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The East-South Axis: Legitimizing the “Hungarian Solution to Migration”

L'axe Est-Sud : légitimer la « solution hongroise à la migration »

El eje Este-Sur: legitimación de la «solución húngara a la migración»

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The East-South Axis: Legitimizing the “Hungarian Solution to Migration”

Annastiina Kallius¹

Introduction: The Ill-fated Lorry

On a hot summer evening in June 2013, I joined a farewell gathering at the Keleti railway station in Budapest, the nodal point of international train traffic in Hungary. I had come to say goodbye to a group of seventy Afghans, all granted international protection by the Hungarian state after crossing through the Balkans. After half a year's protesting against the prospect of homelessness, the group decided to take matters into their own hands and travel to Germany together in order to re-apply for asylum. The scene was impressive, as the group occupied a whole wagon in the daily train between Budapest and Munich. Although migration was not much of a topic in the local media at the time, Hungarian alternative press recorded the event, criticizing structural homelessness among recognized refugees, with an evocative article titled “Hungary: even refugees escape from here” (Horváth, 2013). The number of asylum seekers in Hungary was exponentially increasing in 2013: tent camps had been set up, and arbitrary detention of asylum seekers as a deterrent was about to be introduced again (UNHCR, 2013; Nagy, 2016a).² International media concentrated its focus on tragic events unfolding in the Mediterranean, where the number of people crossing the sea, and drowning in it, was rising. Meanwhile, the Balkan route was steadily solidifying as another principal route to the EU, although escaping the gaze of policy-makers. This group of seventy Afghans, whose political protest and class action later became iconic in the emerging movement for the rights of refugees and migrants in Hungary, faced no problems when they embarked on

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2 Until 2012, the number of asylum applications in Hungary remained more or less steady, ca. 2,000 applications per year. In 2013, the annual increase was 844% (18,900 applications). In 2014, the number of applications more than doubled into 42,777. The absolute majority of the 177,135 people who applied for asylum in Hungary in 2015 left the country before the end of the procedure. For these numbers, and a further analysis of the legal developments of the Hungarian asylum system see Nagy (2016a), and the monthly updates of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee.

their journey. They arrived safely in Germany, where, at the time of writing, some of them are still undergoing the complicated process of re-determining their refugee status, while others have already been granted international protection by the German state.

Two years later I was at same location, nearly at the same time. Also on a steaming hot summer day, many of the same people who had waved goodbye to the Afghan group in 2013, once again congregated at Keleti to mark a journey to the west – or more accurately, to commemorate it, since this journey had met a fatal end. A day earlier, on August 27th, an abandoned lorry had been found in Burgenland in Austria near the Hungarian border. Inside the lorry, the police discovered the dead bodies of seventy-one people: asylum seekers from multiple countries, mainly Afghanistan and Syria. Stuffed inside the truck that could have only taken on safely half of their number, they had suffocated to death one week earlier.

The tragic incident took place after more than one month's deadlock at the Keleti station, which had developed into an ad hoc refugee camp and where an estimated 1,500 people were sleeping every day. Just like their predecessors in 2013, the people in the ill-fated lorry of summer 2015, had in all likelihood, walked up to the international ticket counter at Keleti, and bought train tickets to Vienna or Munich. When approaching the platforms, however, migrant-looking people were stopped and denied entry by the police. In all likelihood, this is also what happened to the fifty-nine men, eight women and four children who, not having succeeded in taking the train, had then embarked on their journey towards the west in the back of a truck.

The similarities and contrasts between these two journeys are striking, and they beg the question: what happened? In this article, my aim is to answer this question and relate it to the wider European context. I argue that the answer lies in the implementation of the so-called “Hungarian solution to migration.”³ In short, this refers to a three-fold policy package: (1) selective closure of the Hungarian borders, blocking the entrance of migrants but allowing them to move on; (2) a series of deterrents including detention, poor reception conditions, and no integration support, and (3) promotion of a pervasive government-sanctioned propaganda campaign advancing a particular idea of Europe.⁴

After providing a brief contextualization of the Balkan route, I outline the evolution and anatomy of the Hungarian solution in greater detail. First, I address the domestic anchoring of the policy, related to a governmental attempt to consolidate a hegemonic discourse of heteronormative conservative-nationalist citizenship that produces surplus populations (Anderson, 2013; Rajaram, 2015; Fekete, 2016; Cervinkova, 2016). I then continue to the specific focus of

3 The term “Hungarian solution” was coined by the Hungarian government in its parlance in 2016. I thank Prem Kumar Rajaram for his insightful and inspiring comments during our discussions on the concept and content of the Hungarian solution. For an earlier analysis, see Rajaram, 2016.

4 Since gaining two-thirds majority in 2010, the conservative-nationalist Fidesz government has fundamentally transformed numerous institutions in Hungary. Gagyí (2016) has extensively analyzed the long term – and short term – reasons behind Fidesz’ consolidation of power.

this article, the propaganda-aspects of the solution and how they relate to developments in the East and West of Europe. Gille's (2017) "relational perspective" for analyzing Eastern European responses to migration is utilized. Such a perspective goes beyond contextualization, and uncovers connections between western and eastern European developments that are not necessarily causal (Gille, 2017). Tošić (2017) has also underlined the importance of relational and historical analysis of the Balkan route, and pointed to the resurfacing of east/west connections in the Serbian context. Following these authors, I suggest that the governmental propaganda discourse in Hungary capitalizes precisely on such relational connections. In addition to the east/west divide, the discourse is also intertwined with the reproduction of a Europe/Balkans divide, another relational epistemology of Europe (Cabot, 2014; Green, 2005; Helms, 2008; Herzfeld, 1989; Todorova, 1997). I argue that in its discourse of defending "Europe," the Hungarian government strategically positions itself at the crux of these nesting orientalisms (Bakić-Hayden, 1995) and moral hierarchies at play, within East/West and Europe/Balkans binaries. In other words, I claim that interwoven moral hierarchies and nesting orientalisms within the European space allows the Hungarian government to position itself as a defender of a particular type of Europe, and thus legitimize the Hungarian solution to migration. In this vein, my contribution builds on earlier scholarship that has exposed the coloniality and orientalism of power of the East-West-rhetoric (Chari and Verdery, 2009; Owczarzak, 2009; Böröcz, 2000; Buchowski, 2006), and is meant to contribute to the discussion of the dynamics between European peripheries in relation to migration and location. To clarify, I do not suggest that the Hungarian, or any other, government be devoid of responsibility. Instead, following Nancheva (2015) who has analyzed the failure of the Bulgarian asylum system, I argue that this responsibility needs to be examined in its wider, relational context, including but not limited to the transfer of EU border policy to Eastern Europe (Kallius, 2016; Lavenex, 1999 and 2002; Byrne *et al.*, 2004, for insightful analysis on Bulgaria, see also Apostolova, 2016).

My inquiry focuses chiefly on the years 2015-17, although the crafting of the Hungarian solution began much earlier. Methodologically, this conceptual contribution relies on four years of anthropological research in the field of migration and asylum in Hungary. During these years I have also been involved in the emerging social movement for the rights of migrants in Hungary. In particular, the ethnographic vignettes and analysis of the evolution of the Hungarian solution to migration stem from this source. In setting down the parameters of the public discourse on migration, I take the Hungarian-language governmental media that advocates the Hungarian solution to migration to be an integral part of the ethnographic analysis. This media landscape is saturated by "societally targeted advertisements" (*társadalmi célú reklámok*) which aggressively highlight the dangers of migration in the form of TV advertisements, billboards, leaflets distributed to homes, print advertisements and the like.⁵ I also rely

⁵ The governmental media is available in daily news programs in Russian, Chinese, English, German and Hungarian (<http://www.hirado.hu/video/hirmusorok/>), on the official news site of the government (www.kormany.hu/en), and the two government-ran blogs (<http://hungarytoday.hu> and <http://abouthungary.hu>). In response to the government control over media, several independent Hungarian-language online news portals that focus particularly on corruption and social policy have emerged in recent years.

on some international media coverage on Hungary. Juxtaposing liberal international media with the Hungarian governmental media might, at first hand, seem unwarranted. Rather than presenting them as a binary, however, I opt for these because the propaganda element of the Hungarian solution to migration is fueled precisely in response to such modernist representations of Hungary in outlets such as the *Guardian*, *Der Spiegel*, and *New York Times*.⁶

The Recent History of the Balkan Route

Since 2015, international liberal media has incessantly criticized Eastern Europe, and particularly Hungary, for “its” treatment of migrants. This coincides with the “discovery” of the Balkan route by the international public. For years leading to 2015, however, the route has been a steady component of Europe’s “borderscape” (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, 2007), taken by people who made it to Greece, but wanted and were able to continue northwards to other countries. Those crossing the Turkish-Bulgarian border also join this route.⁷ Although people taking the Balkan route routinely shared accounts of violence in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary, the relative anonymity of the route also guaranteed a relative stability of the route.⁸

As the number of people taking the route increased in 2015, its discovery by the international media and policymakers caused corollary effects throughout the route. Sabine Hess has showed how the naming and mapping of routes changes power dynamics, and furnishes so-called transit-countries with power to use their status as a bargaining chip to push through their own desired policies, at the same time as revealing the full force of migration (Hess, 2010). Indeed, as the Balkan route began to appear in the media and on policy-maps, events on the route escalated and the border policies of individual European Union member states oscillated throughout the route, culminating in the European Commission’s attempt to finally close the route.

A brief, non-exhaustive outline of developments of the Balkan route between 2015 and 2017, locates Hungary in its constitutive context and illustrates the dynamics of states’ supposedly independent decisions that have corollary effects. During summer 2015, the majority of migrants who came to the EU via the Balkan route crossed the Aegean Sea instead of arriving via Bulgaria. Most were driven to cross the sea because the land borders are difficult to cross: the Greek-Turkish land border has been partly sealed off by a fence, and the notori-

6 For an example, see the blog post from Zoltán Kovács, the spokesperson of the Hungarian government, 14 March 2017: “Dear New York Times Editors: you just don’t get it, do you?” (<http://abouthungary.hu/blog/dear-new-york-times-editors-you-just-dont-get-it-do-you/>, accessed 12/06/2017).

7 The implications of this initial choice are serious. According to the Dublin Regulation, people seeking asylum in the EU may be deported back to the first EU member state they entered. Between 2011 and 2017, Dublin deportations to Greece were stopped due to a European Court of Human Rights ruling, rendering Hungary the country that many migrants would have been returned to. People who cross through Bulgaria face possible Dublin deportation to Bulgaria.

8 For accounts of the violence over the last years, see bordermonitoring.eu. Local support structures in these locations have existed for years. For well-researched example of the Serbian context, see Stojic-Mitrovic and Meh (2015).

ously dangerous Bulgarian-Turkish border is guarded partially by a fence and paramilitary vigilante groups. People who did not wish to stay in Greece and were able to move onwards, continued northward to Macedonia, and faced severe obstacles when attempting to cross the border. The impromptu refugee camp in Idomeni evolved into one of the most iconic symbols of border enforcement and exclusion on one hand, and of the agency and autonomy of people on the move, on the other (Tošić, 2017). The tracks via Greece and Bulgaria conjoin in Serbia. Until 2015, the route continued smoothly northward to Hungary, where the government turned a blind eye to its position as the second EU-member state on the route. From Hungary, most people were, contrary to EU legislation, allowed to continue westwards, while others decided to or were forced to stay, due to personal reasons, financial resources and/or the Dublin regulation. Like Greece and Bulgaria, Hungary, could also be characterized as both a transit and as a destination country. It is a peripheral outlier for the Western European gaze, and both a central point of entry and potential return for a migrant seeking asylum in EU.

When the Hungarian borders with Serbia, and later with Croatia, were temporarily closed to migrants in late autumn 2015, the route shifted. From Serbia, people continued westward to Croatia instead of Hungary (Čapo, 2015), onwards to Austria via Slovenia, and ahead to Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Finland. This passage collapsed as the North of Europe showcased its political power: in January 2016, Sweden introduced border checks with Denmark, citing infrastructural limitations (Dzenovska, 2017). In turn, Denmark announced border controls at the German border, which then continued southward like a domino. When Germany commenced border controls on the Austrian border, Austria introduced a maximum quota for asylum requests at the Slovenian border. Slovenia, in turn, built a fence on its border with Croatia, which controversially closed its border to migrants from Serbia (Tošić, 2017). In spring 2016, while EU was striking a deal with Turkey in an attempt to close the route, for those still in Serbia, Hungary re-emerged as a transit route, as the Hungarian-Serbian border fence was, at the time, relatively easy to climb over or crawl under. At the same time, the number of people arriving via the Aegean Sea radically decreased as a result of the EU-Turkey deal. The Hungarian border was nearly sealed in summer 2016 when pushbacks of people to the Serbian side of the fence were codified in Hungarian legislation, first for those caught within eight kilometers of the fence, and by 2017, from anywhere in the country. At the same time, the Hungarian government began to erect a second line of fencing on the southern border, along with military complexes and a specialized “transit zone” detention for migrants. In Greece, where tens of thousands of migrants remained stranded in EU-ran “hot spots” (Kalir and Rozakou, 2016), and also in Serbia emerged nodal points where marooned migrants formed an easily divisible multiplicity, held together only by the border policy that had pushed them to this zone (Tazzioli, 2016).

The Evolution of the Hungarian Solution to Migration

The designation “Hungarian solution to migration” only appeared in winter 2015-2016, when the conservative-nationalist Fidesz government repeatedly referred to the relative success of the “Hungarian solution” in relation to EU

policy.⁹ The crafting of this solution had begun already with legislative changes in 2013, when arbitrary detention was re-introduced in response to rising numbers of asylum applications. The 2013 legislation also included contradictory measures that were, at the time, cautiously welcomed by civil society organizations. These included an “integration contract,” by which recognized refugees received some support to afford housing, but was conditional to punitive reporting measures. All Hungarian language education for recognized refugees was abolished.¹⁰

Migration was consolidated as a principal media agenda item after the Charlie Hebdo shootings in France in January 2015, when Prime Minister Viktor Orbán held a speech connecting terrorism with migration. This period coincided with Serbian visa liberalization for Kosovars, which contributed to a large number of Kosovars crossing through Hungary in the first few months of 2015 in order to seek asylum in Germany. In April 2015, the government announced the launch of a pseudo-democratic “national consultation on terrorism and migration,” an essentially biased questionnaire sent to every Hungarian home.¹¹ Together with a massive government-commissioned billboard campaign, the national consultation constituted the first large-scale propaganda campaign against immigration.¹² Increasing numbers of migrants tested the reception infrastructure of Hungarian authorities, and in June 2015, the government announced the temporary unilateral suspension of the Dublin regulation, only to take back its words the following day. As migrants began to be stranded in train stations of Budapest, looking for ways to continue onwards to the West, the government announced its plan to build a fence on the southern border of Hungary. The announcement caused domestic and international outcry, and a large anti-fence protest was held in Budapest in July 2015.

At the same time, Hungarian asylum legislation underwent multiple changes that Nagy (2016a) has exhaustively analyzed. Serbia was declared a safe third country of transit, and thereby all asylum applications from people who had crossed through Serbia would face blanket rejection. Time to appeal against negative decisions were reduced, detention in “transit zones” at the southern border were introduced, and crossing the border fence was made a criminal

9 See, for instance, abouthungary.hu, 19 February 2016, “Summit on Migration: 'The EU Approved the Hungarian Solution'” at http://abouthungary.hu/speeches-and-remarks/Prime_Minister_Viktor_Orb%C3%A1n_s_press%20statement_following_the_EU_Summit/ (accessed 06/06/2017), and the official government news site kormany.hu, 24 February 2016, “More and more countries are recognising that only the Hungarian solution is viable” at <http://www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-foreign-affairs-and-trade/news/more-and-more-countries-are-recognising-that-only-the-hungarian-solution-is-viable> (accessed 06/06/2017).

10 This section on the evolution of Hungarian asylum policy since 2012 is informed by my involvement as an activist at *Mígszol Csoport* (Migrant Solidarity Group). Between 2013 and 2016, I visited refugee camps, followed all legal and policy-developments, and the Hungarian media. I was also present at the Keleti station in summer 2015 conducting research on the conditions, and joined the March of Hope on 4 September 2015. For details, see Mígszol (2016).

11 For the complete consultation in English, see kormany.hu/en, 24 April 2015, “National consultation on immigration to begin,” available at <http://www.kormany.hu/en/prime-minister-s-office/news/national-consultation-on-immigration-to-begin> (accessed 13/06/2017).

12 For an analysis on the satirical counter-campaign staged by civil society, see Nagy, 2016b.

offence punishable by three-five years in prison. New tent camps with poor conditions and limited legal aid were springing up in the country, while existing, well-functioning camps with solid infrastructure, experienced staff and case officers were closed. For reasons that were not made public, the government refused an emergency relocation scheme proposed by the European Commission that would have seen migrants in Hungary being relocated to other EU member states in the framework of a quota resettlement scheme.

When the Hungarian government nominally pretended to follow the Dublin regulation by not allowing migrants simply travel through its territory, the train stations in Budapest turned into *ad hoc* refugee camps housing thousands of people with minimal help from the government or the municipality, relying instead on massive humanitarian operations set up by Hungarian volunteers (Simonovits and Bernát, 2016). After the vigil that marked the people who suffocated to death in the ill-fated lorry, the stalemate in Keleti escalated to series of protests, culminating in a “March of Hope” of hundreds of people, who began to walk from Budapest to Vienna on September 4th. After the exhausted marchers collapsed on a highway (Kallius, 2016), the government responded by sending buses to transport the people to Vienna, in a clear breach of EU asylum legislation. When the government-organized transportation of people to the Austrian border continued for months, Budapest became empty of migrants (Kallius *et al.*, 2016). After the border fence was completed in September, riots took place on the southern border crossing at Röszke, and some of those involved were later staged in a political trial for supposed terrorism and violently crossing the border (Amnesty International, 2016).

In summer 2016, all integration support for recognized refugees was abolished, and a mandatory three-year review of the refugee status was introduced. Violent pushbacks of people to the Serbian side of the fence became normalized from July 2016, when legislative changes allowed the Hungarian authorities to “escort” back anyone found on the Hungarian side of the fence. The following quote represents a standard testimony on violence at the Hungarian-Serbian border at the time:

“I entered the border... We were about fifteen of us, including women and children... Ten minutes later about twenty army soldiers surrounded us and beat us. They put plastic handcuffs on me and threw me down on the ground and kicked me in the stomach, shoulder and head... They had four dogs without muzzles. One dog jumped on me but I managed to escape it. As I was lying on the ground, the soldiers used their batons to hit us on our legs and our heads. They didn’t say anything and we didn’t dare to say anything. After that, they brought us back to the fence, took our cuffs off and started pushing us through the fence and kicking us as we tried to crawl through the layers of razor-wire.”
(Zaid, nineteen, Afghanistan, quoted in Human Rights Watch, 2016)

Similar testimonies were collected in 2016 and 2017 by multiple civil society organizations in both Serbia and Hungary. The Hungarian government denied the allegations, citing also the presence of border guards from other EU member states as guaranteeing that no violations occur. From late summer 2016 onwards, with a widely publicized campaign, border control was strengthened by new units of police-run “border hunters,” generally recruits from poor rural areas who are promised a stable income and a career. At the same time, the fence on

the southern border and the accompanying military complex became pervasive elements in public communications of the government, with for instance the Prime Minister's and the government's own Facebook pages regularly updated with videos and photo albums depicting the southern frontier. In addition, a series of large-scale propaganda campaigns against supposedly liberal western asylum policy directed by EU or by "Brussels," took place in preparation for the referendum on EU-orchestrated resettlement of refugees in October 2016. At the same time, László Toroczkai, the self-proclaimed leader of border militias around the village of Ásotthalom, routinely posted pictures in social media of migrants apprehended and tied up around the border area.

Meanwhile, the "transit zones" on the Serbian side of the fence, where one is supposed to officially enter the country and ask for asylum, developed into militarized no-go zones extremely difficult to access by independent civil and watchdog organizations. By spring 2017, only ten people per day were allowed to ask for asylum in Hungary, and were consequently detained at the transit zone where access to independent legal aid was very difficult. With the effective sealing of the border and the fence-complex standing as an embodiment of legal instruments, the route shifted again in spring 2017. Later in the year several pushbacks on the Hungarian-Romanian border were reported, well as numerous accounts of violence on the Bulgarian-Serbian and Croatian-Serbian borders.

The Anatomy of the Hungarian Solution

As mentioned, the term "Hungarian solution" began appearing in winter 2016, in government parlance unaware or willfully ignorant about the connotations that the wording bears to the Holocaust. The explicit purpose of the solution is to emphasize a Huntingtonian clash of civilizations, and advance a rhetoric of protecting Christianity and Europe from two fronts: migrants from the South, and from liberal multiculturalism from the West. By extension, then, the solution advances a particular discourse of Europe, to which I will return later. It is essentially a policy package that can be divided into three elements.

Selective Closure of the Borders

Particularly the Southern and Eastern borders are selectively closed towards migrants. The government does not, however, engage in any large-scale efforts to obstruct migrants from moving onwards particularly to Austria. This selective closure is achieved chiefly through legislative measures (safe third country rule, state of emergency, pushback legislation, fence-related law, law on the fence), which are embodied in the military border zone complex. Government-influenced national media continuously present the country's borders as under pressure, or under attack, justifying further militarization. This selective closure pushes migrants to Serbia, and is unique in the extent, but not in form, as it represents an extreme version of EU-wide tendency of externalization of border management towards the South and East (Kallius, 2016; Casas-Cortes *et al.*, 2015; Nancheva, 2015; Collinson, 1996).

Deterrents

These discourage migrants from moving to, or through, Hungary. Examples of deterrents include violence at the border zone, widespread, systematic detention in the transit zone on arbitrary grounds, poor quality of the refugee status determination process, poor reception conditions (e.g. those staying at refugee camps are not entitled to free food), and finally, the total abolishment of all integration support and language education, effectively rendering people granted international protection homeless.

Propaganda Campaigns

These already introduced campaigns include an omnipresent media presence of governmental discourse and slogans on billboards, TV advertisements, leaflets, posters, and print media, with slogans such as “Did you know that the Paris massacre was committed by migrants?,” “Did you know that since the beginning of the migration crisis, more than 300 people in Europe have died of terror attacks?,” “Brussels wants to resettle a townful of illegal immigrants in Hungary,” etc. The campaigns extend also to government-influenced discussion programs on the television and radio, specially set up websites that, for instance, define the whole of Paris and Stockholm as no-go zones, opinion pieces in daily and weekly newspapers, and finally pseudo-democratic measures such as “national consultations” and the aforementioned referendum on migration. According to the government, the purpose of these campaigns, that are explicitly hostile towards the European Union and weave together impressive conspiracy theories about western liberalism, NGOs, activists, and especially, the Hungarian-born American philanthropist George Soros, is in order to educate the Hungarian population regarding the dangers of immigration.

Overall, tightening of asylum legislation is by no means unique to Hungary. Across the European Union, member states responded to the events of 2015 by introducing selective border closures or deterrents such as border checks on internal Schengen borders, tightening or nearly eliminating the possibility for family reunification for refugees, stricter Country of Origin-reports, and the EU-Turkey deal outlining that all migrants coming to Greece risk detention and possible deportation back to Turkey. Indeed, in the context of the EU and the European Economic Area, examples of similar measures predate the summer of migration in 2015. For instance, Norway’s classification of Russia as a safe third country parallels Hungary’s reliance on a similar denomination for Serbia in order to close the border. Regarding integration, Bulgaria also gives minimal integration support to people granted international protection, as does, for instance, Finland. The difference lies in the existence of relatively well-functioning welfare systems of Western Europe, available also for people granted international protection. In the context of Hungary, apart from reducing the number of arriving migrants to a trickle, the effect of the Hungarian solution to migration is that it attempts to push migrants in Hungary to the fringes of the society along with other marginalized populations (Rajaram, 2015). It is this domestic context to which I now turn.

Domestic Anchoring of the Hungarian Solution

Outwards, the Hungarian solution to migration unfolds in relation to different divides and hierarchies of European space. Domestically, it is connected to other policies that produce, exclude and police marginalized populations, as an expression of the Fidesz government's discourse of hegemonic citizenship that continues the historically present punitive governance of the poor (Udvarhelyi, 2015). As Nagy (2016a) notes, ever since obtaining power in 2010, the Fidesz government has secured its popularity by turning the public's attention away from real crises of economy, housing, education and healthcare by a process of first creating enemies, and then "defeating" these enemies. These enemies have included foreign banks, large foreign retail outlets, and more implicitly sexual minorities, and the Roma population (Fekete, 2016). At the time of writing, the Hungarian born American financier and philanthropist George Soros and human rights NGOs fulfill this role. Indeed, the drafting of the Hungarian solution cannot be considered in isolation to the exacerbated stigmatization of other marginal groups in society, of which concrete measures have included the criminalization of homelessness in the Hungarian Constitution (Hungarian Helsinki Committee, 2013; Udvarhelyi, 2014), and legalizing school segregation for children of Roma origin (European Roma Rights Centre, 2016). These measures have also included the transformation from a welfare society to a workfare society, which, according to Szöke (2015), upholds and reproduces economic and social inequalities and creates structures of dependency at the municipal level, and obscures official statistics on unemployment levels.

The Fidesz government has on numerous occasions made explicit connections between unwanted populations, most notably the Roma and refugees. In September 2015, the Prime Minister Viktor Orbán explicitly stated that Hungary should not resettle any refugees from Greece and Italy, because of the "burden" of being home to hundreds of thousands of Roma. Furthermore, Hungary never asked Europe "to take care of its gypsies," and consequently it is unfair of Europe to ask Hungary to take care of refugees (Jámbor, 2015). Rajaram (2015) has commented in detail on this slippage between unwanted groups of people, connecting the production of unwanted populations to capitalism as an economic system that regularly produces surplus populations. He argues that the marginalized situation of irregular migrants today cannot be understood without a wider historicization of production of locally marginalized populations. Similarly, Anderson (2013) has pointed to the similarities between "non-citizens" and "failed citizens", and connected the exclusion of marginalized populations to economy and the dominant values of the majority community. Indeed, considering the values of whiteness, Christianity, and heterosexuality that the Fidesz-sanctioned campaigns publicly advocate, the slippages between different unwanted populations become apparent, as Cervinkova (2016) has also shown in the context of Poland. The Hungarian solution to migration is, then, a question of internal lines of belonging that have complex relations with external borders (Borneman, 2012).

Overlapping Hierarchies of European Space

This campaign of a particular form of conservative citizenship exceeds the national boundary by advocating a particular idea of Europe and the location of Hungary therein. This domestic discourse is crucial when considering the east-west constellations of refugee crisis that Zsuzsa Gille (2011 and 2017), Dzenovska (2016 and 2017), and Tošić (2017) have uncovered. In government communications, Hungary emerges as the rescuer of Europe. This positioning, which is at the crux of my argument, is the key legitimating factor of the Hungarian solution to migration. The following random sample of news items from summer 2016 on the government's official English language news portal illustrates this argument.¹³

- Hungary standing in the way of immigration (May 19)
- Brussels should not decide who we want to live alongside (May 24)
- Co-existence of civilisations is a major question for the future (June 1)
- Infringement procedure is Brussels' revenge against Hungary for not spending funds on integration of migrants (May 30)
- European leaders have placed themselves in opposition to their peoples (June 3)
- Mission of every Hungarian is to serve survival of nation (June 6)
- Migrants are becoming increasingly violent (June 7)
- Arrival of masses in Europe will trigger an unmanageable situation (June 14)
- EU migration policy requires a fundamental ideological change (June 20)
- We must discard Brussels' immigration policy, which is endangering the unity of Europe (June 27)
- Hungary represents order in a Europe of increasing disorder (June 27)
- Brussels must be stopped (July 6, August 1)
- Government of Hungary: EU is not able to handle the migration issue (June 29)
- Hungarian-Serbian border under constant pressure (July 20)
- The political Left would like to invite migrants; the Government would like to restore security (July 25)
- The European way of life must be protected (July 25)
- Europe is in its twenty-fourth hour (July 26)
- Millions of migrants awaiting entry into Europe (July 27)

As becomes apparent, a basic component of this governmental discourse is the juxtaposition of "Europe" with "EU". In short, the latter refers to undemocratic "Brussels bureaucrats" who promote multiculturalism and have lost touch with real "people," which will inevitably lead to clashes between Muslims and European Christians. Europe, on the other hand, refers to a particular understanding of the continent as white, Christian and heterosexual, a constellation of sovereign democratic peoples to whom, unlike "Brussels," the Fidesz government listens to. In such a rhetorical move, populations that do not adhere to this norm of citizenship remain excluded from "Europe," and the figure of the migrant emerges as the key representative of alterity (Böröcz and Sarkar, 2017; Cantat, 2016). In short, the government represents Hungary as the frontier of Europe, which is under attack from two directions: from the west by "Brussels," and from the Balkans in the south by a faceless mass of violent migrants. I now

¹³These are the original wordings, in English, of the items. More similar news items available in English at www.kormany.hu/en, many of them pointing to the "historical responsibility" of Hungary to "protect Europe."

turn to this strategic positioning of the frontier in detail, analyzing how it relates to a tactical positioning of two overlapping divides of European space: the east/west divide, on one hand, and Europe/Balkans, on the other.

Legitimization of the Hungarian solution to migration revolves around tactical deployment of a colonially gradated conception of European space. Crucially, governmental propaganda campaigns' positioning of Hungary as the frontier of Europe, excludes the ambiguous Balkans from European space, highlighting the ever-present dynamic of nesting orientalisms, whereby the eastward and southward neighbors are considered just slightly more oriental (Bakić-Hayden, 1995; Helms, 2008). In the context of the EU in the 2010s, such a "great chain of orientalism" (Khazzoom, 2003) also appears in relation to references to the inherently more racist character of Eastern Europe. As Krastev (2017) points out, at play is a connection, albeit not causal, and a reappearance of the east/west divide. Social scientists working on Eastern Europe have pointed out that the so-called refugee crisis has led to the resurfacing of the question of exactly how "European" certain Eastern European countries are (Dzenovska, 2016 and 2017; Gille, 2016 and 2017). As Dzenovska writes with reference to Latvia: "Eastern Europe emerged as an ideal type, an unsympathetic not-quite-European subject mired in racialized paranoia about foreigners, exaggerated concerns about self-determination and self-preservation, and timeworn claims of historical suffering" (2016: 12). Thus Dzenovska exposes the colonality of the underpinnings of the east-west moral divide. Her work follows a vibrant debate on the colonial character of postsocialist denominations, which pointed to the orientalist production of the "east" and also criticized the marginalization of Eastern European scholars in postsocialist debates (Buchowski, 2006; Cervinkova, 2012; Kürti and Skalník, 2011; Owczarzak, 2009, Chari and Verdery, 2009; Wolff, 1994). Notably, Hungarian scholars have also revealed an economic constellation of Europe where Eastern Europe holds a semi-peripheral position, resulting in relations of labor and capital that are inadvertently linked to questions of race (Böröcz and Sarkar 2017; Böröcz 2000; Gagyí, 2016; Melegh, 2016). These relations of power and values have also been reproduced and internalized by actors in Hungarian society, as Böröcz (2006) succinctly reveals in his analysis of Hungarian liberal intellectuals' conception of goodness as a virtue located, and stemming from, Western European space. In this light, the orientalist tones with which international, mostly western, media discovered the moral deficits of Eastern European countries and Balkan route in 2015, seem hardly surprising.

The resistance to common asylum policies that the governments of Eastern European countries, especially the Visegrád Four (V4) countries of Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary,¹⁴ is often expressed in similarly colonial terms. International media often compares Eastern European countries to Western Europe, as suffering from backwardness, and seemingly genetic resistance

14 See Buchowski (2006: 465) on the particular positioning of the Visegrád countries in relation to nesting orientalisms.

to “European” values of liberalism and equality.¹⁵ This negative international media coverage with its allusions to Hungary’s “failure” to catch up with Western Europe has caused public exasperation in Hungary: I have witnessed many a conversation where people have wondered at the outrage towards Hungarian asylum policy, when the European public hardly even noticed the construction of earlier, and arguably deadlier, fences on other EU external borders in Spain or Greece. In addition, why were Eastern European countries judged by their sinister governments, and Western European countries by their good people? A commentary by Ungár (2016), a member of a small, but visible green Hungarian opposition party *Lehet Más a Politika* (“Politics Can Be Different,” LMP) coins these frustrations:

“Unsurprisingly, many Western observers are content to see this referendum [on EU refugee resettlement quotas] as yet more proof of prime minister Viktor Orbán’s xenophobia, and the Hungarian people’s inability to be civilised members of the ‘European family’. It’s an easy position to take, but it’s underwritten by arguably the last acceptable form of racism among the liberal-left: the denigration of Eastern Europeans. Indeed, it is this all-too-palpable anti-eastern sentiment on the part of the EU’s leaders that drives many Hungarians to support Orbán...

And what did the EU do? It held numerous summits and urged Eastern Europeans to treat migrants humanely. It was a shockingly counterproductive move... And it is precisely this high-handed dismissal of ordinary Hungarians’ fears and concerns that drives many to look to the far right for answers. The Hungarian government’s fence, built on the border with Serbia, may be an objectionable answer to these fears, but it was still an answer.”
(Ungár, 2016)

Ungár’s short commentary is haunted by disappointment and bitterness towards the representation of Eastern Europe, and Hungary in particular, as backward and uncivilized. What follows is a conceptual leap from exposing the EU’s double-standard’s to legitimizing the border-fence. He also points to the larger context of the events of 2015 that is often ignored in the international media, that the east-west divide is something that legitimizes the fence as an “answer”, illustrating a process by which the resentment of an opposition politician is translated into a defense of the Hungarian governmental asylum policy. I suggest that Ungár’s commentary illustrates one of the key features behind the implementation of the Hungarian solution, and the relational analysis called for by Gille, namely the government’s strategic position at the crux of overlapping moral hierarchies in between two of Hungary’s constitutive outsiders – Western

15 “Eastern Bloc’s Resistance to Refugees Highlights Europe’s Cultural and Political Divisions,” ran a title in the New York Times in mid-September (Lyman, 2015). The article reads: “Their [Eastern European countries’] stance – reflecting a mix of powerful far-right movements, nationalism, racial and religious prejudices as well as economic arguments that they are less able to afford to take in outsiders than their wealthier neighbors – is the latest evidence of the stubborn cultural and political divides that persist between East and West... When joining the European Union – as the former Communist countries have done since 2004 – nations are asked to pledge support to a raft of so-called European values, including open markets, transparent government, respect for an independent media, open borders, cultural diversity, protection of minorities and a rejection of xenophobia. But the reality is that the former Communist states have proved sluggish in actually absorbing many of these values and practicing them. Oligarchs, cronyism and endemic corruption remain a part of daily life in many of the countries, freedom of the press is in decline while rising nationalism and populist political movements have stirred anti-immigrant tensions.”

European member states dubbed as the EU, on the one hand, and the Balkans, on the other.

In other words, the symbolic position of Hungary as Eastern European, but not part of the Balkans, in this chain of orientalism is capitalized on by the Hungarian government. As the opposition politician quoted above alludes, the occupation of this imagined niche is crucial in order to understand the legitimization and the implementation of the Hungarian solution for migration. In what follows, through his statement I focus on the ways in which this gradation is central for the vindication of the Hungarian solution, and how it allows the Fidesz government to override the importance of the imagined east-west frontier with the imagined east-south axis.

The orientalization of the Balkans trickles down from the government rhetoric to the daily language of people, exemplified poignantly with the Hungarian verb *lebalkánózni* – to “Balkan down” someone or something. It taps into the historical consciousness of Hungary as the northernmost bastion of the Ottoman Empire, and wider Balkanist discourse that relies on a conceptual divide between “Europe” and the Balkans. A rich body of research has shown the different manifestations of ambivalence towards the Balkans as marginal, but central, to notions of European space (Herzfeld, 1989; Todorova, 1997; Helms, 2008; Green, 2005). Balibar (2003) has also posed central questions about the constant negotiation of the Balkans in relation to European space. How is it that the Balkans are considered an external space subject to intervention (such as by NATO), but yet internal, as undoubtedly geographically located on European soil?

Accordingly, governmental discourse that places Hungary at the frontiers of Europe omits the Balkan Peninsula from the European space. This discourse traces its way from government-sanctioned TV advertisements to daily exchanges between people, and are aptly illustrated by the following short discussion I witnessed at a meeting of humanitarian volunteers in Budapest in December 2015. During this planning meeting of integration-related support programs for recognized refugees, planning to settle in Hungary, a volunteer posed the following question: “But why should we integrate the refugees in Hungary, if they want to leave towards to Germany and the West in any case?” The self-appointed leader of the group was convincing in her answer: “That is a very valid question. Let’s remember, though, that Hungary is the first European country that refugees arrive at – and if we integrate them here, we do a favor for the whole of Europe, as they will already know how things work.” The programs included integration-related measures such as help in searching for housing and employment, but also cultural programs such as sightseeing in Budapest, and visiting the zoo.

There are several features in this small exchange that warrant attention: how smoothly the volunteer reproduced the division between the “west” as desirable, and by corollary, the “east” as undesirable; how straightforwardly Hungary was portrayed as a transit country, and finally, how comfortably the leader countered this not by negating the east/west divide, but by emphasizing the superior importance of the divide between “Europe” and the Balkans. This rhetorical move located Hungary in the same conceptual space as Germany, and questioned the conflation of Europe with the European Union by locating Greece

outside of Europe, but relying also on the east/west divide. In the same vein, the governmental discourse and propaganda also emphasizes the emergence of “Eastern” leadership for Europe (as opposed to Western, undemocratic and technocratic rule). The volunteers’ exchange further pinpoints the stubborn east-west divide of European space that unproblematically presents Hungary as an “Eastern” transit space (Tošić, 2017).

Considering the presence of these persistent divisions of European space – Europe/Balkans, and east/west – what emerges is the particular, strategic positioning of Hungary at their crux. Europe-wide relations, in other words, allow the Hungarian government to occupy a strategic position: a leader of the truly European “community” – proudly eastern, and definitely European, against those in the east and south.

Conclusion: The East-South Axis

In spring 2017 the European Parliament voted on the process of triggering the article 7 against Hungary. If passed, this could mean sanctions for Hungary’s voting rights in the EU due to lack of adherence to EU values.¹⁶ The reasons cited behind this action was a law branding foreign-funded NGOs as “foreign agents”, a move to outlaw the private Hungarian-American university, Central European University, and finally, the country’s migration policy. In this article I have focused on the third element, unraveling the evolution, content, and relational context of the Hungarian solution to migration. To clarify, I have not argued that the Hungarian solution is an outcome of Western, liberal discourse that judges Eastern Europe as almost, but not quite, European. Rather, I have claimed that this discourse, along the east/west and Europe/Balkans divides are key elements that the Hungarian government has successfully used in order to legitimize its migration policy. Current discourse in the international media that presents the Visegrád countries as an almost-European, semi-peripheral and uncivilized location, reduces the entire region with its multiple histories and the actual dynamics of “surplus” populations merely into a simplified socialist past, while at the same time conflates Europe not only with EU, but with only Western Europe. In this imagination, “real” European values are neatly listed as a liberal handbook: multiculturalism, minimal governments, and free markets. In order to truly understand and appreciate the emergence and consolidation of the Hungarian solution to migration, it needs to be approached through the domestic context as well as from the two imagined, constitutive outsides, Western Europe and the Balkans. What emerges is a strategic employment of these two moral hierarchies, and a positioning on what I term the East-South axis, that legitimizes the Hungarian solution.

16 Press release, European Parliament, 17 May 2017, “Fundamental rights in Hungary: MEPs call for triggering Article 7”, available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20170511IPR74350/fundamental-rights-in-hungary-meps-call-for-triggering-article-7> (accessed 13/06/2017).

In July 2016, the European Commission proposed a new legislative framework for common European asylum policy.¹⁷ Many of the elements in this new policy, such as regular review of asylum statuses, detention as a means of deterrence and most crucially, the adoption of a legal fence by considering Turkey and Serbia as safe third countries, reflect the policies included in the Hungarian solution. As Tošić (2017), and indeed also the Hungarian government, note, the initial juxtaposition of Germany's "tolerant" migration policy with Hungary's restrictive one has given way to increasing understanding of the Hungarian solution to migration (Tošić, 2017: 152). In order to understand the turbulent landscape of European migration policy and the place of Hungary therein, the analysis of individual countries' policies necessarily needs to be located in the wider context, where migration policy becomes also a manifestation of different understandings and imaginations of Europe as both a symbolic and material location.

As Dzenovska (2016) argues, crises provide an opportunity to reassert and redefine Europeanness. Just as the Europeanness of Greece was questioned during the financial crisis, since the summer of migration in 2015 the Europeanness of numerous Eastern European countries came into question with their perceived deficiency of compassion towards refugees. While advancing a particular idea of Europe, the Hungarian government has used this underlying quest for Europeanness to its advantage in positioning itself as the frontier. What emerges, then, is not one divide, but rather an assemblage of centre-periphery divides on which the rhetoric of the Hungarian government relies. The construction of Balkans as a violent, external space within Europe allowed for the Hungarian government to posit itself as the defender of Europe: the country's position in the supposed "front lines" signals the Fidesz government's attempt to provincialize Western Europe and catapult Hungary from the waiting room of its postsocialist history (Chakrabarty, 2007) to the front rows of European policy-making as a proudly Eastern European leader.

17 Press release, European Commission, 13 July 2016, "Completing the reform of the Common European Asylum System: towards an efficient, fair and humane asylum policy" available at http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-2433_en.htm (accessed 13/06/2017).

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Annastiina Kallius

The East-South Axis: Legitimizing the “Hungarian Solution to Migration”

The Hungarian solution to migration is a policy package consisting of three elements: selective closure of borders, series of deterrents, and governmental xenophobic discourse and propaganda campaigns. This policy package is legitimized by the Hungarian government's strategic self-positioning as the “frontier of Europe.” This position is enabled by interwoven moral divides of the European space: the east/west and the Europe/Balkans. At the same time, the Hungarian solution is anchored to a series of domestic political manoeuvres that advance a hegemonic discourse of citizenship and attempt to exclude domestic, marginalized populations from the public sphere. In order to understand the Hungarian government's punitive approach to migration, its policy needs to be examined in the domestic context, on the one hand, and in relation to those European moral hierarchies that are used to legitimize these policies, on the other. This article is a contribution to discussion on the dynamics of European peripheries in relation to migration and location.

L'axe Est-Sud : légitimer la « solution hongroise à la migration »

La solution hongroise à la migration est un ensemble de politiques comprenant trois éléments : la fermeture sélective des frontières, une série de moyens de dissuasion et un discours gouvernemental xénophobe aux côtés de campagnes de propagande. Cet ensemble de politiques est légitimé par le gouvernement ayant stratégiquement proclamé la Hongrie comme « la frontière de l'Europe ». Cette position est rendue possible par les divisions morales qui s'enchevêtrent dans l'espace européen : divisions est/ouest et Europe/Balkans. Dans le même temps, la solution hongroise repose sur plusieurs stratagèmes de politiques publiques internes promouvant un discours hégémonique de citoyenneté tout en favorisant l'exclusion de la sphère publique des populations nationales marginalisées. Afin de comprendre l'approche punitive du gouvernement hongrois à l'égard de la migration, sa politique doit être examinée d'une part, dans son contexte national et d'autre part, à la lumière des hiérarchies morales européennes utilisées pour légitimer ces politiques. Cet article entend contribuer à la discussion sur la dynamique des périphéries européennes en relation avec la migration et les territoires.

El eje Este-Sur: legitimación de la «solución húngara a la migración»

La solución húngara a la migración es un paquete de políticas que consta de tres elementos: el cierre selectivo de las fronteras, una serie de medidas disuasorias y el discurso gubernamental xenófobo y las campañas de propaganda. Este paquete de políticas está legitimado por el autopoicionamiento estratégico del gobierno húngaro como la «frontera de Europa». Esta posición está habilitada por divisiones morales entrelazadas del espacio europeo: la división este/oeste y Europa/Balcanes. Al mismo tiempo, la solución húngara se basa en una serie de maniobras políticas internas del gobierno que promueven el discurso hegemónico de la ciudadanía e intentan excluir a las poblaciones domésticas marginadas de la esfera pública. Para entender el enfoque punitivo de la migración del gobierno húngaro, su política debe ser examinada en el contexto nacional, por un lado, y las jerarquías morales europeas que se utilizan para legitimar estas políticas, por el otro. Este artículo es una contribución al debate sobre la dinámica de las periferias europeas en relación con la migración y la ubicación.