passive. Hungary was the first nation-state to act autonomously*, and as a result *Hungary today is the best-protected country in the European Union*. And even those who waited much longer for a *European solution* than we did have finally embarked on the path of *independent action*, because it is *better to do something individually than to do nothing together*. (Orbán, 2016b)

At the end of that interview, the European Other moves slightly towards the direction of antagonism – once again, this happens because Orbán starts articulating his discourse around Brussels’ proposed migration quotas:

[T]heir intention will be to distribute millions of migrants across Europe on a legally binding basis [...]. It is against this that *we* are calling the citizens of Hungary to battle; it is this which *Hungary is rebelling against*, and it is this which *we* must stop. It is in response to this that I say that *we Hungarians* must stop *Brussels*. (Orbán, 2016b)

Orbán deploys a similar pattern of othering in another interview, on 8 April 2016, in the context of the EU-Turkey agreement. Here, he argues that the agreement can serve as a solution to “one problem” but not as the solution to the biggest problem: namely the fact that migrants and refugees have already entered the EU and are not leaving. The nodal point is national sovereignty, whereas all other notions are discursively articulated in relation to this nodal point:

The *agreement with the Turks* provides the *answer to one problem*: how to hold back the tide of people who are heading for Europe along the Western Balkan route. But it will *not solve the problem* that many of them are already here: one and a half million people, *whom it is planned to distribute across Europe* [...]. So the *Turkish agreement solved one problem from a vast pool of problems*, but left the rest unresolved. And *Brussels* now wants to *solve the other problems* with new regulations which are completely *contrary to the principle of national sovereignty*. (Orbán, 2016c)

Perhaps ironically, Merkel has a similar construction of the EU-Turkey agreement as just a temporary solution. In complete opposite to Orbán, however, the quota system

is constructed as the real solution, not the problem. This is evident in her speech on 24 September 2016, in Vienna:

For this it is necessary on the one hand to discuss with Turkey the last conditions which are not fulfilled yet. But it is also necessary, on the other hand, that Greece in particular enforces the necessary implementation of the one-to-one mechanism, thus the return of illegally arriving migrants. There are capacity problems here. (Merkel, 2016b)

Note, however, that this speech fits better to Merkel's recent discursive shift, after the Cologne assaults. Indeed, the need to stop illegal migration has finally become a dominant moment in her discourse:

I think that we will do justice to the common European responsibility that we expect *to stop illegal migration and fulfil our humanitarian mission*. That means tackling the root causes of flight, giving refugees residence opportunities, especially near their homes, and then, as we did with the *EU-Turkey Agreement*, providing voluntary, sustainable solutions to the problem of illegal migration Set up quotas (Merkel, 2016b).

A similar discourse is dominant in Merkel's joint press conference with the Maltese prime minister Joseph Muscat, on 29 November 2016. Meanwhile, she articulates the EU-Turkey agreement as an agreement of mutual interests, and not just one that serves the EU:

This agreement is of mutual interest. It is not just good for us in the European Union. It is also good for Turkey, in my opinion. Illegal, mafia structures where tugs work off the shores of their own land are never a good thing. (Merkel, 2016c)

For Putin, sovereignty takes yet another position. Although his articulation of sovereignty is not very different from Orbán's, its position as a nodal point is more central in Putin's discourse. Putin considers the chaos in the Middle East, including the resulting spread of global terrorism, to be the major trigger of the European migrant crisis. To solve this, he argues, it is necessary to restore statehood in the Middle East by following "international law", i.e. national sovereignty:

There are hundreds of thousands of them now, and before long, there might be millions. It is, essentially, a new, tragic Migration Period, and a harsh lesson for all of us, including Europe [...]. However, the only way to solve this problem for

good is to restore *statehood* where it has been destroyed, to *strengthen government institutions* where they still exist, or are being re-established [...]. Of course, *any assistance to sovereign nations can, and should*, be offered rather than imposed, *in strict compliance with the UN Charter*. In other words, our Organisation should support any measures that have been, or will be, taken in this regard *in accordance with international law*, and reject any actions that *are in breach of the UN Charter*. (Putin, 2015a)

In the same speech, Putin connects sovereignty as a nodal point, with the moment “freedom” and, by doing so, makes the moments “state” and “person” almost synonymous, thus basically anthropomorphising nation-states:

What is the *meaning of state sovereignty*, the term which has been mentioned by our colleagues here? It basically means *freedom, every person and every state being free to choose their future* [...]. We are all different, and we should respect that. *Nations shouldn't be forced* to all conform to the same development model that somebody has declared the only appropriate one. (Putin, 2015a)

He continues this discourse in his joint news conference with Orbán, more than a year later. After Orbán has constructed a Christian European identity, Putin thereafter argues that he and the Russian people express sympathy for Orbán's desire to protect this identity. Putin continues as follows:

If you allow, I will talk about our position and add a couple words. The reason for today's problem with migrants lies in the destabilisation of *states* and whole regions of the world – North Africa, Afghanistan and other nations. And in order to resolve the migration problem, we need to eliminate the root cause of this – we need *to restore statehood*, the economy and the social sphere in these states, so that people can live in *their own nation* or return home [...]. But to do this, we need, first and foremost, to eliminate *terrorists*. (Orbán & Putin, 2016; in this case only Putin is cited)

When one compares Putin's dominant articulation of “terrorism” in connection with “national sovereignty” with Orbán's articulation of “terrorism”, one sees a stark difference. In Orbán's discourse, “terrorism” is not constructed as a moment connected to the nodal point “national sovereignty”. Quite the opposite, “terrorism” is connected to “European integration”:

First of all, we must lay down the number one law, which is more important than anything else. And this is that if anyone has information on the possibility that a *terrorist attack* may occur on the territory of any member state, *they must inform the country* concerned immediately and without delay [... Despite] the difficulties, the nature of this discipline means that *we will need a coordination or consultation scheme*, and the *future sharing of information within a trust-based mechanism*. (Orbán, 2016c)

This construction of terrorism being connected to European cooperation is further strengthened at the end of the same interview, when Orbán strengthens pan-European identity by articulating the March 2016 terrorist attacks in Brussels as an attack on the whole of Europe:

Well, this is a difficult thing, because no acts of terrorism have occurred in Hungary. But Hungary is part of the EU and the terrorist attacks in Brussels were in fact aimed against the EU – as Brussels is the heart, the very centre of the European Union. And in this sense, they were also aimed against us. But here there is no immediate sense of threat, as there is in Paris or Brussels (Orbán, 2016c).

In the Valdai meeting's speech on 22 October 2015, Putin articulates a similar discourse. Here, it becomes more evident how closely he intertwines “sovereignty” and “the rule of law”. Moreover, he implicitly others the West as disregarding this virtue of sovereignty, i.e. the rule of law:

All *states* have always had and will continue to have their *own diverse interests*, while the course of world history has always been accompanied by competition between nations and their alliances. In my view, this is absolutely natural. The main thing is to ensure that this competition develops within the framework of *fixed political, legal and moral norms and rules* [...]. Attempts to promote a model of unilateral domination, as I have said on numerous occasions, have led to an imbalance in the system of international law and global regulation, which means there is a threat, and political, economic or military competition may get out of control. (Putin, 2015b)

This marks a great difference between his discourse and Merkel's, as Merkel connects "the rule of law" with the nodal point "universal human rights" – not with the nodal point "sovereignty".

Interestingly, Merkel barely speaks of "sovereignty" at all in the analysed texts. Aside from a passage in a Q&A session that took place after Merkel's summer press conference speech in 2015, there is no mention of this notion in either of the analysed texts. The typical rhetorical practice that is visible in Orbán's discourses is absent: Merkel does not argue to follow German interests only. Instead, she articulates Germany's responsibilities towards Europe and the world (again, relating responsibilities to the nodal point "universal human rights"). These German responsibilities, she argues, should be followed because Germany had regained its sovereignty after its post-Cold War reunification:

We have a great responsibility, we are the largest economy in the European Union. What is certainly true 25 years after German unification: the fact that we have achieved full sovereignty through German unity has consequences in a good sense, but also in the sense of assuming responsibility. (Merkel, 2015a)

4.5 Ethnicity, Culture, Christianity and Islam

As already underlined, ethnicity is one of the main constituents of Orbán's articulation of the (Hungarian) nation-state. Also, he argues that (cultural) Christianity is part of the Hungarian past and is a virtue that should be defended in the future. In this section, it is demonstrated that ethnicity and Christianity are nodal points in yet another construction within Orbán's discourse, namely that of a "Christian and ethnic Europe". As seen in *4.1 A Shifting Us*, Orbán argues that not only Hungary's sovereignty, but European identity is being threatened by migrants ("we Hungarians would like to keep *Europe for the Europeans*"; Orbán, 2015a). Later in the speech, he links this to "Christian and ethnic Europe": "We Hungarians want to decide ourselves on whether we want immigrants [...]. We are a *Christian and national government*" (Orbán, 2015a). The ethnic part is even more emphasised in his September interview, as shown in the previous section (e.g. "I personally believe in a *Europe [...] which is a continuation of the one thousand-year tradition maintained by our parents [...]*"; Orbán, 2015b).

It is worthy to once again go back to Orbán's speech at the meeting with Hungarian diplomats when he introduces his idea of moving towards a pan-European final debate, which brings to the fore the question: What Europe do we want? His answer to this debate is straightforward: Orbán and his self-constructed “Hungarian people” want a Christian and ethnically nativist Europe.

Speaking in specific terms, [...] will eventually be replaced by a single final debate [...]. The question is whether a country has the right to declare that it does not wish *to change its own ethnic-cultural composition suddenly and dramatically* as a result of external intervention [...]. This will be the very end of the debate. (Orbán, 2015c)

By including Christianity in European identity, one may wonder whether Orbán’s “Europe” should not be more open towards refugees. Indeed, Orbán himself constructs Christian Hungary by connecting it with the moment “mercy”. The point here, however, is that Orbán’s construction of “genuine refugees” is a floating signifier: “We are a *Christian and national government*, we have *mercy in our hearts*, and we have always sheltered refugees – *genuine refugees* – and shall continue to do so in the future” (Orbán, 2015e). At another point in that same speech, he does articulate what a refugee indicates in his discourse, resulting in a construction in which almost none of the self-declared refugees in the EU can truly be labelled as such:

[The] *international refugee conventions that we are a party to* state in absolutely clear terms that refugees may not freely choose which country they wish to escape to [...]. As regards genuine refugees who are indeed fleeing degradation or a threat to their lives, the world does provide safe shelter for them. But a refugee cannot say that they want to be a refugee in Germany, or in Macedonia – or in Hungary, for that matter. (Orbán, 2015e).

Islam, in Orbán’s discourse, is constructed as an antagonistic Other threatening European Christendom. However, following his sovereignty discourse, Orbán regularly attempts to construct this Other as agonistic. In this case, Islam is connected to predominantly Islamic nation-states with which he wants Hungary to have good relationships. Here, he constructs Western (and liberal) Europe as the actual anti-Islamic entity:

Hungary will *not take an anti-Islamic stance*. We look *upon Islam as an intellectual and spiritual structure which has great merits*, and which created

entire civilisations over a considerable part of the world. We do not live in those civilisations, we live in the *Christian* civilisation, but we nonetheless recognise them. In those areas there are civilisations, instead of barbarism. Consequently, we do not wish to engage, and the Hungarian government does not wish to become entangled, in debates about the *nature of Islam*, and other issues which have permeated *Western European politics* and which, I believe, poison the atmosphere and in no way serve the cause of co-existence. (Orbán, 2016d)

In an interview on 17 February 2015, Orbán constructs this semi-agonistic relationship with Islam by using the nodal point “Christian and ethnic Europe” rather than “sovereignty”. Here, he constructs Islamic civilisation as a source of spiritual inspiration for European Christians and “secular and liberal Europe” as the Other. Following his argumentation, secular and liberal Europe has created the European migrant crisis in the first place and has weakened Christendom in Europe to such an extent, that Islam became a threat or even a “competition”.

It is a *liberal dream* [...] to believe that *European values* are so attractive to others that *they* cannot wait to seize the opportunity to transform their own personal and family lives, and to live like we do. *They do not want to live like we do, because they hold different views on the world, they think differently about the place they occupy in the world, about how they relate with God, other people, and the economic system.* Therefore, parallel societies come into being, and from then on sheer mathematics comes in to play, and because they have higher birth rates, are more family-centred, and in some respects lead more spiritual lives than we do, they are more competitive. And Europe is what it is. If we *allow a competition to evolve between two civilisations here, in Europe, we Christians will lose* [...]. We can *only keep the continent as it is* by not letting everyone in, and *not allowing a competition of this kind* to start. (Orbán, 2015d)

Putin certainly sympathises with this discourse – he says so literally in a joint conference with Orbán. Before Orbán articulates Christian-cultural discourse (“The second issue Europe is discussing now is whether or not it is a value that *Europe is home to nations with their own national identity* and with common *Christian and democratic roots and values that we want to preserve*”), Putin says: “*Our people has sympathy* for the position taken by the Hungarian government and Prime Minister, *the desire to defend European*

identity and Hungary's national identity" (Orbán & Putin, 2016). However, it is important to underline that Putin envisions a different identity for Russia. This is demonstrated in Putin's speech at the Valdai meeting on 22 October 2015: *Christian culture* lies at the foundation of *our unity*, but we also have an advantage in that nearly 20% of our population is *Muslim*, and in this respect, we can be a link between many of our partners and the *Islamic world*. (Putin, 2015b)

From the perspective of Putin's identity building, which attempts to discursively include "Islam" as a moment closely attached to "Russia", Putin's agonistic discourse on Islam becomes clearer when he talks about Islamist terrorism in his UN speech. First here: "The so-called *Islamic State* has tens of thousands of militants fighting for it [...]". Then here: "*Islamic State* [...] tarnishes *one of the greatest world religions*". Finally, Putin invites "Muslim spiritual leaders" to join the fight against terrorism: "I would also like to address *Muslim spiritual leaders*: Your authority and your guidance are of great importance right now (Putin, 2015a).

Interestingly, Merkel does not articulate the moment "Christianity" in her sampled texts, except once in a Q&A session in her summer press conference in 2015. This is significant, as Merkel's humanist policy during the European migrant crisis has often been coined as a typical product of Christian values (Müller, 2016, Prange, 2017). The following passage confirms an already widely analysed discourse of Merkel's, which underlines her tendency to connect moments to the nodal point "Europe of universal human rights" within the context of the European migrant crisis:

I believe that *our values in Europe are based on the dignity of each individual*. It grieves me when people say: "We do not want Muslims; we are a Christian country." Maybe someone says tomorrow: "Even Christianity is no longer so important, we don't want any religion." That cannot be right. (Merkel, 2015a)

4.6 A Democratic Europe

Orbán constructs democracy predominantly as the will of the people, more specifically, of the majority of the people. Moreover, it is intertwined with "sovereign Hungary". Often, this results in "Hungarians" being constructed as a homogeneous entity as opposed to a multicultural one. As explained already in the previous section, this way Orbán constructs Hungarian people and European people as often synonymous (e.g.

“...*Hungarians* would like to keep *Europe for the Europeans*...”; Orbán, 2015a). It is also clear that Orbán’s other nodal point, “Europe of rule of law”, is subordinated to the nodal point “democratic Europe”. Indeed, as earlier mentioned in section 4.2, that outlines the nodal point “Europe of rule of law”, Orbán explicitly argues in his EP speech that the EU’s rules and principles “are not carved in stone” and that people may, therefore “change them at any time” in the name of “freedom” and “democracy” (Orbán, 2015a).

In this discourse, the Other, challenging the European people, is the European political elite:

We cannot have a situation in which the *European elite and European governments speak, think and act in opposition to the wishes of the people who have elected them*. In a *democracy* this tension cannot be sustained for long. We must *serve the people, and the people are worried* – they are filled with fears [...]. *People are worried and concerned – not only in Hungary, but in the whole of Europe*” (Orbán, 2015b).

In an interview on 17 September 2015, the elite is constructed as clearly agonistic, likely to move to Orbán’s side when the results of the European migrant crisis are becoming more evident:

Judging by the swift changes in the positions of governments which we are observing in Western Europe today, above all I would conclude that Europe is, after all, a land of democracy; Europe is a democratic political world. You cannot go against the will of the people here for long, and without genuine arguments. (Orbán, 2015d)

In Orbán’s speech on 24 February 2016, after the government had called a referendum on the EU’s resettlement quotas, Orbán articulates the EU as a moment that comes the closest to antagonistic of all his European Others in the analysed texts. Importantly, when this EU-Other threatens “democratic Europe” or “ethnic-Christian Europe”, Us is focused on Europeans, whereas when “Europe of sovereign nation-states” is threatened, Us shifts to Hungarians:

The Government believes that *democracy is one of Europe’s core values*, and the *European Union is also based on the foundations of democracy*. This means that we may not adopt decisions [...] over the heads of *the people*, and against *the will of the European people* [...]. The *Hungarian government* takes the view that

neither the *EU, nor Brussels, nor the leaders of Europe* have the authority to do this [...]. *We Hungarians* believe [...] that introducing compulsory resettlement quotes *without the consent of the people* is nothing less than the abuse of power. (Orbán, 2016a)

The EU as the Other continues to be articulated as anti-democratic and anti-sovereign in the speech after the referendum outcome: “The question is whether *Brussels – the democratic community of European States* – can get away with imposing its will upon a member state in opposition to more than ninety per cent of those who voted in a referendum” (Orbán, 2016d).

During the EU-Turkey talks and the aftermath of the resulting agreement, Orbán articulates a similar discourse. In an interview on 4 March 2016, the division between “democratic Europe” and the liberal Other is becoming more explicit. Not anywhere else in the analysed texts, Orbán is this close to articulating his 2014 notion of illiberal democracy, as a more democratic version of Western-style liberal democracy. Note that this time “democratic Europe” is as nodal point once again intertwined with Orbán’s other nodal point, “ethnic-cultural Europe”:

Can a refugee policy be right if it is contrary to the will of the people? Is it possible to change the future, the demographic composition, public security and cultural fabric of a people in the name of some abstract, higher ideal against the people’s will? This is where liberalism and democracy, the liberal and democratic ways of thinking clash. Liberals believe that of course it is possible [...]. There are democrats – and we Hungarians belong to this camp – who say that naturally debates like this may emerge, but that on fundamental issues, which determine the very fate of a people, it is irrelevant what we think; what is relevant is what the people think [...]. This is where the liberal mentality and the democratic mentality clash. Hungary clearly belongs to the camp of democrats, the camp of democratically minded peoples. (Orbán, 2016b)

Whereas Orbán’s construction of “democratic Europe” is closely intertwined with a homogeneous people and national sovereignty, Merkel constructs “democratic Europe” as an identity that predominantly serves as a moment related to the central nodal point “Europe of universal human rights”. As quoted in *4.2 Rule of Law, Law and Order and Constitution in Europe*, Merkel does this visibly in her 2016 New Year’s speech (e.g.

“...our democracy, what it says about *human rights/values*...”; Merkel, 2016a). She underscores this point in a joint conference with then French president François Hollande, now constructing populists as the antagonistic Other of “democratic Europe”:

If *Europe* is called into question, *values* and *democracy* will also be called into question. [You/You all] can suffer from this. Those who want to *destroy Europe* do not want to *strengthen democracy*. Nor do they want to implement the *values* we stand for on *our continent*, in *our two nations* [France and Germany]. The populists fight against Europe because the populists are against a *value system* and a social system. (Merkel, 2016d)

Finally, Putin either constructs democracy implicitly as a synonym of national sovereignty (see 4.4 *Europe, Sovereignty and Nation-States*) or as something that is threatened by Western interference (see 4.3 *Universal Human Rights and Europe*).

4.7 20th-Century History and Europe: Fascism, Communism and War

In Orbán's discourse, Europe's dark 20th-century history mostly refers to communism. It is once used to antagonistically construct refugees and migrants as occupiers and potential communists (“*They could occupy Hungary – something not unprecedented in our history – or they could introduce communism*”; Orbán, 2015b). But in general, it refers, along with the World Wars and economic crises, to Hungary's experience with occupation and events that have taken place against the people's will:

[The] people of Europe should have the self-confidence to say (in Hungary for example) that the source of what we have is hard work. We have *worked harder than many European nations* for our standard of living, and it was not easy. We have had everything here: *world wars, communism, the defeat of communism, economic crisis*. So, what we have here today is not something we took from someone else, and it is not something that was gifted to us; it is something we have worked hard for (Orbán, 2015d).

Merkel most of the time refers to the Second World War in this context. By doing so, she strengthens Germany's and Europe's universal human rights identity as a response to what happened during the Nazi regime. WWII is positioned as a moment that one could coin as a *Stunde Null* (“zero hour”) from which Europe and Germany cut its ties with xenophobia and embraced the universal values of human rights. This happens throughout

the analysed texts implicitly, therefore it is necessary to introduce one other source that takes place outside the timeline, namely in Merkel's speech on 4 July 2018. Here, she argues that the promise of Europe for refugees and migrants is intertwined with Germany and Europe's identity, by intertwining this identity with World War II memory: "It is about our future, about *Germany's* future, about the future of *Europe*. It is about the future of Germany and Europe as agents in the world [...]. *Europe* has been a *promise of peace and a promise of prosperity since its inception and with World War II in mind*. Fortunately, the European Union has been able to keep this peace pledge to this day, and of course we are doing everything *we* can to keep it that way" (Merkel, 2018).

Putin's construction in the context of modern European history is the most complicated one. Sometimes, he constructs the Soviet Union as a positive actor, that helps him articulate Russia and the West as agonistic nodal points with shared interests (the battle on Nazism and terrorism) and shared values (that remain floating signifiers). As shown in *4.1 A Shifting Us*, Putin constructs the "principles defining interaction between states", rooted in the UN Charter, as a result of "the *anti-Hitler coalition*" – created in "our country" (Putin, 2015a). He similarly articulates this in another speech that year:

Periods of peace in both European and world history were always been based on securing and maintaining the existing balance of forces. This happened [...] *70 years ago in Yalta*, when the victors over *Nazism* made the decision to set up the United Nations Organisation and lay down the principles of relations between states. (Putin, 2015b)

On other points, he uses the Soviet Union as a historical warning. Two examples can be found in the analysed texts. One example would be the need for the West to learn from the Soviet Union's mistake to export ideology (in this case, democracy) to different nation-states that do not embrace its ideals, and as a result, will fall into instability that threatens basic human rights (Putin, 2015a; see *4.1 A Shifting Us*). A second example would be the potential mistake to establish a federal, supranational system like the USSR that neglects national sovereignty. Here, Putin criticises the EU:

Today, the number of binding decisions on EU member countries, decisions passed by the European Parliament, is more than the number of decisions passed by the *USSR Supreme Soviet that were mandatory for the Soviet republics*. This is a fairly high degree of centralisation. (Putin, 2016c)

Indeed, in both examples, the memory of the Soviet Union is used to defend sovereignty of the nation-state.

If one is to apply Bottici and Challand's theory (2013), this section can be re-interpreted by defining it, not only as attempts to construct European identity but as attempts to construct European political myths. In line with Bottici and Challand, these myths are then understood as revolving around a common past and a common blueprint for the future, which in turn allows these politicians to articulate how Europeans should act in the present. Consequently, these myths are understood to be constructed in the realms of the respective nation-states, as is argued by Malmberg and Stråth (2002) as well as Hansen and Wæver (2002) to be the predominant space in which European identities and myths are constructed.

First, Orbán's Christian-ethnic and illiberal Europe is rooted in a memory construction of foreign occupation, and a subsequent democratic uprising that revolves around national sovereignty and a people's will to keep out alien forces. This past particularly underlines Hungary and Central Europe's memory, but Orbán argues that this memory serves as a warning for all of Europe. Second, by doing so, Orbán's blueprint for Europe and Hungary's common future should centre around creating a European community that is founded on its ethnically, religiously and culturally defined roots, as well as on an illiberal democratic model that chiefly derives its legitimacy from national sovereignty. Third, by arguing this, Orbán indicates that universal human rights may still be considered as important values (although he does not define sufficiently what these values entail) but should not be the binding force of the European community. Orbán's blueprint seems on the surface a paradoxical one. After all, how can Europe be built, on the one hand, on Christian-ethnic, nativist and illiberal values, and, on the other hand, on the mutual willingness of nation-states to adopt different policies towards non-Christian and non-white (i.e. non-European) immigrants? However, when looking closely, Orbán explains recurrently why such a blueprint is not paradoxical. In Orbán's discourse, the European people are constructed as essentially having the same interests and demands as the Hungarian people. It is because of the Hungarian people's exceptional straightforwardness and historical experience (a memory that is even more intertwined with foreign occupation than most other Europeans) that Hungarians have embraced this

European blueprint earlier than other Europeans. In Orbán's discourse, it is only a matter of time that other Europeans will join Hungary's political camp.

Merkel's liberal Europe of universal human rights is, firstly, rooted in a memory construction that places the end of World War II as the starting point of a newly established society that is no longer built on nationalism, intolerance and xenophobia, but on human rights universalism, tolerance and openness. This past particularly fits Germany's memory as a fascist dictatorship that has undergone its democratisation in the shadow of the defeat of Nazism. But Merkel constructs this memory as a crucial point of reference for all European democracies, including the EU. Secondly, based on this memory-construction, Merkel's blueprint for Germany and Europe's common future is centred around maintaining a European community that is rooted in universal human rights and liberal democracy. In Merkel's discourse, there is no regard for an ethnic dimension of Europe – in fact, ethnic identity, be it German or European, embodies the antagonistic Other of Merkel's liberal Europe of universal human rights. Allowing an ethnic discourse to penetrate the German state or European Union would not only be a problem but the very end of Europe. Thirdly, Merkel's discourse allows her to offer the following solution for the European migrant crisis: although European external borders may, to some extent, be protected against illegal migrants, one is not to bargain about Europe's responsibility towards refugees. Not only Germany, but the entire EU is responsible to offer a safe and dignified place for refugees so that Europe meets the necessary demands to protect the universal human rights of all people – not just EU citizens.

Putin's Europe of sovereign nation-states is rooted in a memory construction that underlines the joint forces of Western nation-states and Russia (i.e. the USSR) in defeating Nazism. By doing so, they jointly managed to establish a new world order, which is rooted in the UN's shared legal framework and common values. These values are, in Putin's construction, mainly related to national sovereignty. Putin's memory-construction refers occasionally to the Soviet Union's mistake to not always respect national sovereignty. The lack of respect was manifest in building a supranational federation and in disregarding the national sovereignty of other countries when it aspired to spread its state-ideology. Thus, secondly, Putin's blueprint allows him to construct a discourse in which Europe and the West are not only disregarding national sovereignty

in the world (by exporting their own values worldwide, pushing the world into chaos) but are also disregarding national sovereignty within Europe (by turning the EU into something that increasingly acts like the USSR).

4.8 Results of the Discourse Analysis

This section brings together the three constructions of Europe – Orbán’s Europe, Merkel’s Europe and Putin’s Europe – by offering general observations on the basis of the detailed analysis undertaken in the thematic sections.

Orbán's Europe is first and foremost built on three different European identities that serve as the pivotal nodal points for the encompassing European identity: “Democratic Europe”, “Europe of sovereign nation-states” and “Christian-ethnic Europe”. These three nodal points have a lot in common. They all pave the way for Orbán to construct “us Hungarians” as a (culturally and ethnically) monolithic entity of which he is the democratic and sovereign representative. In this discourse, the EU is sometimes constructed as a hypocritical and disingenuous Other that, at a few points, even tends to come close to antagonistic. In most cases, however, Orbán constructs an “us Europeans” in which the EU is included as part of the Self. The shifting of othering happens often, not only between texts but within. This shifting is most obvious when Orbán constructs a common European solution against the crisis (strengthening the borders against non-European migrants) together with an ethnically constructed nativist European Self, whereas European countries and the EU are othered from Hungary when Orbán mentions the disagreement across the EU on how to solve the crisis.

The separate constructions of these Europes, however, underline some discursive differences within Orbán’s texts. While “Democratic Europe” is often constructed to agonise the European political elite (a disenchanted elite that eventually has no choice but to take Orbán’s side), in other cases the nodal point “democracy” is highly intertwined with “national sovereignty”. In this case, “Europe of sovereign nation-states” postulates a more ambiguous relationship between European identity and the Hungarian Self. “Hungarian interests” and “European interests” are no longer synonyms, and sovereignty is used as an articulation to establish an agonistic relationship between European countries: it is articulated to underline differences, not similarities. Consequently, precisely the agonistic acceptance of national differences is what makes Europe

democratic. This allows Orbán to construct an Other: the EU and liberal Europe. At some points, this Other tends to take antagonistic forms, but only because Orbán constructs this Other as not willing to accept Orbán's right to present his version of Europe and Hungary. In most cases, Orbán uses identity of sovereignty as a way to agonise the Other, which is most explicitly expressed in his notion of a “single final debate”: a blueprint for a pan-European debate on what stance the EU should take on national sovereignty, multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity.

The two concepts of national sovereignty and democracy demonstrate how dominant the nodal point “Christian-ethnic Europe” is in Orbán's discourse: a European identity that intertwines white ethnicity and Christian culture, based on a mythical idea of a native European people. All these above-mentioned constructions of European identity are embedded in Orbán's overarching construction of European, but particularly Central-European and Hungarian history. This is a history of hard-working peoples who have been victims of foreign occupation. By using this historical construction, Orbán strengthens his arguments for the need for a sovereign, ethnic-cultural and democratic Hungary to stop foreigners from both “occupying” the country and “taking” everything that Hungarians have worked hard for.

Consequently, Orbán rarely articulates “universal human rights”, but when he does, they are either floating or form a subordinated moment that underlines the privileged position of the nodal points “Democratic Europe” (hence, indicating that the people's will stands above human right values) and “Europe of sovereign nation-states” (hence, indicating that human rights are not as universal as they seem). This construction echoes Orbán's notion of “illiberal democracy”.

To a lesser extent, it is also composed by “rule of law Europe”, which provides a more ambivalent discourse in which the EU and EU member states (particularly Greece) are constructed as potential threats against both the Hungarian and European rule of law. In this context, the Schengen agreement and border protection are the dominant themes. Indeed, they refer to the fact that closing the border for non-European migrants and refugees is set as Orbán's top priority in combatting the migrant crisis.

However, “the rule of law” is still subordinated to those aforementioned three nodal points: “democratic Europe”, “Europe of sovereign nation-states” and “Christian-ethnic Europe”. Rules are, in the end, “not carved in stone”, as Orbán already argues from

the very first speech onwards. They are, in other words, always subject to the European and Hungarian people's will. From February 2016 onwards, when Orbán has announced a referendum against the EU's proposed quota system, the construction of "the rule of law Europe" becomes absent. Indeed, the need to mobilise Hungarians against EU-based regulations means that the EU's legal framework no longer serves as a discursive field from which Orbán can construct arguments in favour of his European identity and his proposed solutions against the crisis.

Although Orbán attempts at some point in his discourse to turn the antagonistic Islamic Other into an agonistic Other, he is unsuccessful. This can be concluded because, although he articulates Islam as an inspiring religion for Christianity that should be respected outside of Europe, he continues to insist that Muslims do not have a place in Hungary nor Europe. Indeed, the construction of this Other remains quintessentially antagonistic: it has no right to co-exist with the Self (native Europeans). Hence, Orbán's antagonistic construction of Islam reveals a stark difference with Putin's. While Putin explicitly sympathises with Orbán's construction of "Christian Europe", he is careful in including Russia as part of that "Europe". Instead, Putin constructs Russian identity by closely intertwining it with "Islam". Indeed, Putin's agonisation of the Islamic community plays a central part in his constructed solutions for the European migrant crisis. From this perspective, only by including the Islamic community and its spiritual leaders, terrorism in the Middle East, hence the resulting European migrant crisis, can be stopped.

Differently from Orbán's construction of a Hungarian Us, Merkel's "us Germans" and "us Europeans" is not monolithic. "We Germans" and "we Europeans" emerge, in their current state, as morally good communities linked to universal human rights and liberal-democratic values. But the Us, whether European or German, can also be morally bad, linked to xenophobia, intolerance and the World War II past. This "bad Europe" and "bad Germany" are constructed as antagonistic Others but simultaneously are positioned particularly close to the Self. Merkel, thus, constructs a constant threat that the Self may turn into the Other (Merkel, 2015a; 2015b; 2018). Only immediately after the Cologne assaults, was the construction of the Self rendered unambiguous: "us Germans" versus "they refugees and migrants" (Merkel, 2016a).

The fact that the Self and Other are more closely intertwined with one another in Merkel's discourse than in Orbán's, does not mean that Merkel's Self-Other construction tends to be more agonistic. Quite the opposite. Orbán's European Other is most of the time agonistic (allowing sovereign nation-states to construct fundamentally different values than Hungary and insisting that they should join a "final debate" on Europe's future). Merkel's illiberal and xenophobic European Other is strongly antagonistic; it continues to be articulated as a threat to Merkel's construction of "us Europeans" and "us Germans".

While Orbán's construction of "rule of law Europe" is subordinated by "Democratic Europe", Merkel's articulation of "the rule of law" is predominantly a moment attached to the nodal point "universal human rights", which she embeds in her construction of European history – one that emphasises the horrors of World War II and the resulting rebuilding of Europe and Germany as a humanist, tolerant and liberal-democratic society. Indeed, while Orbán's construction of European history allows him to argue against ethnically and religiously non-Europeans (he constructs them as "occupiers"), Merkel's construction allows her to place Europe and Germany's responsibilities towards refugees in a historical post-World War II context.

Compared to Putin and Orbán, Merkel's construction of the dominant nodal point "Europe of universal human rights" is connected with a high density of moments. She links them to constitutional laws of Germany and to the foundation of the EU. By doing so, Merkel's solution to the crisis - the fair distribution of refugees across EU member states - is articulated as a fundamental responsibility for the entire EU. Without following this responsibility, the EU and European identity as a whole become meaningless. Indeed, "Europe of universal human rights" is not only the most pivotal nodal point in her discourse but also the most threatened one. The threatening force, in this context, is the antagonistic, xenophobic and illiberal Other. Again, Merkel's New Year's speech, after the series of assaults that took place in Cologne, forms the exception among the analysed texts. Refugees, in this speech, are for the first (and last) time articulated as not only potential victims of the violation of human rights but also as potential violators.

Coming from a Christian-democratic background, it is significant that Merkel rarely articulates Christianity or Europe's Christian identity. When she does, she relates it to "Europe of universal human rights". In this construction, she argues that the

antagonistic and xenophobic Other is not only a threat against Muslims but Christians too.

Putin's Us is mostly shifting between “us Russians” and “us global leaders”. Consequently, Russia's relation to Europe and the West is othered, but not necessarily antagonistically. His antagonism is mainly articulated as a reaction to the West's antagonistic attitude towards Russia. The Russian Self, then, becomes an identity that is constantly seeking for an agonistic relationship with the West. This agonism is sometimes historical, by articulating “Nazism” as the shared antagonistic Other, while it simultaneously allows Putin to synonymise the Nazi Other with the present-based terrorist Other. In Putin's discourse, only the West's reluctance towards Russia is keeping the relationship antagonistic. Terrorism and the unwillingness of the West to cooperate with Russia, then, become the two nodal points that are causing the European migrant crisis. Putin's solution to the European migrant crisis is therefore fundamentally different from Orbán and Merkel's solutions, as Putin's are geopolitical in nature.

Although Putin rarely constructs “us Europeans” explicitly, he does construct European identity. Putin's Europe is often othered as antagonistic when he articulates “the rule of law”. In this construction, the selfish and dictating Western Other is a threat against international law and the UN, causing terrorist activity that has now penetrated both the EU and Russia.

But the central nodal point in Putin's discursive construction of Europe is “state sovereignty”. Although Merkel differs most from this practice (she rarely articulates sovereignty at all), even Orbán's construction of “sovereignty” is not as dominant. In Orbán's discourse, “the rule of law” still, at some points, is discursively subordinating “sovereignty” (particularly when he refers to shared EU responsibilities on the EU's external border). But in Putin's discourse, it becomes evident that all legitimacy, even international law and the UN, are rooted in the ideal of sovereignty. Even Putin's articulation of universal human rights, or the lack thereof, underlines the central position of the nodal point “national sovereignty”. Universal human rights are predominantly a floating signifier in Putin's discourse, like in Orbán's. Even when he attempts to connect “Europe” and “Russia” with the moment “common values”, he does not attempt to define these values except for linking them, once again, with “national sovereignty”. Putin goes

even as far as to articulate “freedom” as synonymous to national sovereignty, hence basically anthropomorphising nation-states.

The central position of Putin's nodal point “national sovereignty”, underlines his construction of European modern history, which is most visible in his articulation of the Soviet Union. This is an ambiguous discourse, but one in which sovereignty always plays a central role. Sometimes, the USSR is constructed as a fundamentally positive actor, an agonistic force for Europe and the West in their joint task to defeat the antagonistic Nazi Other. In the same way, he argues, the EU and Russia share the common task to defeat terrorism today, by restoring statehood (i.e. national sovereignty) in the Middle East. On other occasions, however, the USSR is constructed as a warning for Europe. In both cases exemplified in this analysis, the Soviet Union serves as a warning to underline the importance of national sovereignty: either the USSR and the West made the mistake to violate the sovereignty of Middle Eastern states, or the USSR serves as a warning to not turn European sovereign nation-states into a supranational federation.

All three actors construct European identity by connecting it with specific sets of solidarities and responsibilities. The differences between the three Europes could be summarised in the following way. Orbán's Europe is embedded in a cultural-ethnic and Christian understanding of European identity, that underlines the need to protect white and Christian Europeans against aliens (e.g. non-white and non-Christian refugees and migrants) while downplaying the importance of universal human rights. Democratic and other political rights are there, first and foremost, for native Europeans. Other visions of Europe, like Merkel's, are generally understood as agonistic: they are accepted as visions that have the right to co-exist in Europe, but they are essentially part of an elitist liberal doctrine that is doomed to lose Europe's battle of ideas, as they are not in the interests of the European people.

Merkel's Europe, in turn, is rooted in a liberal-democratic and humanist understanding of European identity, which emphasises the need to protect both Europeans and non-Europeans (e.g. non-European refugees and migrants) against the violation of universal human rights. The ethnic dimension of the European community does not exist in this discourse and arguing in favour of this dimension is even strongly antagonised. Visions of Europe that are fundamentally questioning Merkel's human rights-based Europe, like Orbán's, are a direct threat to Europe and, essentially, should not be allowed

to exist. Indeed, aside from Orbán and Merkel's radically different contents of European identity and proposed solutions against the migrant crisis, the difference of othering is visible too.

Finally, Putin's Europe is essentially based on the idea of national sovereignty. Only when Russia's sovereign interests are respected, only when the EU respects Russia as an equal player, only when the EU respects the sovereign demands of its member states, and only when the West understands the importance to restore state sovereignty in the Middle East, rather than supporting rebellious group without sovereign legitimacy, can Russia and the EU defeat terrorism and, thereby address the root cause of the European migrant crisis.

In sum, the three clashing European identities in this discourse analysis of the European migrant crisis can be defined as following: Orbán's Christian-ethnic and illiberal Europe, Merkel's liberal Europe of universal human rights, and Putin's Europe of sovereign nation-states. Their struggles are centred at defining the floating signifier “Europe” that is, simultaneously, the empty signifier, signifying their community.

This thesis demonstrates how Orbán, Putin and Merkel construct three different Europes that are rooted in three different European myths which are, in line with Bottici and Challand’s theory, conceptualised through the construction of a common past and a common blueprint for the future, which in turn allow the politicians to articulate how Europeans should act in the present.

Orbán’s Christian-ethnic and illiberal Europe is rooted in a Central-European memory construction of foreign occupation and nationalist-democratic uprisings that were predominantly concerned with national sovereignty and cleaning the nation from alien forces. This allows Orbán to construct a European blueprint for the future that strengthens, firstly, an ethnically, religiously and culturally defined European community and, secondly, an illiberal democratic system. Accordingly, it is only a matter of time that other Europeans will join Hungary’s political camp. Orbán uses this discourse to offer two political solutions. First of all, he proposes to close the external European borders vis-à-vis non-European migrants and refugees. Only by defending the EU against flows of non-Europeans, only by defending Christendom against the flux of Muslims, and only by defending native Europeans against other ethnicities, Europe as a community can survive. Secondly, he proposes to push for a pan-European debate, in which both

politicians and intellectuals will be divided by two opposing and agonistic camps. Only by recognising each other's political legitimacy, Orbán argues, can the EU as a democratic community survive. One of these two camps is in line with Orbán's Christian-ethnic and illiberal Europe. The other camp seems to share most characteristics with Merkel's liberal Europe of universal human rights.

Merkel's liberal Europe of universal human rights is rooted in a memory construction of a newly established post-WWII society, free from nationalism, intolerance and xenophobia, and embracing human rights universalism, tolerance and openness. This allows her to construct a blueprint for Germany and Europe's common future that revolves around maintaining a European community rooted in universal human rights and liberal democracy. In this construction, any attempt to construct Europe as a nationalist, illiberal or ethnic identity is considered a direct threat. Orbán's Europe is therefore predominantly constructed as antagonistic to Merkel's discourse. Merkel's discourse allows her to offer the following solution for the European migrant crisis: although European external borders may, to some extent, be protected against illegal migrants, one is not to bargain about Europe's responsibility towards refugees. Not only Germany, but the entire EU is responsible to offer a safe and dignified place for refugees so that Europe meets the necessary demands to protect the universal human rights of all people – not just EU citizens.

Putin's Europe of sovereign nation-states is rooted in a memory construction that places the USSR in an ambiguous position. On the one hand, the USSR and the West's common historical challenge in defeating fascism is foregrounded. On the other hand, the USSR has made a mistake by historically showing little respect for national sovereignty and by being too focussed on its ideological ambitions. This allows Putin to construct a European blueprint that, firstly, underscores the importance of maintaining the UN's shared legal framework and common values (as established by the USSR and the West after the defeat of Nazism) and, secondly, by defining these common values as being predominantly related to national sovereignty. As a result, Putin's blueprint for the future of Europe and Russia is a direct criticism towards Europe and the West's current disregarding of national sovereignty (both within Europe as outside Europe, mainly the Middle East). Consequently, this allows Putin to blame the European migrant crisis on

Europe's own actions, as he considers the crisis to be directly caused by Europe's irresponsible behaviour in the Middle East.

Conclusion

The thesis has demonstrated that the European migrant crisis is, as Krastev argues, rooted in an overarching European identity crisis. As I have argued in the second chapter, the European migrant crisis is a pan-European crisis that demands pan-European solutions, for which – in turn – pan-European identities and myths are needed. Orbán, Putin and Merkel's constructions of Europe have not come out of nowhere. They had, in a less confrontational matter, already been present in the three leaders' discourses before the European migrant crisis erupted. It was when an uncontrollable flux of non-European migrants and refugees came to the EU when Orbán, Merkel and Putin's Europes turned out to be potential antagonists of each other, unwilling to compromise their respective solutions for the question of non-European mass migration.

Orbán's "Christian and ethnic Europe" is greatly based on his memory-construction of a Hungary and Europe that have been occupied by foreign forces throughout history and were only able to become democratic when they could turn back to their nativist roots: these roots are based on national sovereignty, Christendom and ethnicity. Given that his subsequent blueprint for Europe's future is rooted in nativist characteristics of Europe – liberal democracy is, for this reason, not a desired system, as it puts "non-native" Europeans (e.g. non-whites, Muslims) on an equal footing with white, Christian Europeans. Between this common past and future, Orbán proposes the following policies for the European migrant crisis: The EU and its member-states have to protect the EU's external borders against non-European migrants and refugees. An influx of migrants would be undesirable for two reasons: it would undermine the interests of sovereign European nation-states and it would threaten the ethnic and Christian core of European civilisation. Allowing non-Europeans into the EU could be the end of Europe and has to be stopped by any measure.

Merkel's "Europe of universal human rights" is predominantly based on her memory-construction of a post-war Germany and Europe that have liberated themselves from fascism, intolerance and exclusion, by building the new Europe of inclusion, liberal democracy and universal human rights. Her subsequent blueprint for Europe's future is to maintain this particular value-based European community. The real Europeans cannot

be defined by ethnicity or religion, but by the values they embrace. Between this common past and future, Orbán proposes the following policies for the European migrant crisis: The EU and its member-states have the responsibility to let refugees in and allow them to enjoy their universal human rights to the fullest. A compulsory migrant quota system would meet these normative demands and distribute refugees fairly among the member states. If the EU and Europe do not meet these normative demands, this would indicate the moral decline of Europe as a value-based community and, therefore, it could be the end of Europe as a whole.

Putin's "Europe of sovereign nation-states" is greatly based on his memory-construction of the joint efforts of the USSR and the West to rebuild Europe and the world after the defeat of Nazism. The core value of this new world order would be national sovereignty. Undermining national sovereignty has caused terrorism in Europe and the Middle East to rise and has been at the roots of the Syrian Civil War, hence the European migrant crisis. His subsequent blueprint for Europe's future would be his proposed policy too: a Europe in which the West and Russia, once again, join forces to protect their common values (i.e. national sovereignty) and defeat a common enemy (i.e. terrorism). Only by joining this geopolitical alliance, Europe and the EU can combat the crisis.

These findings confirm Krastev's arguments that the European migrant crisis needs to be described as a battle between pro-EU and anti-EU forces, but as a clash of European solidarities. As has become evident, none of the three politicians want to change the current set-up of European institutions. While both Orbán and Merkel express their support for the EU continuously throughout the analysed texts, Putin remains mostly neutral about the EU and embraces the joint participation in the UN.

In line with Malmborg and Stråth, as well as Hansen and Wæver, the competing Europes are strongly intertwined with their corresponding national identities. This becomes most apparent when placing the discourse analysis in the Bottici and Challand's theory of mythmaking. By doing so, Orbán's Christian and ethnic Europe has to be understood in his memory-construction of Hungary and the several foreign occupations it had to undergo, Merkel's Europe of universal human rights cannot be detached from her memory-construction of post-fascist Germany, and Putin's Europe of sovereign nation-states is embedded in a memory-construction of the USSR and the West in the Cold War's multipolar world. Meanwhile, these identity-constructions of Europe and the

respective nation-states underline when European identities are part of the Self, are othered agonistically, and are othered antagonistically.

This once again underscores that the shifting of Us is not characterised by inconsistency. Regarding the European Self, whenever Orbán and Merkel articulate constructions of a European identity that are in accordance with their own national identity, the Self refers to Europe. When a European identity is constructed that is not in line with Orbán's Hungarian Self, he others Europe. Differently from Orbán, however, Merkel's Us-shifting takes places on both the level of European identity and the level of national identity. Thus, Merkel's Self (embedded in human rights values) can be threatened by an antagonistic Other that can be articulated as Germany. Such an antagonistic position for Hungary is absent in Orbán's discourse. In this context, Putin's shifting is mostly located between antagonising Europe and agonising Europe. Putin, in other words, predominantly others Europe as essentially different from Russia. Whenever Europe is constructed in accordance with Putin's construction of Russian identity, Russia and Europe become each other's agonists within a shared group (e.g. global leaders, the UN, or anti-terrorist forces).

The uncompromising and antagonistic relationship between Orbán and Merkel's European identities is particularly strong. While their respective solutions mutually exclude each other, neither of the solutions exclude Putin's invitation to join forces in combatting terrorism and restoring statehood in the Middle East. However, unlike Putin, Orbán and Merkel are part of the increasingly integrated EU. As neither of them has Putin's privilege to distance themselves from this pan-European problem, one can argue that the fact that Orbán and Merkel are part of the EU is one of the main reasons why the relationship between the European identities they construct is so antagonistic. Indeed, as Krastev argues, the European migrant crisis is not about a withdrawal from, but a clash of European solidarities. This is precisely why Orbán and Merkel's identity constructions are more antagonistic towards each other, even though they may share more political interests with each one another than they do with Putin.

On a more positive note from the perspective of European integration, the fact that a compromise has been made eventually (the EU-Turkey migration agreement) as well as the fact that the European migrant crisis has not caused the collapse of the EU

(yet), may indicate that these different European identity-constructions can co-exist within the EU.

When placing the thesis in Chantal Mouffe's perspective on agonism, it is difficult to avoid the uncomfortable conclusion that both Merkel and Orbán's discourses can be dangerous for the future of pan-European democracy. On the one hand, Orbán argues that there is essentially no place for Muslims (and other minorities that can be ethnically, religiously or culturally labelled as non-Europeans) to co-exist with "native" (e.g. white-skinned, Christian) Europeans. Orbán's discursive attempts to agonise Muslims have not been successful: his refusal to offer a blueprint in which European Muslims and non-Muslims can co-exist, demonstrate that Muslims are quintessential antagonists in his discourse. On the other hand, Orbán does push for a pan-European debate, in which different identities of and blueprints for Europe are expected to fiercely fight each other, but mutually recognise each other's right to defend their ideas. Merkel, however, does not allow for such a debate. In fact, for her, Orbán's Europe is a hostile, antagonistic European identity that cannot co-exist with her construction of Europe.

No matter what Orbán's true political intentions are in pushing for such a debate, it is a notion that is in line with what Mouffe views as an imperative for European democratisation today. Only by allowing for pan-European identities that can fight each other in a pan-European discursive field (indeed, in a pan-European "war of position"), a situation can appear in which not only European politicians but European citizens as a whole would be increasingly more able to escape their isolated nation-based discursive spaces. Ideally, in such a scenario, the pivotal question of "What kind of Europe do we want?" would be placed at the centre of a supranational debate. Only if discourses revolving around European identity can enter a pan-European level, can pan-European myths and blueprints take shape. This is the key precondition for the emergence of truly pan-European solutions to European crises (which, as a consequence, would be less likely to get stuck in a debate fought between nation-states). These solutions would also become increasingly subject to a democratic scrutiny within the agonistic competition of European discourses. This would provide a democratic consciousness that would be increasingly embraced by both politicians and European citizens.

At the same time, however, it has to be emphasised that Orbán's antagonisation of Muslims is typical for his envisioned illiberal-democratic version of Europe. Orbán's

emphasis on the belief that “native” Europeans cannot co-exist with Muslims, is in direct contradiction with the liberal-democratic values upon which the European Union and its member states are constitutionally built. By doing so, Orbán aims to silence certain minorities whom he does not recognise as truly European. From that perspective, his invitation towards Europeans to participate in a pan-European debate on the future of Europe is somehow ironic, as his proposed European identity aspires to exclude certain Europeans from that debate.

Indeed, the difference of antagonisms between Merkel and Orbán brings to the fore a paradox of liberal democracy. It highlights the question of to what extent liberal democracy can legitimately exclude certain discourses, and attached identities, from its public space. If I am to follow Karl Popper’s paradox of tolerance, I would have to admit that “[i]n order to maintain a tolerant society, the society must be intolerant of intolerance” (Popper, 2013; originally published in 1945). Conversely, one could apply this paradox to Chantal Mouffe’s theory and that in order to maintain an agonistic society, the society must be antagonistic of antagonism.

Simultaneously, completely antagonising Orbán’s Europe would risk missing the opportunity to finally start a pan-European debate in which citizens and politicians are invited to construct their own memory-constructions, blueprints and resulting policies that revolve around the question: Who are we as Europeans?

The paradigm of liberal versus illiberal Europe also raises the question where to position Putin’s Europe. Could Putin’s construction of Europe be described as illiberal? Although one could argue that Putin does on many occasions construct illiberal Self-identities in many occasions, in the context of this thesis’ topic – the European migrant crisis – Putin does not seem to follow Orbán’s construction of illiberal democracy. If anything, he is more inclusive towards Muslims than Orbán is, but one may wonder whether this is really a product of his own liberal convictions rather than an attempt to include Muslims into his all-Russian identity. Rarely does he articulate democracy, and when he does, democracy is either synonymous with national sovereignty or threatened by the West’s interference. The lack of reflection on democracy might suggest that Putin is neither liberal democratic nor illiberal democratic. In the analysed speeches, Putin seems to simply not be bothered with democracy and its relationship with Europe. At the same time, the limited number of references to democracy may likely be a result of the

limited sources that have been analysed in this thesis. The question of to what extent Putin's discourse resonates with Orbán's construction of an illiberal identity of Europe cannot be adequately answered within the scope of this thesis.

By analysing different national constructions of European identity that have come to clash on a pan-European level, and by pinpointing where the greatest discursive differences between European identity-constructions are located, this thesis can provide a basis for a wide range of further research on this topic. First of all, this can be done by analysing other European identities on the nation-state level, as well as analysing European identities within national contexts. Indeed, the German, Hungarian and Russian governments are not the only actors that have constructed European identity differently during the migrant crisis. Not only the differences of European identity-construction between countries during the migrant crisis would be valuable to analyse, so would the analysis and comparison be of different identity-constructions within national spaces: between political parties, between governmental figures, between members of parliament or between influential media figures.

Secondly, new research can be done on a supranational level, for instance by analysing different constructions of Europe within EU institutions, to find out whether some European identities and myths are more successfully constructed on a supranational level than others. Indeed, the question that this thesis has not answered is to what extent Merkel, Orbán and Putin have been successful in their respective constructions of European identity. Has one of their identities come to be more dominant in the EU during and after the European migrant crisis? Has one of their identities lost in political influence?

Thirdly, more historical research can be done, by linking today's clash of European identities and solidarities with different nationally constructed memory-based narratives of national and European identity.

Last but not least, this thesis is placed in Krastev's line of argumentation that the European migrant crisis has more than any other recent political crisis revealed the clash of European identities and solidarities. However, it has not been my intention to argue that clashes of European identities, solidarities and myths should only be analysed in the context of this crisis. One could conduct research that compares the analysis of this thesis' European identities with identity-constructions during other crises, as well as with

European identities that are constructed in political times that have been relatively free from political crises.

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