

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

CONTINUITY OR CHANGE: MAPPING NATIONALISM'S
RE-EMERGENCE WITH REFERENCE TO HUNGARY AND
INDIA

by
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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This thesis will attempt to analyse the rightward shift of nationalism after its re-emergence as a mode of politics by considering the rise of national-populism in Hungary and India and its implications for democratic politics more broadly. From an emancipatory ideology, nationalism has mutated into a political style used to oppress and exclude minorities within a state's population. Through the course of the work we will break down the core components of nationalism and show how they construct a political reality that is inherently divisive and leaves lasting socio-political issues unresolved. Though the world has never been more connected, nationalism, a politics which raises one identity above all others, has achieved considerable success as a means of framing the political in at least one state on every continent. Within the global system there are innumerate social, economic and even epidemical challenges posed to the current state-structure yet paradoxically it is nationalism newly reformatted which has been adopted as a one-size-fits-all solution.

Through the course of the analysis the two core case studies are set against one of the original nationalist movements – that of the German unification project. The purpose of this comparison is to show how nationalism has changed over the course of two centuries whilst also revealing some of the inherently problematic trends of nationalism through history which have returned to the fore with particular potency today. The evidence provided by the study of the movements in Hungary and India is applied to draw wider conclusions as to how the new face of nationalism has been able to prove such a powerful mobiliser in different states' democratic elections and to understand why this method of framing is so adaptable and resilient.

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CHAPTER I

THESIS OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this thesis is to show nationalism as a political concept which has returned to vogue but in an altogether more unpleasant guise. The crucial distinction to be made is between the nationalism of the anti-imperialist and state-building periods and its electoral incarnations today. The key question can be framed as - *if nationalism was designed for independence movements and state-formation, how and why has it been able to adapt and rise to prominence again, enabling electoral victories in Hungary and India and setting a template that can be followed by others in the wider world?* In part the answer lies with the innovative strategies employed by nationalists which are well-designed to capitalise on the mood of the electorate. There is an acknowledgement that nationalism today – unlike in the period of German unification used as a historical comparison – must secure votes. However, this thesis also attempts to contextualise what different electorates' susceptibility to new nationalism is built on and why, despite the claims of nationalists, electing advocates of this style will do nothing to remedy existing political issues and could actually make them worse.

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This thesis' central premise is to underscore that nationalism has always held an inherently destructive potential but that the true ramifications of this are only now being realised. It was important, then, to operationalise the first articulations of nationalism and establish a lineage of nationalist thought that reaches to present day. This required analysis of the vocabulary employed in nationalism's foundation texts and to separate nationalism as a thematic trend in politics, but also in literature and poetry. Nationalism, more than most politics, requires a coherent people to mobilise under its flag, and identifying the diffusion of nationalist thought beyond the work of academics in this early period is testament to the success of that device. There is a major trend towards populism as a contemporary political model but one which also focuses on the mobilisation of peoples. The work done on populism provides a useful theoretical base on which to build an analysis of present-day nationalism and there are significant overlaps in the operative processes of both political styles. Adapting the template provided by scholars of populism provides a means of considering why the rhetorical devices identified in early nationalism are still successful, but also roots the study in the present day, providing fair cause to update the historical components where necessary. This process of updating rather than translating across at face value requires an evaluation of the successes of the old methods and is built on comparative analyses. As the study reaches the events of the last few years it has also been necessary to return to non-academic work by referring to the outputs of modern media. This serves two purposes. First, it updates the evidence base to include statements and incidents not yet

the subject of academic writing, but more potently a full criticism of media methods reveals their central importance to the construction of nationalist modes of discourse. The research spans a lengthy time period and a broad geographical range which both pose problems around comprehension which have necessitated a predominant reliance on English language sources or translations.

A. Historical Foundations

The German tradition is effective for the purpose of considering the initial emergence of nationalism as there can be identified a clear distinction between the ‘national identity’ which the German nationalists espoused, and the politicising of this identity - converting it into a fledgling German nationalism with the aims of securing a German state. Different examples in the works of German political philosophers and artists provide the antecedents for the heart of the study, feeding directly into the arguments made about cultural homogeneity and the denial of other forms of identity and politics, the utilisation of false history to secure a shared ancestry, and the fundamental point about the creation of a nationalist ‘Other’. Though much of the German work was academic, the dialogue considering the importance of strongmen and leadership types is also founded on sources which elaborate on, for example, how the German professor Friedrich Jahn manifest his nationalist thinking by wearing an invented German costume and hosting book-burnings of anti-German literature.¹ Jahn was born in 1778, yet the radical and performative style of his politics provides one of the clearest connections to contemporary nationalists. It is also with him that for the

¹ Peter Vierek on Friedrich Jahn in *Metapolitics: From Wagner and the German Romantics to Hitler*, (London, 2004). And Benjamin Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style and Representation*, (Stanford, 2016).

first time the dangers of nationalism, which this thesis aims to illustrate, become most obvious.

The second founding for the research components relies on this link between past and present. Though the German nationalist movement created much of the early literature on the subject and formed a solid template to be transposed between movements, nationalism now is a global phenomenon with more similarities between the politics that are propped up by the mode than in the different national identities that have been politicised. With that in mind, there is an attempt to update each of these components by tracking them through two periods of imperial decline and then up to the present day. For the sake of coherence whilst studying this transition, this thesis will examine two supporting nationalist movements, which both emerged in dominions of different kinds. India's new nationalism is analysed as first it brought them freedom from the British empire, but now has led to harsh repression and divisive policies targeted towards minorities and particularly their Muslim population, while Hungary is used as an example of a nation which seceded from an ideological empire, the USSR, but now provides the stage for some of Europe's most virulent anti-immigrant rhetoric. Both cases overlap with the German benchmark in different areas. Indian nationalism has a similar tradition of false history angled with an ethnic tilt, as well as a willingness to rely on enmity with Pakistan to shore up internal unity. In the leadership sphere, Narendra Modi is part of the new order, as is his Hungarian counterpart Viktor Orbán. The Hungarian case is most useful to support an argument structured around culture war theory, as exploring how 'anti-communism' was insufficient as a state ideology once communism no longer had any remaining adherents provides an insight into new

nationalism as a replacement for ideology, just as nationalism was once posed a replacement for religion.

B. Applying Theory

Though India, Hungary, and the German nationalists provide three poles for the study, the implications of the argument are far broader. Nationalism is a universal issue even as it purports to only speak for one nation at a time. The central components of the analysis have been chosen for their significance and their prevalence and so other states' examples are included where they help to illustrate change – there is no undue favour shown to one nationalist ideologue over another. To bring the varied elements together and most accurately reflect the contemporary context this study must include an analysis of populism, which is accurately defined by Cas Mudde, as a voice for politics rather than a politics in and of itself.² Thus far, relatively little has been done to view the rise of new nationalism through the populist lens, though both modes have been discussed frequently enough. Much has been written about why populism is not an inherently left-wing or right-wing voice, but this essay suggests that it is much more effectively applied to right-wing exclusivist politics, of which nationalism is the current dominant form.

C. Media Analyses

Finally, underpinning the body of the work, it is important to consider the role of new media in controlling nationalist narratives. It remains to be seen whether a moral

² Cas Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist' in *Government and Opposition* vol.39, no.4 (Autumn 2004), pp.541-563.

judgement could be applied to those who actively go out and support anti-immigrant, racialised or religiously imbued harmful rhetoric and policies, whether it is an unavoidable psychological spectre of tribalism – which was for so long an Orientalist judgement of anywhere non-Western – or whether in fact the new nationalists were amongst the first to adapt to whole new ways of guaranteeing electoral dominance, creating a form of democratic autocracy enforced by emotive claims and bewilderment brought about by information abundance. The bulk of the thesis is bookended by the populist and media narrative considerations, as they are applicable to all nations and are best representative of the threat nationalism might hold, even to those not currently under its sway. The focus on the role of the media has also prompted a greater usage of primary source journalistic reporting than is usual as this best reflects quite how contemporary some of the subjects of the study are. Contrastingly, the heart of the thesis focuses more closely on the chosen case-studies and the employed methodologies, with a pre-existing wealth of academic analysis, that make up this accelerating political threat. There is a distinction between the theorists' understanding of nationalism, from the anti-colonial period to its ugly current incarnations, and the actual practice of nationalism in the political sphere, which this research's choice of sources attempts to bridge.

CHAPTER III

INTRODUCTION

Nationalism has emerged as one of the dominant political dialogues of the decade past and with all likelihood will remain so for the decade to come. There has been a wealth of new nationalist parties created and beyond these the seeping influence of the nationalist mode of framing can be felt in prior established parties too. In a world system where state borders have mostly been agreed upon, albeit reluctantly, and where there are few direct interstate conflicts, this seems anachronistic.³ Perhaps even more surprising is that nationalism is now most often referred to as a political tool within democratic states; a means of ensuring electoral success against established elites rather than a mode of mobilising your population against foreign invaders. What is it about national-populism then that has enabled it to sweep to success in such disparate locations facing such disparate political challenges?

In Hungary and India, nationalism has come to come to dominate domestic politics. Together they serve as the modern case studies to be referred to throughout this thesis, with their formations set against the historic German nationalist and unionist movement. In this process nationalism is tracked from its earliest incarnation through to two linked but non-identical faces for a movement which under the same name now pursues very different goals. Hungary and India are by no means representative of all new nationalist formations but as former colonies themselves they serve to bring into focus some of the most obvious contradictions of new nationalism when it aligns itself

³ There are just three active interstate conflicts at time of writing, according to **The Council of Foreign Relations** <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/?category=usConflictStatus&conflictType=1101>

with what were once emancipatory movements. India fought for Independence in a protracted social conflict against the “direct” rule of the British empire, whilst Hungary maintained its cultural difference under a lengthy period of ideological domination as part of the Soviet Bloc. Both country’s prior experiences with imperialism have coloured their nationalist formations today, whilst they are further differentiated by their geographical location, cultural norms and the weighting of their methods for generating support. They are crucially also both led by two of the most secure parties and leaders of any state to have elected nationalists, which renders them instructive cases now that nationalism is predominantly an electoral mode. Alongside India and Hungary, where necessary, other contemporary examples are drawn upon to widen the frame of reference. However, every component of nationalism analysed in this thesis is present in both of those states to varying degrees, and either matched to or distinct from a German precursor, demonstrating that even with their difference there is a core “playbook” for electoral nationalism.

This thesis opens with a consideration of populism, for that is what has redefined nationalism giving it its new face as an aggressive electoral strategy rather than a nation-building or nation-freeing political mode. This is followed by an analysis of the usage of the “Nationalist Other” in Chapter 2, a fundamental tenet and the means of dividing a state’s population by defining the Self and the Non-Self and setting them against each other. This divide is familiar to populism and nationalism both, though rarely ever before has nationalism applied the divide within the state where it is at its most dangerous. Despite the potency of this framing, these definitions are by their very nature ever-changing and so to support them requires artifice. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the way in which a recourse to falsified history has accomplished this.

Democratic politics vary, with some democracies built around party systems, while others are more dependent on single figures representing their side. Nationalism within democracies has elevated the role of the figurehead and Chapter 4 breaks down the now central importance of the leader. A second contemporary adaptation of nationalism is the support provided directly and indirectly by modern forms of media and following this the ease with which national-populists have been able to manipulate mainstream and new social media channels is examined in Chapter 5. In the final chapter, Chapter 6, the culture war paradigm is compared with early nationalism's focus on cultural unification. Ultimately it is argued that identity politics has come to supplant ideological politics, with potentially disastrous consequences. But, to explain this transition from nigh-on a century of liberal democratic politics to a destructive and exclusivist mode of political formation it is first necessary to provide a starting point for nationalism against which its developments during its re-emergence can be measured.

A. A Historical Overview

A history of an idea requires an understanding of the foundational tenets for that concept paralleled with some understanding of the context in which it emerged. For nationalism to spread as an ideology there would logically need to be two preceding ideas; the nation-state and national identity. This, however, is the last bastion of logic applicable to nationalism. Defying logic in the first incidence the nationalist political culture emerged 'from the universalism of the Enlightenment' in the 18th century and for the second paradox, Enlightenment discussions of national identity preceded those

of the nation state.⁴ It is to national identity that attention should be directed first then, particularly as it still underpins nationalism today. John G. Hayman wrote a seminal account of these theories, but as he wrote in 1971 before there was a widespread understanding of the power of “identity” his study is framed around ‘national characters.’⁵ He argued that the Enlightenment period’s obsession with national characters was reflective of an ‘intellectual activity of central importance in the eighteenth century – namely the practice of drawing distinctions within the controlling framework of generalisation.’⁶ Replicating his own conception of national characters as lacking the same political potential as an identity, he found their writings to be academic endeavours and part of a broader intellectual thrust towards categorisation. Crucially, as these theorists wrestled with the possible causes for difference between national characters there was an ingrained acceptance that such national characters were not fixed or inherent. When compared with many modern understandings of national identity that nuance alone would undermine contemporary nationalism.

One of the earliest essayists to address national character was Montesquieu, who offered a selection of possible influences on their development including ‘the climate, the religion, the laws, the maxims of government, the history, the mores.’⁷ The ordering of these is worthy of note as the singling out of climate may seem like a forefather of later racial arguments, but in fact is indicative only of how naïve these first attempts to

⁴ Vicki Spencer, ‘Herder and Nationalism: Reclaiming the Principle of Cultural Respect’ in the *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 43 Issue 1, (January 1997), p.1.

⁵ John G. Hayman, ‘Notions of National Characters in the Eighteenth Century’ in *Huntington Library Quarterly* Vol. 35, No.1, (November 1971), pp.1-17.

⁶ *Ibid*, p.1.

⁷ Montesquieu, *L’Esprit des Lois*, (Paris, 1869), P.275.

delineate peoples were. David Hume challenged Montesquieu's conception by preferring moral causes for national character difference such as the mode of government, 'the revolutions of public affairs' or the 'plenty or penury in which the people live.'⁸ This was an advancement from his predecessor built from Hume's view of national peoples themselves as 'nothing but a collection of individuals.'⁹ What singles a people out, he thought, was not their existence as a separate group imbued with a special and innate character. Instead they are singled out only by the ingrained impact of their moral causes and by the 'imitative nature' of human minds that interact only with one another.¹⁰ The value granted to each of Hume's different causes, or each of Montesquieu's, can be questioned – there is far more sociological research on the subject now, but in the Enlightenment national characters were considered loose categorisations anchored to specific but wide-ranging contextual factors.

However, Hume also predicted the transition that was to come. He theorised that national characters would become intransigent identities as they were taken on from the academic field by the 'vulgar,' who would 'carry all national characters to extremes... (and) admit no exception.'¹¹ Though Hume and Montesquieu may have seen their debate around the subject as a means of arguing that peoples had fundamental similarities and that their differences were only the result of their environments, by categorising in the first place they took the first steps onto what would become a long and slippery slope. Theory once it takes hold will be applied to reality though not

⁸ David Hume, 'Essay XXI: Of National Characters' in *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects in Two Volumes*, Vol. I (London, 1742), p.214.

⁹ Ibid, p.215.

¹⁰ Ibid, p.218

¹¹ Ibid, p.214

always in the way the theorist intends. The neat categorisation between philosopher and ‘vulgar’ horde is itself an oversimplification as buried within a footnote in Hume’s article is an expression of his own prejudice. He stated that ‘I am apt to suspect the negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites.’¹² The racism of the claim could for some be explained away by the time period but even so, Hume undercuts his own argument made so effectively previously as he supports this claim with the lazy speculation that ‘such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction between these breeds of men.’¹³

As with any idea, its articulation rarely develops linearly in one direction and Hayman found more hope in the work of John Rutledge, who followed Hume, by reiterating the argument that it was ‘a nation’s government’ that can ‘affect the minutiae of its social and moral character,’ but this time stripped of racial exceptions.¹⁴ Now, nationalism is most recognisable as an internal political doctrine but the claim of nationalist parties is quite the inverse. First, they believe the identity group are fundamentally different to a range of minority groups, and then that the government’s role is to style itself as best as is possible to serve that identity group alone. The illustrative comparison between Enlightenment perspectives and those of today can be sustained with reference to the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau argued progressively that a select character could be grown in a population and that it was ‘education that you must count on to shape the souls of the citizens in a national

¹² Ibid, Footnote 10, pp.214-229

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Hayman, ‘Notions of National Characters in the Eighteenth Century’, p.14.

pattern.’¹⁵ This too no longer fits the prevailing viewpoint. Nationalist governments in power would argue that they are the representatives of a unique people (dependent on the state they rise in) and that they are only reproducing the nationalist sentiment of the voting population, rather than shaping it. The shift in perspectives around this process of identity formation is partially rooted in how the state is viewed. The Enlightenment theorists wrote prior to the universal proliferation of the nation-state and so had a frame of reference that understood that political power within a state could shape the people, Rutledge more so than Rousseau. In the post-Enlightenment nation-state system, political power stems directly from the national population, or at least is claimed to do so. Within a nation-state then national identity can become a political force.

B. The Nation-State System

It is possible once again to combine Enlightenment origins with contemporary analyses when considering the proliferation of the nation-state. From the end of the Enlightenment in an uninterrupted span onwards that structure has been treated as an ideal. In the words of Rousseau the strength of a nation-state was in its assurance that ‘the Sovereign recognises only the body of the nation, and draws no distinctions between the body and each of its members.’¹⁶ This triumphant equality may seem dissonant with the lived realities of those in the approximately ‘95 percent’ of independent states which were also nation-states as of the year 2000, but the idea

¹⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau (trans. Willmoore Kendall), ‘The Government of Poland’, (Indianapolis, 1985), p.19.

¹⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ‘Chapter 4: The Limits of Sovereign Power’ in *The Social Contract: Book II*, (1762) accessed via <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/economics/rousseau/social-contract/ch02.htm>

remains vaunted with power and assumed truth.¹⁷ David Miller writing more than 200 years after the Enlightenment claimed similarly that the nation-state is the ‘one possible form in which overall community can be realised in modern societies.’¹⁸ To dispel some of these persistent illusions it is worth completing the analysis of Andreas Wimmer and Yuval Feinstein from 2000 - that of those independent states, while 95 percent were nation-states, ‘less than 50 percent... were democracies.’¹⁹ In reality nation-states were a way of sectioning off an area to govern just like any political construction before them. Nation-states, unlike previous state-structures, however, thus far, endure.

The nation-state system evolved after conceptions of national character and took longer to spread as political realities always prove harder to bed in than political ideas. This slow start was not obstructive though as the analysis of Wimmer and Feinstein into the expansion of the nation-state structure found that it is ‘now almost universally adopted.’²⁰ There are innumerate theories for how the nation-state became the norm but their statistical research, which considers 145 states since 1816, is perhaps most convincing. They tested the economic modernisation theory of Ernest Gellner, the political modernisation theories of Charles Tilley and Michael Hechter and the cultural modernisation theory of Benedict Anderson and found all to be insufficient.²¹ Instead, they argue that once the nation-state system existed in one place, by a domino-effect

¹⁷ Andreas Wimmer and Yuval Feinstein, ‘The Rise of the Nation-State across the World, 1816 to 2001’ in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 75, No. 5 (2010), p.773.

¹⁸ David Miller, *Market, State, and Community: Theoretical Foundations of Market Socialism*, (Oxford, 1989), p.245.

¹⁹ Wimmer and Feinstein, ‘The Rise of the Nation-State across the World, 1816 to 2001’, p.773.

²⁰ Ibid, p.765.

²¹ Ibid, p.767

nations begun to emerge elsewhere. As with national characters the birthplace of the first nation-states was Europe and David Held argued that to some extent the ‘story of the formation of the modern state is in part the story of the formation of Europe.’²² More tellingly when considering how the nation-state system spread globally, as it would have had to for nationalism to be the international phenomenon it is today, he continued that ‘the state system of Europe has had an extraordinary influence in the world beyond Europe.’²³ According to Wimmer and Feinstein, the exportation of the European state system worked predominantly by proximate states becoming nations and once the genie of nationalism was let out of the bottle ‘nationalists (would) create nation states, whether or not nations have already been built.’²⁴

C. Nationalism: A Working Definition

From the origins and spread of national character then the origins and spread of the nation-state system, we have the required blocks to build an understanding of nationalism – that spectre which grew to, as Ernest Gellner put it - ‘invent nations where they do not exist,’ from those few areas where they did.²⁵ Nationalism has been a complex changing politics but in its most simple form it is a politicisation of national identity, within a nation-state. It’s definition according to the Political Encyclopaedia is that it is ‘an ideology – and by far the most potent ideology in the world.’²⁶ To be

²² David Held, ‘The Development of the Modern State’ in Bram Gieben and Stuart Hall (eds.) *The Formations of Modernity*, (Oxford, 1992), p.72.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Wimmer and Feinstein, ‘The Rise of the Nation-State across the World, 1816 to 2001’, p.767.

²⁵ Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change*, (London, 1972), p.169.

²⁶ Brian Barry, ‘Nationalism’ in the *Blackwell Political Encyclopaedia*, (Oxford, 2004), p.353.

deemed as such, quite so dramatically, and in an encyclopaedia of all places should make the subject a magnet for research. Yet nationalism has also been critiqued by many political scientists (perhaps because of its effects) with Karl Deutsch skewering it as the politics of ‘a group of people united by a common error about their ancestry and a common dislike of their neighbours.’²⁷ A tentative middle-ground might suggest that nationalism is worthy of study because it is now omnipresent, but also at its most fallible and destructive. The contention of this thesis is that whilst there have existed periods of “justified nationalism,” during which times states sought real and achievable aims through a politicisation of their national identity, contemporary nationalism rallies supporters with no articulated aim. This is so contrary to its encyclopaedic definition that it can scarcely even be described as an ideology. Throughout this degrading process nationalism has distracted from the problems democratic politics are supposed to solve and the only recognisable components of nationalism in its electoral form are the strategies that are employed to deceive.

In seeking out the characteristics of nationalism it was necessary to track its developmental history. We have shown how nationalism emerged from national characters and the nation-state but how did the earliest incarnation of nationalism, nationalism as an ideal, mutate into the unbridled nationalism of Viktor Orbán and Narendra Modi? To answer that question we must bridge the gap from “justified nationalism” to “unjustified nationalism,” from new politics to established philosophy, from state-building to state-destroying and in the process reveal the inherent issues of nationalism as the apex of identity politics.

²⁷ Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Its Alternatives*, (New York, 1969), p.3.

D. From Justified to Unjustified Nationalism

Wimmer and Feinstein's analysis of state formation includes a figure showing the number of nation-states created per five-year period, with notable spikes in the 1820s, 1950s and 1990s.²⁸ Loosely these spikes can be mapped onto peaks of high nationalist political activity, as traditionally speaking - nationalist politics has been about either state formation or state expansion. The first true active nationalist movement was that of the German unionists whose key period of action Ute Planert identified as from 1740-1830 – intersecting neatly with the first of Wimmer and Feinstein's spikes.²⁹ Their nationalism sought to bring together the princely states and form a new nation-state unifying those populations that shared a German national character. This provides the starting point for this study of nationalism. The German example introduced many of the nationalist methods and had a clear and recognisable goal. It took some time for nationalist politics to spread, but not the 130 years indicated by the two authors' chart. Though there is no spike, it was in the 1920s that the idea of nationalism re-emerged, but under a different name – self-determination.

The concept of self-determination, like the nation-state and discourses on national characters, had its origins in the Enlightenment. John Stuart Mill argued that 'where the sentiment of nationality exists in any force, there is a prima facie case for uniting all the members of the nationality under the same government... this is merely saying the question of government ought to be decided by the governed.'³⁰ The sentiment

²⁸ Wimmer and Feinstein, 'The Rise of the Nation State across the World, 1816 to 2001', p.765.

²⁹ Ute Planert, 'Wann beginnt der "moderne" deutsche Nationalismus?' in Jörg Echternkamp and Sven-Oliver Müller (eds.) '*Politik der Nation. Deutscher Nationalismus in Krieg and Krisen 1760-1960*', (Munich, 2002), pp.25-59.

³⁰ John Stuart Mill, 'Utilitarianism, Liberty, Representative Government', (London, 1910), pp.360-361.

of nationality was easily repressed by the expansionist imperial regimes of Europe however. Movements towards self-determination had no chance of success until the 1920s when this reframed principle now termed self-determination became one of the principles of the League of Nations as they looked towards a global restructuring in the aftermath of the First World War. Self-determination remained closely tied to ideas around the nation-state and national character, for to rule yourselves you had to prove that you had a claim to a specific territory and existed as a coherent people. This burden of proof is where the protracted debate on the principle began and it is because of the multiple interpretations of this reasoning that the next wave of state creation did not arrive for another 30 years. As David George shows in his analysis, there is huge ambiguity as ‘there is no agreed definition, legal or otherwise of a “people” and thus there is no legal definition of nationhood.’³¹ There were presumably idealists who sought to grant new peoples new states, but without imperial incentives these initiatives were halted. Jörg Fisch summarises that ‘decolonisation and self-determination were to be granted when the colonial peoples had reached a sufficient level of maturity.’³² This is an evidently patronising perspective, but an even greater obstacle to the idea of nationalism was that it was to be defined from the outside. Proscriptive nation-building was not to last for long though. The spirit of nationalism under the guise of self-determination had been articulated and the artificial checks created were immediately threatened by the same people self-determination was supposed to be withheld from.

³¹ David George, ‘The Right of National Self Determination’ in *History of European Ideas*, Vol. 16, No. 4-6, (1993), p.508.

³² Jörg Fisch(trans. Anita Mage), ‘The Right of Self-Determination of People: The Domestication of an Illusion’, (Cambridge, 2015), p.196.

For colonial populations self-determination was the endpoint and nationalism the vehicle for reaching it. This is vital in our understanding of a justified or unjustified politics - the nationalism of this second wave was against imperial oppressors and for the construction of a new state, both of which are aims nationalism was the only suitable politics to achieve. Former colonies fought for 'economic and above all political independence.'³³ Some were granted their independence as empires withdrew whilst others fought victoriously for it, forcing the colonial powers out. In 1970, the United Nations General Assembly declared that 'the further continuation of colonialism in all its forms and manifestations is a crime.'³⁴ So closed one chapter of nationalist politics, the reclaiming of territories from imperial forces and self-government from London or Paris.

Nationalism is not confined singularly to state creation however, or it would have no voice today. As Hilal Khashan and Michael Nehme showed in their analysis of new nationalist movements as recently as 1996, even in those instances where self-determination had been nominally achieved, the story was not over.³⁵ The issue with European withdrawal was that on leaving a territory there remained a colonial legacy and the imperial powers often ensured that 'the state was built from above.'³⁶ Though the initial criteria for self-determination had been a territory and a people, little attention was paid to these technicalities, and 'the Europeans created artificial entities in Africa' as they did across the world, 'that did not correspond to the continent's ethnic, language

³³ Ibid, p.203.

³⁴ The United Nations, G.A. Res. 2621 (XXV), art. 1. U.N. Doc. A/RES/2621(XXV) (Oct. 10, 1970).

³⁵ Hilal Khashan and Michel Nehme, 'The Making of Stalled National Movements: Evidence from South Sudan and Northern Iraq', in *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol.2, No.1 (1996), pp.111-140.

³⁶ Ibid, p.115.

and cultural realities.’³⁷ The success of the German nationalist movement was founded on ethnic, cultural and linguistic appeals and any state that contained significant variance in any or all of those categories was likely to face multiple conflicting internal mobilisations of the powerful political nationalism. In a globalised world, those inconsistencies have sprung up everywhere and so too have the seeds of nationalism, but the former colonies were most at risk of this and even the ever-positive Fisch summarised that ‘speaking of a right of self-determination was misleading – one could at best speak of the right of populations in former colonial territories to a state without the colonial borders.’³⁸

Set alongside the original example of German nationalism, this thesis pivots on two further case studies – chosen because they have transitioned from justified nationalism, to unjustified nationalism. The first of these is India. Indian nationalism fits neatly within the anticolonial movements set out above succeeding as it did in formalising a state and removing the British imperial presence. India is an emblematic example of nationalism, as noted by Wimmer and Feinstein who reflected upon the ‘powerful demonstration effect that Indian independence had on many nationalist movements in the British Empire,’ though the circumstances of partition on the basis of religion mean that the realisation of that movement was comparatively unique.³⁹ India is considered the only state to have transitioned from a colony directly to a democracy and today also proudly proclaims itself to be the world’s largest democratic state. In a population of 1.35 billion 79% identify as Hindu and Indian electoral nationalism has

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Fisch, ‘The Right of Self-Determination of People’, p.217.

³⁹ Wimmer and Feinstein, ‘The Rise of the Nation State across the World, 1816 to 2001’, p.781.

now given a particular voice to that majority.⁴⁰ The ruling party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are Hindu nationalists and have swept to power with huge victories in the two most recent elections, reflecting an increasingly prevalent anti-Muslim sentiment in the supposedly secular state. This religious element is the most obvious indicator of change in Indian nationalism and reflects one of the defining principles of an unjustified nationalist movement – turning on an internal minority in an attempt to redefine citizenship and secure majority democratic support.

The second case study employed in parallel is that of Hungary. While Indian nationalism spanned the imperial period and peaked with the securing of independence in 1947 before re-emerging in the last decade, the Hungarian example works to a different timeline. Rather than contesting with the first wave of imperialism, Hungary was subsumed into an ideologically structured empire as part of the Soviet Union during this second imperialist wave. The nationalist movements that contributed to the union's eventual collapse had to operate differently and mobilise against a less visible oppression than if under direct rule. However, this also meant there existed already a strong conception of what the state would look like without external involvement and so 'having secured sovereign spaces following the collapse of the world's largest multi-ethnic federation,' the process of 'nation-building' should have been smoother.⁴¹ That Hungary, like India, is now ruled by a nationalist party, Fidesz under Viktor Orbán, reflects a similar turn from a politics of nation-building to a means of consolidating an exclusivist pseudo-right-wing power within the democratic structure. To compare the

⁴⁰ All India Religion Census Data 2011 in *Census 2011*, accessed at <https://www.census2011.co.in/religion.php> on 9th October 2020.

⁴¹ Graham Smith, Vivien Law, Andrew Wilson, Annette Bohr, Edward Allworth, *Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identities*, (Cambridge, 1998), p.1.

cases, Hungary and India are vastly different states with vastly different experiences of outsider control that secured Independence proper almost 50 years apart from each other. That both have now revived the vehicles of their emancipation but as part of an otherwise conservative political mode is indicative of the scale and success of new nationalism.

This third wave of nationalism, after the realisation of self-determination and after the freeing from ideological imperialism, has emerged without the fanfare or tell-tale signs of new state creations or expansive territorial conflicts. Judged on those parameters it has been a fairly anticlimactic resurrection. Jamie Gruffydd-Jones showed there have been some external effects to the embedding of nationalism finding that ‘in the two months following national days, conflict is markedly higher than would be expected – almost 30% more likely than the rest of the year,’ and there are a few tragic examples of unresolved national conflicts resulting in new casualties, but for the most part nationalism has become an internalised phenomenon.⁴² This means that the consequences are also internal. Some scholars of nationalism including Kai Nielsen claim that nations then ‘do not now, whatever may have been the case in the past, have an ethnic nationalist agenda,’ and that ‘their nationalism, if it exists, is not exclusionist.’⁴³ If that were the case, there would be little cause for concern. This is misleading though. Anomalous occasions of interstate violence are not the crux of the

⁴² Jamie Gruffydd-Jones, ‘Dangerous Days: The Impact of Nationalism on Interstate Conflict’ in *Security Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (2017), p.698.

⁴³ Kai Nielsen, ‘Cultural Nationalism, Neither Ethnic nor Civic’ in Omar Dahbour (ed.) *Philosophical Perspectives on National Identity*, Special Volume *Philosophical Forum*, Vol. 28 Nos. 1-2 (1996-1997) p.46.

problem, nor is ethnic nationalism any longer the chosen method of operation.

Nationalism has found a different voice and a different purpose.

Vladimir Lenin once claimed that ‘the best conditions for the development of capitalism are undoubtedly provided by the nation state.’⁴⁴ Repurposed, this commentary provides an outline for why right-wing politics might have attempted to rejuvenate nationalist discourse. Capitalism is now a global economic system without any strong opposition, yet it is still not without its crises. Just as the nation-state once helped to build capitalism in territory after territory, the international political tilt towards nationalism protects capitalist interests, often during periods of relative crisis, in each country that elects a new nationalist. In 1952, Aneurin Bevan defined conservative politics as a series of attempts to answer the question ‘how can wealth persuade poverty to use its political freedom to keep wealth in power?’⁴⁵ Nationalism is the most effective answer to that question today. To complement these leftist critiques and integrate this development into a longer chronology, Klaus von Beyme’s investigation into post-war right-wing extremism is illustrative. Von Beyme identified three waves of right-wing movements with the third, aligning with our analysis of third-wave nationalism.⁴⁶ He wrote of that phase that it capitalised on the causal factor of ‘unemployment and xenophobia at the end of a long prosperous period.’⁴⁷ Though published in 1988, this account exactly parallels the crisis context of new nationalism.

⁴⁴ Vladimir I. Lenin, ‘The Right of Nations to Self-Determination’ in *Collected Works*, Vol.20 (Moscow, 1977) p.400.

⁴⁵ Aneurin Bevan, ‘In Place of Fear’, (London, 1952), p.3.

⁴⁶ Klaus von Beyme, ‘Right-wing Extremism in Post-War Europe’ in *West European Politics*, Vol.11 No.2, (1988), pp.1-18.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.11.

New nationalism models itself as an alternative to traditional conservative, right-of-centre politics and is built from the same incentives, but in action draws on boundary discourses familiar to the extreme right. This is what makes new nationalism unjustified, and dangerous.

The issues with nationalism predate this unjustified third wave. As early as World War 2, before the greatest successes of the mode, Fisch critiqued a ‘perversion... which had led to mass extermination and expulsions.’⁴⁸ For Omar Dahbour, self-determination and nationalism could have been decoupled. He argued that ‘the transformation of political self-determination into national self-determination is neither a necessary nor an inevitable entailment of the idea itself.’⁴⁹ Though Dahbour is blessed with the courage of his convictions and goes on to suggest ‘postnational sovereignty,’ the timing of his writing could not be worse.⁵⁰ He is confronting a global trend that is strong in each of its incarnations and, as once was successful in Germany, is politicising national identity – making it the headline topic of every election. In practice, new nationalism has little in its sights beyond electoral success but this thesis will draw out the wider implications of the normalisation of this mode.

In the West ‘immigration debates in the political arena and among lay people are omnipresent,’ for those issues that are raised by nationalism are so powerful precisely because of the way that they surpass the political sphere.⁵¹ This is a characteristic of

⁴⁸ Fisch, ‘The Right of Self-Determination of People’, p.190.

⁴⁹ Omar Dahbour, *Self-Determination without Nationalism: A Theory of Postnational Sovereignty*, (Philadelphia, 2013), p.2.

⁵⁰ Ibid, pp.1-278.

⁵¹ Eva G.T Green, Oriane Sarrasin, Nicole Fasel and Christian Staerkle, ‘Nationalism and Patriotism as Predictors of Immigration Attitudes in Switzerland: A Municipality-level Analysis’ in *Swiss Political Science Review*, Vol. 17 No. 4, p.369.

populist politics also, and a prominent place is found for populism within this evaluation of nationalism, setting it as a first component and one that feeds in to each of the following elements of analysis. Populism is a modern innovation, but the bulk of the rest of the thesis combines elements drawn from the German examples then updated with consideration of the Indian and Hungarian mutations to demonstrate some continuity in the development of nationalism as a political force. The modern case studies chosen, India and Hungary, were selected in part because of their existence as former dominions of the two different types and it is hard to disavow the notion that if even ex-colonies have embraced this style of national-populism, though they previously had proud histories of “justified” nationalist success, the scale and severity of the problem has so far been understated.

CHAPTER IV

THE POPULIST MEGAPHONE

*'For we are the people of England, that never have spoken yet.'*⁵²

In Angus Stewart's 1969 chapter on the 'Social Roots' of populism, he described populism as merely 'a kind of nationalism.'⁵³ This reduction of one to a subset of the other is excessive but the contention of this thesis is that there exists a strong overlap between the two styles of politics – perhaps even more so now than in the late 60s considering how both have risen to such prominence. In fact, nationalism would not have won such success as a strategy in electoral politics without the megaphone populism provides.

A. Competing nationalisms

In the introduction, we sketched a rough transition of justified nation-building nationalism to unjustified electoral nationalism. There are problems with this frame of analysis. The categorisation of justified movement versus unjustified movement conceals a moral judgement which requires qualification throughout this thesis. More broadly, the linear progression from one to the other is useful for illustrating the way in which the meaning of nationalism has changed, but it obscures the many and varied incarnations nationalist movements have taken on throughout this period. The form nationalism now takes has few actual positives either for its supporters or its opponents,

⁵² GK Chesterton, *The Secret People*, 1908.

⁵³ Angus Stewart, 'Social Roots' in Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (eds.) *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, (London, 1969), p.183.

yet it remains a developing political force. In its rise it has subsumed other forms of nationalism, just as the prevailing liberal nationalism of the post-Second World War years subsumed most other nationalisms with occasional disruptions, including the state building of the former Soviet states after the decline of the Union.

Louis Wirth's 1936 study noted nationalist analyses according to 'race, language, religion, politics, economics, education and psychology.'⁵⁴ He attempted to ameliorate these analyses and create a European typology and listed four forms of manifest nationalist sentiment; hegemony nationalism, particularistic nationalism, marginal nationalism, and the nationalism of minorities. Though Wirth's study was inclusive of types of nationalism, there was little flexibility around their interplay. He rigidly attributes each state, or people within a state, to one of his four categorisations all of which were politically inclined. This does not mean that political nationalism was the only form that existed at Wirth's time of writing. There was a dearth of academic research on nationalism and the range of possible analyses were limited by a lack of expertise, even if the range of nationalist movements was diverse.

The field of nationalist studies remained small until the 1990s though there were stand-out works from Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson prior to this.⁵⁵ Before Gellner and Anderson but eight years after Wirth's study Hans Kohn wrote a seminal text which delineated politically-oriented nationalism from culturally-oriented nationalism and into two distinct groups; 'civic nationalism' and 'ethnic nationalism.'⁵⁶ Kohn's mode of analysis also looked beyond Europe, but only because he dealt in such

⁵⁴ Louis Wirth, 'Types of Nationalism' in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol.36 (May 1936) pp.723-724.

⁵⁵ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (London, 1983).

⁵⁶ Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in its Origins and Background*, (New York, 1944).

sweeping generalisations. He dismissed non-Western nationalisms as derivative, critiqued them for preceding the nation-state rather than emerging within nations and via their ethnic nationalist categorisation deemed them dangerous and irrational. But Kohn's work did also unintentionally allow for a wider definition of nationalism. The ethnic nationalist framing required an understanding that some nationalist movements had cultural bases and a feeling of belonging that sat aside from governmental policy. These were cultural nationalist movements, rather than political or territorial movements. James Kellas advanced Kohn's dichotomy whilst maintaining the geographic simplification, classing Western nationalisms as inclusive and liberal and Eastern nationalism as exclusivist and authoritarian.⁵⁷ This division is misguided, a component of the unjustified nature of nationalism today in both the East and West is its welding together of exclusivist and authoritarian tendencies as demonstrated in India and Hungary, but Kellas' attempts to understand nationalism as an article of state doctrine which might impact its broader politics again widens the range of what is considered nationalist.

Kohn's and Kellas' arguments for nationalism defined by its locale have been dismissed by many authors since, but as John Coakley shows, the phenomena they were articulating were, and are, real.⁵⁸ The issue is that both types are present in the mixtures of people that make up all ethnonational groups. Widespread liberal nationalism, emerging as the norm between the state-forming spikes mapped by Wimmer and Feinstein, proved to be reasonably successful at keeping these different nationalist

⁵⁷ James Kellas, *Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, (New York, 1991), pp.73-74.

⁵⁸ John Coakley, 'National Identity and the "Kohn Dichotomy"' in *The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, Vol.26, (2018), pp.252-271.

inclinations muted.⁵⁹ Liberal nationalism stripped out much of the political and militaristic impetus of nationalist feeling, limiting much of its expression to safe shows such as international sporting contests. Even national stereotypes have become increasingly unpopular and risqué amongst liberal nationalists. After the Second World War for most settled states it was more appropriate to talk of patriotism, defined by Louis Kriesberg and Bruce W. Dayton as ‘positive attachment to one’s country’ then nationalism which was classed as ‘feelings of national superiority.’⁶⁰

Liberal nationalism narrowed the range of nationalist expression and in doing so brought some coherence back to the definition of the term. However, Bart Bonikowski’s study focused on what he called ‘popular nationalism,’ (not to be confused with national-populism) which he believed acts under the surface whilst nationalism has no political outlet.⁶¹ Bonikowski found popular nationalism to be ever-present, existing as a ‘pervasive cognitive orientation based on the taken-for-granted assumption that the nation-state is a natural and primary object of loyalty and identification, as well as a fundamental building block of the modern institutional order.’⁶² Bonikowski is correct and his research which ‘places emphasis on everyday attitudes of ordinary people in all nation-states, including nation-states that do not experience flare-ups of nationalism’s more overt and incendiary values,’ only confirms the success of liberal nationalism in

⁵⁹ Wimmer and Feinstein, ‘The Rise of the Nation State across the World, 1816 to 2001’, p.765.

⁶⁰ Louis Kriesberg and Bruce W. Dayton, *Constructive Conflicts: From Escalation to Resolution*, (Plymouth, 2012), p.58.

⁶¹ Bart Bonikowski, ‘Varieties of Popular Nationalism in Modern Democracies: An Inductive Approach to Comparative Research on Popular Culture’ in *Weatherhead Center for International Affairs Harvard University: Working Paper Series*, No.13-0001, accessed at https://wcfia.harvard.edu/files/wcfia/files/full_bonikowski_13-0001.pdf

⁶² Ibid, p.4.

side-lining these views, though not at removing them entirely.⁶³ As he concludes, ‘all varieties of nationalism are present in all countries,’ with the only difference being the way in which ‘their relative prevalence varies.’⁶⁴ Bonikowski is unwilling to sort state from state but his statistical work does elaborate on four types of popular nationalist that exist within every state. According to his 2003 sample, critical nationalists made up 24.2% of the respondents and at the opposite end of the scale, ultranationalists made up 17.96% of the respondents.⁶⁵ Given that nationalism is now able to mobilise voting populations and win majorities it is evident that something must have changed fundamentally since 2003. Further evidence for this is revealed in the fact that of the 30 countries Bonikowski surveyed, Hungary sits in the bottom third for percentage population of ultranationalists.⁶⁶ How then to account for the election of Viktor Orbán?

The latent nationalist attitudes Bonikowski uncovered existed despite nationalism not having taken a political form in most states for a considerable period of time. Since 1993 though research has been able to demonstrate that even without mainstream nationalist parties, individuals’ beliefs around who legitimately belongs to a state can have impacts on their support for policies as well as their willing to vote and selection of candidates.⁶⁷ This is partly attributable to the claim made by Živko Sučurlija, that nationalism is a collectivist ideology which is fundamentally

⁶³ Ibid, p.49.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p.50.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p.18 and p.21.

⁶⁶ Ibid, ‘Table 3. Distribution of latent classes by country, ISSP 2003’, p.24.

⁶⁷ David Sears, ‘Symbolic Politics: A Socio-Psychological Theory’ in Shanto Iyengar and William J. McGuire *Explorations in Political Sociology*, (Durham, North Carolina, 1993).

incompatible with liberalism, an individualist ideology.⁶⁸ Of the three ‘great principles of the modern European thought,’ which he lists as ‘freedom, equality, and community,’ he situates nationalism as championing the third.⁶⁹ As a result of their inability to mix successfully Sučurlija is sceptical of any form of nationalism which seeks to divert its collective impulse. He allows for militaristic nationalism, the nationalism of various different identity groupings, any pure nationalism, but not for any distorted nationalism such as ‘liberal, democratic... and antidemocratic.’⁷⁰

Perhaps it was inevitable that nationalism would cast off its limitations and re-emerge if not in a nation-building sense at least as an unconstrained political force. There is a new form of nationalism and each of the states to have returned it to the political fold have welcomed it in the national-populist guise – though this is a guise that takes the nationalist impulse and drives it in a direction that limits freedom and thrives on its rejection of equality. Populist nationalism has emerged from and retains its cultural traditions (which Kohn was right to fear but wrong to attribute to one region), the traditions that survived liberal nationalism and its weeding out of any element it deemed problematic. It combines those cultural norms with political theorisations and realisations on how to enact nationalism as a state doctrine, as articulated by Kellas. Most crucially though it provides what nationalism now needs to succeed - an electoral face for its politics. One that equips it well to win power democratically, giving voice to latent popular nationalism, without necessarily requiring conflict to profit. It achieves all of this without changing the host state’s nationalist

⁶⁸ Živko Sučurlija, ‘Different Concepts and Types of Nationalism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century’ in *The European Legacy*, Vol.1, No.2, (1996), pp.453-458.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p.453

⁷⁰ Ibid, p.453.

expression, India's nationalism is religious, Hungary's ethnic, both are national-populist.

The relationship between nationalism and populism has been a topic of discussion in the past two decades but Benjamin de Cleen found that the bulk of the literature on the two has been structured around 'how populism and nationalism come together in particular movements and parties' leaving the 'empirical analyses... surprisingly uncommon.'⁷¹ De Cleen was writing on the relation of nationalism to populism rather the relation of populism to nationalism, but it is still true; that in order to sustain the claim that nationalism is drawing on populism to amplify its appeal and secure voters, some consideration of the actual techniques employed will be required. Methodologically, the contemporary increase in studies of populism has resulted in more effective attempts to combine theoretical analyses with efforts to understand populism in action. This template for evaluating the logic to a political movement alongside its actual impact is instructive when attempting to deconstruct nationalism along similar lines. Delving only into the strategies of a movement without considering the context in which they are developed and enacted provides an incomplete picture. Fittingly then, while populism has provided some of the fuel for the nationalist wave, the study of populism provides has also provided some of the critical foundations required for an understanding of nationalism.

Throughout the rest of this thesis the populist relation to other tenets of nationalism will be drawn out as a continual frame of analysis just as those tenets will be related to their historical precedents. First though populism must be understood in

⁷¹ Benjamin de Cleen, 'Populism and Nationalism' in Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo and Pierre Ostiguy (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, (Oxford, 2017), p.342.

isolation and the warning of Cas Mudde is worth heeding; that in part populism is seen everywhere ‘because it is very often poorly defined and wrongly used.’⁷²

Mudde’s comment came in reference to populism being chosen as 2017’s word of the year by the Cambridge dictionary, which is itself a testament to populism’s current relevance. Though in vogue today, populism is clearly an anachronistic label when considering the German case study, one of the core studies of this thesis, and populism’s combination with nationalism is an even more modern innovation. Yet although populism as a complete theory may not have existed in the late Enlightenment, some of the ways of conceiving the political and constructing political identities are more fundamental. There are populist echoes even in German nationalism.

B. Nationalist-Populism

The populist turn to nationalism, forming a hybrid nationalist-populism, is a major factor in rendering contemporary nationalism as an almost unassailable politics. Chantal Mouffe, whose work with Ernesto Laclau reinvigorated the field of study, believed for a long time that populism would bring genuine democracy to politics. Instead, when combined with nationalism, that perceived antidote has become a threatening problem for states across the world. As Mouffe conceded in 2016, ‘in 1985 we said “we need to radicalise democracy”; and now we first need to restore democracy, so we can then radicalise it; the task is far more difficult.’⁷³

⁷² Cas Mudde, ‘Why nativism, not populism, should be declared word of the year’ in *The Guardian*, (7th December 2017), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/dec/07/cambridge-dictionary-nativism-populism-word-year>.

⁷³ Chantal Mouffe and Iñigo Errejón, (Owen Jones ed.) *Iñigo Errejón in conversation with Chantal Mouffe: Podemos in the Name of the People*, (London, 2016), p.23.

Populism is harder to define than nationalism. Confusingly, its impact on electoral results is less debated than what actually constitutes it as a politics. To that effect, the Progressive Post's 'populism tracker' reveals the popularity of parties who brand themselves as populists across 28 European countries as of the end of 2019.⁷⁴ According to their results, in 10 of the 28 countries populist parties are the voting choice of over a third of those surveyed whilst in Hungary 59% of people surveyed say they support a populist party. To drill down into these results further, right-wing populists poll at an average of 16.9% across all the countries whilst left-wing populists poll at 7.1%. In fact, 6 of the countries show more support for a right-wing populist party than any country shows for a left-wing populist party. This breakdown is important because populism is not always nationalist but it is in the right-wing iterations that there are usually nationalist elements alongside the populist elements – and those combinations have been the most successful for parties competing in elections.

So, what is it about the combination of populism and nationalism that is so effective? Mudde's article on populism cuts to the root of this question, defining populism as a 'thin-centred ideology' which can be 'easily combined with very different ideologies, including communism, ecologism, **nationalism**, or socialism,' (my emphasis).⁷⁵ Populism, in his conception, has no fixed ideological content, it is more a way of articulating politics than a politics that can be articulated. When populism is attached to a stronger ideology, something which provides the political content for it to dress in a mode that appeals to voter bases, support increases. It is this form of populism

⁷⁴ Populism Tracker on The Progressive Post by *The Foundation for European Progressive Studies*, <https://progressivepost.eu/spotlights/populism-tracker/the-populism-graph>

⁷⁵ Cas Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', p.544.

which acts as nationalism's megaphone. In these instances populism takes the essentialities of nationalist politics and spreads them throughout a state.

Mudde's explanation is helpful for setting out the relationship between nationalism and populism but is theoretically weaker on what it is about populism that makes it so potent when it is working in combination. Ernesto Laclau's work 'On Populist Reason,' written towards the end of a career devoted to the study of populism posed an entirely new way of thinking about the subject with a specific focus on its effects.⁷⁶ Laclau described populism in simple but fundamental terms as a 'way of constructing the political,' affirming the perspective that populism sits above any ideological politics in its essentiality but also that it has less actual content to advocate.⁷⁷ Populism when combined with nationalism enables the politicising of national identity, because it constructs the political within a nation state by considering who is an active member in the democracy and who therefore constitutes a citizen of the nation. In fact, Laclau saw populism as an effective partner with identity politics in general for he finds the key thrust of populism to be about 'the nature and logic of the formation of collective identities.'⁷⁸ This however, is slightly misleading in isolation. Most identity politics operate around fixed identities. Civil rights movements used identity politics effectively to mobilise those discriminated against ethnic groups, sexualities, or genders and to empower them to seek equality. Populism is unnecessary in these instances because the in-group and the out-group are clearly defined. National identities, in contrast, are not fixed. They are dependent on a host of contextual factors

⁷⁶ Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, (London, 2005).

⁷⁷ Ibid, p.xi.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

and a variety of interpretations and therefore populism can be a very effective aid in constructing the bounds of the collective identity.

Key to any nationalist articulation, and borrowed straight from Laclau's view of populism, is a 'frontier of exclusion which divides society into two camps.'⁷⁹ The citizen and the non-citizen. The native and the foreigner. The political constructed by nationalist-populism then is one in which only the natives are a part. Ian Dunt summarised this idea clearly that in the eyes of nationalists, 'only the votes of the people who agree with them count as democracy.'⁸⁰ Only the nation has the right to decide. The dangerous implications of this rotate around what happens to those within a polity's borders, who are not defined as belonging to the state, once political representation has been stripped from them. Laclau though had a very positive interpretation of populism. He believed it would restructure politics in a productive way and would enable the realisation of leftist ideals. In reality this has not yet been the case and there is evidence within Laclau's work that even he may have anticipated some of the potential problems. When describing 'The People' who operate in a populist political structure, Laclau acknowledges that they are by definition 'something less than the totality of the members of the community' but that they aspire to be 'conceived as the only legitimate totality.'⁸¹ He thought that this might be a division that excluded the elites within a society, both political and economic, who had made uniform the neoliberal structuring of democracy that he found to be scarcely democratic at all. Laclau's book was published in 2005 and in the years since, his hopes have been

⁷⁹ Ibid, p.77.

⁸⁰ Ian Dunt, 'How to Be a Liberal: The Story of Liberalism and the Fight for its Life', (London, 2020), p.2.

⁸¹ Laclau, 'On Populist Reason', p.81.

unfounded whilst his fears have been realised. Today it is more likely to be minorities that are excluded than any form of elite. Populism has changed democracy but the division made has not been by class. As Tom Brass cautioned, instead populism has been used to ‘deflect from class divisions’ by invoking ‘other non-class identities or the kinds of religious/nationalist/communal issues that historically feature most effectively in the ideology of conservatives and the far-right.’⁸² How has populism emerged as an ally of at best conservative and at worst divisive and racist nationalist politics then? The broader context of the emergence of populism provides some of the answers.

C. The Power of the Populist Mode

The upsurge of populism was sold primarily as a break from the past. Populist parties and figureheads were framed as the antidotes to the established norm, defined by Richard S. Katz as a period in which ‘politicians of all parties have become more similar sociologically (middle class) and politically (moderate).’⁸³ Since the end of the Second World War a relatively stable but stifling political culture was established in the Western democracies and in any democracy more broadly that fell under the Liberal categorisation. Mouffe critiqued the ‘consensus at the centre’ which came to dominate and became as much a part of state cultures as it was part of their politics.⁸⁴ There were positives to this centralisation, particularly in expanding suffrage and enabling the reaching of political equalities, but many problems remained unresolved. Though much

⁸² Tom Brass, ‘Is Agrarian Populism Progressive? Russia Then, India Now’ in *Critical Sociology* (2019), p.10.

⁸³ Richard S. Katz, quoted in Mudde, ‘The Populist Zeitgeist’, p.553.

⁸⁴ Mouffe and Errejón, ‘Podemos: In the Name of the People’, p.64.

maligned for its failings in handling certain issues, amongst them poverty, institutional oppressions and maintaining of the political elite, this period of liberalism then neo-liberalism also stripped from politics its ‘partisan nature.’⁸⁵ This was a critique of Mouffe’s, though it was one undercut with an implicit positive as it meant only certain viewpoints could earn credence and be aired in the political forums. Nationalist politics was one of the ideologies that for a long time remained distant, and was excluded, from political debate. It was a feeling to be expressed culturally rather than through your politics. Now, with populism’s rise and the desire to bring back to the table those subjects that were disbarred by the political establishment, nationalism has returned.

Nationalism could only re-emerge with force in the slipstream of populism, for it is populist language that of the ‘pure people’ against the ‘corrupt elite’ and the championing of the ‘expression of the *volonte generale* (general will) of the people’ that has pushed back the control over what was considered fit for the political sphere.⁸⁶ Laclau would have been pleased by this emerging rejection of political traditions, but for the fact that these ornamental claims are what he himself identified as ‘empty signifiers,’ and that the rejection of the liberal political tradition has only rejuvenated an antique politics rather than introduced something new.⁸⁷ The elite and the pure people are meaningless terms in isolation. They are perfect for stirring slogans and campaign catchphrases, but they have no definition. Nationalism takes the empty signifiers of populism and gives them a value. The populist mode was imagined as opposing elite

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Mudde, ‘The Populist Zeitgeist’, p.562.

⁸⁷ Laclau, ‘On Populist Reason’, p.162.

politics, but nationalist-populism swaps the sides. It is no longer popular against elite, but national against alien.

It could be argued that this is no manipulation at all, that this is a possible result of genuine democracy. However, the way national-populism has been deployed renders this unlikely. The switch from popular-elite to national-alien would not be successful if it relied solely on xenophobia within a majority in a state. There has to be something that makes the voting population want to identify as the national and begin to vote on the basis of their national identity, that gives new life to a political logic that has been dormant in the last half century. The most brilliantly successful electoral component of populism is the ‘unification of a plurality of demands in an equivalential chain.’⁸⁸ The national-populists speak ambiguously enough about their actual policies and their possible solutions to those long-unresolvable issues, that they can bring all elements of society with all their varied grievances together behind their banner. They replace specifically tailored proposals with exhortations to a vast and all-encompassing national identity. When they portray themselves as “for the country” they align themselves with the interests of the old elites, the oppressed majority, anyone at all who shares the national identity. It becomes possible to speak of bringing industry back to the state, for the good of the country, whilst simultaneously making production costs cheaper, for the good of the country. National-populism saves its most direct for the forgotten ‘heartland’, in which ‘in the populist imagination a virtuous unified population resides.’⁸⁹ That heartland of course is composed entirely within the ‘imagined communities’ of the nationalists, yet though fictitious a categorisation it has managed to

⁸⁸ Ibid, p.77.

⁸⁹ Paul Taggart, *Populism*, (Buckingham, 2000), p.95.

mobilise huge numbers of voters who had felt disenfranchised and now don't because they are being spoken to.⁹⁰ There is a flipside to this though. Electorally these ambiguous claims are successful, but when elected it becomes clear that the equivalential chains have grown too large. It is impossible to pander to such vastly disparate groups as are contained in a nation, and a nation cannot be sustained by a politics that merely restates its identity.

Populists, Mudde noted, 'speak in the name of the "oppressed people" ...however they do not want to change their "way of life."' ⁹¹ How could they without abandoning the other half of their voting base. Nationalists are the same. They speak for the people, but the traditional ideal of the nation they champion is a mirage and cannot be reached through populism. Nationalists no longer want to achieve independence or conquer new territories nor restore their international glory, they want to be elected, to seize power, and for that national-populism provides the best possible route. There is little intention to address the issues flagged by the people who vote for them. It is simpler to repeat slogans through a megaphone. This has proved successful in winning elections, brilliant at drumming up concerns, but it does not result in any real change and certainly not any positive change. Yet despite this apparent inactivity nationalists and populists are feared. The establishment are wary of their political styles and this palpable fear increases the appeal, while democratic structures and pre-existing parties have proved poorly equipped to handle a new challenge. Furthermore, national-populism is building an extra-political base that has cultural roots with Pierre-Andre Taguieff diagnosing that it also, 'seems to become stronger the more intellectuals

⁹⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (London, 1983).

⁹¹ Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', p.546.

criticise it.’⁹² Each time a new national-populist party wins seats in a parliament the style becomes more recognisable and others elsewhere, wherever they are and whatever the political context of their state, can import the mode achieving their own victories and spreading the reach of national-populism further. Laclau was right, populism has been immensely effective, though with a very different result to the one he prophesised.

Nationalism and populism must be seen as separate, but this thesis contends that one is amplifying the voice of the other and in the process exaggerating its most negative tendencies. Mudde made the link between the two forms clear when he said that ‘the heartland of the populists... is the hard-working, slightly conservative, law-abiding citizen, who, in silence but with growing anger, sees his world being “perverted” by progressives, criminals, and aliens,’ for this too is the oft-stated heartland of the nationalists.⁹³ Populism is not going away, it is threaded neatly through each of the strategies employed by nationalists and will be returned to in each chapter as this analysis progresses. It is startlingly original and its most fundamental importance is to the primary element of national-populism, the nationalist construction of the Other.

⁹² Pierre-André Taguieff, ‘Political Science Confronts Populism: From a Conceptual Mirage to a Real Problem’, *Telos*, 103 (1995), p.43.

⁹³ Mudde, ‘The Populist Zeitgeist’, p.557

CHAPTER V

THE SELF AND THE OTHER

*'In myself I experience and know the Other; in me he becomes constituted –
appresentatively mirrored, not constituted as the original'*⁹⁴

All identity politics requires an in-group and an out-group but for new nationalism, which has started to use the populist megaphone, that template is even more essential. When creating a nationalist movement the entire frame of reference revolves around who 'we' are and who is not included as part of 'us'. In nationalism's emancipatory period the 'Other' was simply defined and thoroughly visible, the effort was saved for dislodging them or for constructing against them. In contemporary nationalism, which takes place within sovereign states with established borders, the majority of effort is instead expended on creating an 'Other' to be excluded. This is a process of scapegoating which often has little manifest effect beyond the division of the population. Identity politics has always been successful in forming tightly-knit voting groups and nationalism, though more manipulative a style, does not fail in this regard.

Conception of the self as defined against the non-self is an idea articulated by the philosopher Edmund Husserl in his work on phenomenology.⁹⁵ Husserl was only putting into words one of the fundamentals for a sense of community however, and his work is antedated by prior usages of 'Othering' as a political tool. In the prior discussion on the populist megaphone we repeated Ernesto Laclau's description of

⁹⁴ Edmund Husserl and Doron Cairns (trans.), *Cartesian Meditations: an Introduction to Phenomenology*, (Dordrecht, 1999), p.149.

⁹⁵ Husserl and Cairns (trans.), *Cartesian Meditations: an Introduction to Phenomenology*.

populism as a ‘frontier of exclusion’ that ‘divides society into two camps.’⁹⁶ When showing this as part of the ‘construction of a popular identity’ Laclau is injecting political content into Husserl’s philosophy, forming a hybridised political philosophy and one as familiar to the German nationalists writing half a century before Husserl’s birth as it was to those fighting for Indian and Hungarian independence after his death, or Narendra Modi and Viktor Orbán today.⁹⁷ Though this tenet of nationalism is universal, its application has mutated throughout this 150-year period.

A. Early Nationalism’s Othering

Having reiterated the political importance of othering for nationalism, the German usage of the method has left at least as significant a legacy for new nationalism in the cultural output of the pre-unification period. For those within the Germanic princedoms who sought to create a nation-state, the differences between the German-speaking territories had to be shown to be less entrenched than the differences with the territories that surrounded them. Even without a long and troubled history of perpetual conflict with France on the Southwestern border, the rise of Napoleon in Europe from 1799 provided an ideal enemy against whom German sentiments could be mobilised. The poetry of Karl Theodor Körner, a hero of the German Uprising against Napoleon in 1813, became famous for its glorifying of this conflict but it is the work of Max Schneckenburger who wrote ‘Die Wacht am Rhein’ that is still famous today.⁹⁸ Both Schneckenburger and Körner were poets more than they were political figures but their

⁹⁶ Ernesto Laclau, ‘On Populist Reason’, p.77.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Karl Theodor Körner, ‘Leyer Und Schwert’, (1814). Max Schneckenburger, ‘Die Wacht am Rhein’, (1840).

poetry gave voice to the ideas of Ernst Arndt, one of German nationalisms early ideologues. Like Schneckeburger, Arndt used the Rhine which divided the German states and France as a key semiotic symbol to illustrate separation and difference, naming his anti-French newspaper the 'Rheinische Merkur.'⁹⁹ Arndt popularised opposition to the French outside of the military with what Paul Lützeler termed an 'aggressive propaganda campaign,' with the intention of bringing together the princedoms against an external enemy.¹⁰⁰ The simultaneous processes of positive identity formation and negative cohesion are clear in his popular verses such as that which depicted the French as 'crouching and miserable slaves' juxtaposed with the 'worthy people' of Germany.¹⁰¹

For Arndt, being German and hating the French became inherently linked – in the words of Joep Leerssen he saw it as a 'moral duty' for his readers if they were to commit to his ideal of a strong nation-state.¹⁰² What is perhaps most instructive about this brief examination into an early example of political othering is that, despite the extent of Arndt's attacks, the 'Other' was always limited. When it wasn't, as in the efforts of Jakob Friedrich Fries, the method was opposed. Fries also aimed to build a strong German national identity but targeted a broader range of 'Others'. He was involved in the Wartburg festival, one of a number of national festivals directed by the Burschenschafts - the name given to university student groups whose patriotism exceeded that of even the most radical nationalist author) and whose activities included

⁹⁹ Joep Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History*, (Amsterdam, 2010), p.108.

¹⁰⁰ Paul Michael Lützeler, 'The Image of Napoleon in European Romanticism' in Gerhart Hoffmeister (ed.) *European Romanticism: Literary Cross-Currents, Modes, and Models*, (Detroit, 1990), p.215.

¹⁰¹ Ernst Arndt, *Geist der Zeit*, (1805).

¹⁰² Leerssen, 'National Thought in Europe', p.108.

book burnings.¹⁰³ According to Christian Jansen, Fries' association with these festivals and his particular opposition to the German states' Jewish populations led to him being suspended from his professorship.¹⁰⁴ Fries had crossed two lines. He had taken political language into the active sphere – book-burning was not equivalent with a sharply-worded polemic, but more concerningly he had attempted to mobilise against an 'Other' that existed within the German territories. This set a dangerous precedent. Creating an identity set against an external enemy was a natural process, the targeted state would presumably act out the same process. Excluding an internal minority could lead to abuses that would far overshadow book-burnings.

B. Imperial Cosmopolitanism

The era of cosmopolitanism, as is essential for any nostalgic ideal, has long since passed but it has been replaced by globalisation. Though cosmopolitanism and globalisation seem like overlapping terms, our globalised society has reassured the nation-state as a key actor, whilst cosmopolitanism instead preferred the human. Part of the reason cosmopolitanism has become an unfashionable idea is because of its proximal relation to imperial rule. There was a time when merchants serving as the appendages of developing powers were a vanguard in disparate cultures' interactions, with Perry Gauci's survey of the British merchants finding them to have been 'important intermediaries of social and political change.'¹⁰⁵ The imperial period and the

¹⁰³ Hans Pohlsander, *National Monuments and Nationalism in 19th Century Germany*, (Bern, 2008), p.74.

¹⁰⁴ Christian Jansen, 'The Formation of German Nationalism 1740-1850' in Helmut Walser Smith (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History*, p.246.

¹⁰⁵ Perry Gauci, 'The Politics of Trade: The Overseas Merchant in State and Society, 1660-1720', (Oxford, 2001), p.273.

gradual expansion of networks made multiple interchangeable identities accessible to its adherents with a fine example of this being Ariadni Moutafidou's biographical reconstruction of the life of Niccolo Pappaffy.¹⁰⁶ Pappaffy was an Ottoman-Greek merchant who cast off his pre-existing dual identity to be replaced by a third through the buying of British protection which provided with it the trappings of the British identity. This 'national' exchange was possible only because of the benefits it offered the imperial powers and was intrinsically linked to broader systems of exploitation that are not to be defended, yet there is a context-free ideal revealed in that process.

To be able to shuffle your associations hearkens back to the Enlightenment perspective of national characters loosely defined according to area and moral or natural causes, but not to be thought of as definitive or fixed. In political categorisations, this flexibility died with the end of empire which brought with it a stricter definition of national boundaries and the identities of those within. The end of empire was pre-empted by anticolonial movements though who adopted the solid conception of 'Self' – the oppressed people, and 'Other' – the oppressors, while imperial administrators were still trying to create broader and more inclusive identities of belonging within the empire's apparatus. The failure of 'Ottomanisation', as it was known to British observers, has been well noted and is reflective of the broader pattern in which the more homogenous and smaller identity groupings' logical distinction between self and other was more coherent than those propagandised by the empires.¹⁰⁷ As multiple different colours sprung up all over the map in lieu of the broad brushstrokes of British, French

¹⁰⁶ Ariadni Moutafidou, 'Giovanni di Niccolo Pappaffy: identities and philanthropies of an Ottoman Greek broker in Malta' in *Mediterranean Historical Review*, Vol. 28, No. 2, pp.191-224.

¹⁰⁷ British Documents on Foreign Affairs, 'Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office: From the mid-nineteenth century to the First World War. The Near and Middle East, 1856-1914', (Part I. Series B), p.263

and Ottoman, othering became an established and effective emancipatory technique that undergirded all movements for independence. Shortly after those states were created the method became problematic, as demonstrated by Robert Audi's grappling with where soft and hard national identities should sit in relation to a world-system that is more globalised than cosmopolitan.¹⁰⁸

C. Emancipatory Othering

India and Hungary extricated themselves from two very different imperial systems, requiring different strategies and different extraneous circumstances. Common to both was a clearly defined distinction between themselves and the occupying power which could be diffused throughout their respective populations. This is not dissimilar from the German ideologues' opposition to France over the border, though of course it related to enemies that were closer even than neighbours. The Indian swadeshi movement, literally meaning 'of one's own country', is a prime example of this strategy. In a speech in Bombay, 1921, Mohandas Gandhi declared that 'Swadeshi has two aspects: (1) boycott of foreign cloth and (2) production of other cloth in its place.'¹⁰⁹ In pursuit of 'swaraj' – home rule, he believed it was essential to show preference to the Indian products which alongside 'Hindu-Muslim unity and peace' made up the 'main planks in our movement.'¹¹⁰ For India to secure its independence

¹⁰⁸ Robert Audi, 'Nationalism, Patriotism, and Cosmopolitanism in an Age of Globalization' in *The Journal of Ethics* vol.13 no.4 (2009), pp.365-381.

¹⁰⁹ Mahatma Gandhi, Speech at Santa Cruz, Bombay, recorded in *The Collective Works of Mahatma Gandhi* vol.24: 22nd July, 1921-25th October 1921, p.6 accessed at <https://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-literature/mahatma-gandhi-collected-works-volume-24.pdf>

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

required the Self to triumph over the Other as played out in this contest of economics. Put simply, Gandhi asked that they ‘cast off any foreign materials you have.’¹¹¹ Though this was a material concern it was reflective of the form of imperialism India was suffering as they were subject to a British drain on their finances. Shashi Tharoor’s account of the period found that India’s share of the world economy decreased from ‘23 percent’ at the British arrival, to ‘just over 3 percent’ by the point of British departure.¹¹² Symbolically the boycott of British goods and increase in Indian production meant a reverting to Indian dress, as Gandhi did himself, which meant an even clearer separation between native and invader.

In the Indian case-study the difference between Self and Other was clear. Though wealthy Indians went to study in the British universities, there was an obvious racial separation that removed some of the nuance occasionally required when defining the two groups. The bulk of the challenge for the Quit India movement was maintaining internal unity and actually removing the British from the state, not in articulating the enemy against which they could mobilise. In Soviet Hungary, the ultimate aim was also escaping Soviet rule but the distinction between the in-group and the out-group was slightly more blurred. Ferenc A Váli’s 1961 text on ‘Nationalism versus Communism’ in Hungary shows that even in an ideological empire, a firm conception of Self and Other, national and foreign, could begin to challenge the mode of control applied by the power over the colony.¹¹³ He argued that in the first place, ‘antagonism against the

¹¹¹ Ibid, p.7

¹¹² Shashi Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India*, (Bungay, 2017), p.2.

¹¹³ Ferenc A Váli, ‘Nationalism Versus Communism’ *Rift and Revolt in Hungary* (Harvard, 1961), pp.493-521.

theory and practice of Communist principles was fostered by a resentment of adopting “foreign” ideas imposed by an alien power.’¹¹⁴ The Communist structure was implemented by new party branches in each of the Soviet satellite states but Valli shows that in Hungary the ‘most powerful motivation leading to a rift... was a conscious or unconscious national sentiment.’¹¹⁵ This developed into a feeling of ‘national resentment’ similar to Arndt’s moral duty with the result that ‘many dedicated Communists’ were ‘converted away from Communism.’¹¹⁶ With both Hungarian and Indian opposition broad international solidarity grew. The imperial powers became unfashionable and there was a general recognition for the importance of self-governance without other involvement. Both nations sought an achievable goal of full independence and the reclamation of their systems of governance and economic affairs. In India, the state had never existed prior to British imperialism, in Hungary there was a historic state that antedated foreign domination, but in both the mobilisation of their populations was built, as all nationalist movements are, off the foundation stone of a differentiation between Self and Other.

D. A Cautionary Tale

There are however innumerate proofs that negative cohesion as a singular tactic is ineffective. An identity that defines itself solely by what it is not, as Abdelwaheb el-Affendi critiqued the at that point unsuccessful South Sudanese construction, can prove

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p.494.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p.493

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p.494.

empty once there is no external enemy against which to mobilise.¹¹⁷ Four years before the British withdrew from India, Lebanon secured her independence in 1943. Two years later the Lebanese celebrated the end of the French mandate, the system introduced by the League of Nations which categorised states according to their suitability for self-determination. Lebanon had been granted independence after being deemed to have reached maturity by the colonial powers. A dispatch from the Maronite Archbishop and the Grand Mufti in Lebanon to the New York Herald on November 16th of 1943, around the time of the declaration of independence, stated that ‘for the first time in many years Moslems and Christians are united against the French,’ but this exaggerates the extent to which a clear divide between the French and Lebanese was required.¹¹⁸ Barring the brief imprisonment of Lebanon’s first government by the French the proceedings were calm. Lebanon’s, or as it was then Greater Lebanon’s, independence had been assured long in advance by its categorisation as one of the Class A mandates whose ‘existence as independent nations’ could be ‘provisionally recognised subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory.’¹¹⁹ As a result of this seemingly guaranteed future freedom and the machinations of France the path to Lebanese independence was mostly peaceful and protests were rare. Therefore, Lebanon remained without an imperial enemy to mobilise against.

Though a lack of bloodshed during the formation of a new nation-state is a blessing, it makes the process of national identity construction and consolidation more

¹¹⁷ Abdel Wahab El-Affendi, ‘Discovering the South: Sudanese Dilemmas for Islam in Africa’ in *African Affairs*, Vol.89, No. 356 (July 1990), pp.371-372.

¹¹⁸ Dispatch to the New York Herald from November 16th 1943, quoted in Marc Loris, ‘Lebanon’s Fight for Independence’, in *Fourth International*, Vol. 5, No.1, (January 1944), pp.14-16.

¹¹⁹ Point 4, Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, (30th April 1947), accessed at <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-185531/>

challenging. The division between Us and Them has to be imagined which removes an often vital element of negative cohesion. Lebanon proves this. Kamal Salibi, the state's great historian, wrote that 'In all but name, Lebanon today is a non-country,' though he too spoke of Christian-Muslim unity, with the implication that something was missing.¹²⁰ Lebanon has found an external enemy in Israel on the Southern border and resultantly, in times of conflict solidarity within the nation is at its strongest. The Lebanese are clear that they are not Israelis, a survey in 2010 demonstrated that 98% of the population have an unfavourable opinion of Jews as some indicator, but that negation has two faults.¹²¹ It did not distinguish their identity clearly enough from the other Middle Eastern states in the post-mandate period and nor did it resolve internal religious tensions. This then is the crux of the issue, negative cohesion is powerful – it has been the strongest bond for the Lebanese who are 'not a pluralist society... a plurality of peoples', but it is insufficient alone to build a community within a strong nation-state.¹²² The Lebanese Civil War in 1975-1990 brought this into sharp focus. In that fifteen-year period the 'persisten(t)... primordial ties' that Samir Khalaf had found in 1968 to be seemingly rendered unimportant in the 'curious but happy phenomenon' of the Lebanese system, mobilised other identities and tore the country apart with tragic effect.¹²³ More than 144,000 were killed and many more displaced as Christian turned

¹²⁰ Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered*, (London, 2002), p.2.

¹²¹ The Pew Global Attitudes Project (February 4, 2010), p.23.

¹²² Simon Haddad, '*Lebanon: From Consociationalism to Conciliation*' in 'Pathways from Ethnic Conflict: Institutional Redesign in divided Societies' vol.15 no.4 (2009), p.400.

¹²³ Samir Khalaf, '*Primordial Ties and Politics in Lebanon*' in 'Middle Eastern Studies vol.4 no.3, (1968), p.243.

on Muslim and Shi'a turned on Sunni with ruthless effect.¹²⁴ The Syrians and then even the Israelis were treated like saviours when they invaded, because the value of Lebanese sovereignty had been side-lined by the violence of the fratricidal conflict. A purely negative identity construction formulated to bring together vastly different peoples, themselves yoked together by foreign powers, had a purely negative result. Lebanon had to rebuild.

The Civil War was not the last of Lebanese strife. National identity is still heavily challenged by regional and sectarian bonds though the most recent protests have gone some way to redressing that balance. Contemporary Lebanon has one advantage over contemporary India and Hungary though. The lack of a strong and well-defined national identity has made nationalist rhetoric in Lebanese politics today difficult to apply. The lack of a tradition of othering has made adherents who try to introduce the mode unpopular, rather than swept them to power on the back of huge electoral support. They are competing, essentially, to mobilise many nations and that undercuts the nationalist thrust. Gibran Bassil, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, repeatedly tried to utilise a language of separation against the influx of Syrian refugees following their neighbour's own civil war but for his efforts he drew the ire of protestors with targeted chants in October 2019's protests and he was deemed a 'racist' rather than a national hero.¹²⁵ Without a national identity assuming total prominence a state can cause itself

¹²⁴ Faten Ghosn and Amal Khoury, '*Lebanon After the Civil War: Peace or the Illusion of Peace?*' in 'Middle East Journal' vol.65 no.3, (Summer 2011), p.382.

¹²⁵ Tweets from Gebran Bassil referenced in article "'Racist' Lebanese Foreign Minister Sparks Twitter Storm', (June 10, 2019), <https://gulfnnews.com/world/mena/racist-lebanese-foreign-minister-sparks-twitter-storm-1.64510278>

great harm. However, it also insulates a state from the worst excesses of nationalism and rejects the othering of internal minorities.

E. The Self and the Other in Contemporary Nationalism

Othering is to a certain extent a necessity of the global nation-state system. Ted Hopf's article in the journal of International Security explained the importance of 'intersubjective identities', a rationalising of Husserl's idea, for ensuring predictable patterns of behaviour and to 'tell you and others who you are and to tell you who they are.'¹²⁶ Hopf's argument is well-reasoned, but this is no longer the mainstream utilisation of the Self and Other divide. Nor is the phenomenon having a second life only within ex-colonies. Former imperial states and former colonies alike are experimenting with mobilising a Self-Other distinction within their domestic politics. The emancipatory ideal has become an object of exclusion and direct challenge to minorities seeking to integrate into these new nationalist states. John Lichfield's journalistic piece demonstrates this in action as he noted the vogue for a new word in France, 'ensauvagement.'¹²⁷ Groups that had previously been on the fringes, such as Marie Le Pen's National Rally, have secured enough of an audience for their politics that their language has entered the mainstream. Lichfield's account utilises a bank of statistics to dismiss the claim that crime in the French capital has risen in parallel with increasing numbers of immigrants from France's ex-colonies in North Africa. Ultimately his conclusion is that 'it's just as possible (and probably just as misleading)

¹²⁶ Ted Hopf, 'The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory' in International Security, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Summer, 1998), pp. 175.

¹²⁷ John Lichfield, 'The Racist Myth of France's "Descent into Savagery"' *Politico*, (7th September 2020), accessed at <https://www.politico.eu/article/marine-le-pen-racist-myth-france-descent-into-savagery/>

to argue that increased migration has caused France to become a safer and a more peaceful place,' but what is most surprising is that he has to engage at all with this argument.¹²⁸ This restyling of minorities into internal enemies is part of a global trend, and those who lead it do not have their credentials stripped like Fries in the 1820s, they win loyal supporters and challenge the establishment.

Both Hungary and India are included in this thesis because of the scale of their new nationalism and both apply this fundamental principle liberally. In Hungary, there has been a bifurcated assault on the other in governmental rhetoric that targets an external other in the traditional sense but, more concerningly has used that as a vehicle to target internal minorities as well. This, it seems, is the modern way. Viktor Orbán and Fidesz's ire has been primarily directed towards the perceived migrant crisis in Europe and the state has made repeated efforts to stymie the flow of refugees into the country. Orbán has utilised religious difference, claiming that a large influx of Muslims 'inevitably leads to parallel societies' and that Hungarian Christians and foreign Muslims 'will never unite.' Others who share the view of the party have gone further and added a racial paradigm as Pertti Ahonen noted that one media commentator labelled immigrants that had been involved in sex attacks in the German city of Cologne as 'north African and Arab animals.' Dehumanisation is indicative of the divide between Self and Other being taken to its furthest extremes, but these extremes have yielded success. In a 2016 survey by the Pew Research Centre 72% of Hungarians declared an unfavourable view of Muslims, the highest percentage in Europe.

Just as Orbán's government have muddled religious and racial elements in the fluid Others they are creating, they have also broadened their opposition from

¹²⁸ Ibid.

immigrants (the external becoming internal) to solidly internal groups. This process of making the internal an external Other is hinted at in Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein's, the former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, challenge that Orbán's attack on 'Muslims and Africans as an existential menace to Hungarian culture' is propped up by his alleging that it is 'masterminded by the Hungarian-American financier George Soros.'¹²⁹ Soros' dual nationality, acknowledged by Al-Hussein, as well as his Jewish identity render him a perfect foil for Orbán's broadening of the Other. As a billionaire Soros even fits the traditional populist categorisation of the Other as the 'elite.' Most tellingly though, by challenging the right to belong of even someone Hungarian-born, Orbán has proved willing to attack those within Hungary who do not fit his exclusivist definition of Hungarian.

As another example, the Roma population have long been discriminated against in Hungary but Orbán's preoccupation with the migrant problem has not blunted attacks against this internal minority. In fact, Orbán fluidly shifts from the critique of one to the next only separating them by their chronology as when he bemoaned that 'Hungary's historical given is that we live together with a few hundred thousands of Roma. This was decided by someone, somewhere. This is what we inherited. This is our situation, this is our predetermined condition ... We are the ones who have to live with this.'¹³⁰ Orbán's Hungary show that the Other does not have to be one external and clearly defined group. There is an ambiguity to modern nationalism and the victims it seeks.

¹²⁹ Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, 'Hungary: Opinion Editorial' from *United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner*, (2018), accessed at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22765>

¹³⁰ Viktor Orbán, Speech quoted by Céline Cantat and Prem Kumar Rajaram, 'Chapter 10: The Politics of the Refugee Crisis in Hungary' in Cecilia Menjivar, Marie Ruiz and Immanuel Ness (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Migration Crises*, (New York, 2019), p.191.

The more that can be found, the more fears can be raised and then harnessed. Al-Hussein in his opposition said that to hear these diatribes ‘unabashedly expressed by the leader of a modern, European Union country should outrage every one of us,’ yet they have become part of a normalised discourse across Europe, from Hungary to France, the United Kingdom to Poland.¹³¹

In India this merging of internal and external ‘other’ is even clearer and possibly even more dangerous. It embodies the global trend identified by conflict scholar Jack Levy wherein ‘the distinction between interstate and intrastate wars has itself begun to blur.’¹³² For India, the historic event of Partition is key in any consideration of nationalism within the state. A historic and destructive rivalry with Pakistan was born at the inception of the new nation, fuelling Indian and Pakistani growth but resulting in lasting instability. Russell Brines, writing in 1968, explained the ‘insecurities (that) were built in into the two nations by the history of communal discord, by the nature of their birth and the alchemy of independence,’ showing the opposition as part traditional security dilemma – the Wagah border replacing the Rhine, but partly based on supranational characteristics.¹³³ It’s the latter that has been essential to the construction of an ‘other’ for India more recently. Much academic attention has been granted to the protracted Indo-Pakistani conflict with the tortured state of Kashmir in the centre but even in the work of some Indian researchers their proximity to the issue has been blinding. Sumit Ganguly’s analysis of the ‘deadly impasse’, published in 2016,

¹³¹ Hussein, ‘Hungary: Opinion Editorial’, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22765>

¹³² Jack S. Levy, ‘Theories of Interstate and Interstate War: A Levels-of-Analysis Approach’ in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall (eds.) *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, (2001, Herndon), p.3.

¹³³ Russell Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict*, 1st ed. (London, 1968), p.433.

determined that ‘India, which was based upon the principle of secular civic nationalism, finds itself at odds with Pakistan, which was founded on the basis of religious nationalism.’¹³⁴ With the rise of Narendra Modi and the BJP this argument is entirely unsustainable. Supposedly secular India has made Islamophobia a central premise of their politics under the Hindu nationalists, repeatedly reopening scars of Partition which Salman Rashid’s memoir showed to have been rendered into silence for years after the event.¹³⁵ Kashmir has proved the testing ground for this new politics and for the administrative classing of an internal minority as part of an external enemy. This is possible, in Varun Vaish’s words, because the opposition has always been transferrable – ‘though deep-rooted conflict is described as an intrastate phenomenon, the conflict that exists between India and Pakistan reveals all the characteristics associated with identity.’¹³⁶

The Kashmir problem is almost incomparably complicated, unique and thus far intractable. The extent to which it offers any useful conclusions on new nationalism more broadly could therefore be questioned. However, because of its specificity and because of its persistence through different periods of India nationalism it is exemplary for showing the origins of the modern mode. During discussions in the Constituent Assembly as early as 1949, only two years after Partition, the Indian fear of a link between the very real external enemy and imagined internal enemies was clear. R.K. Sidhva in his speech warned of ‘people outside who are enemies of this country, in this

¹³⁴ Sumit Ganguly, *Deadly Impasse: Kashmir and Indo-Pakistani Relations at the Dawn of a New Century*, (Cambridge, 2016), p.14.

¹³⁵ Salman Rashid, *A Time of Madness: A Memoir of Partition*, (New Delhi, 2017).

¹³⁶ Varun Vaish, ‘Negotiating the India-Pakistan Conflict in Relation to Kashmir’ in *The International Journal on World Peace*, vol.28 no.3, (September 2011), p.54.

country and also outside.’¹³⁷ The issue with a theocratic Pakistan for secular India was that not every Muslim had left to the doppelganger nation, but also for a state that proclaimed itself to be secular those Muslims who remained had to be treated equally. This conceptual challenge was most clear on Kashmir’s full accession into the Indian nation. Mridu Rai’s history of article 370 which enshrined Indian Kashmir found that ‘a fundamental principle underlying the Indian constitution is the state’s secularism... yet Jammu and Kashmir’s very entry into the constituent assembly’s deliberations was attended by a religiously informed understanding of its people.’¹³⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru, the nation’s great statesman, celebrated a great victory in the success of article 370, claiming that ‘Kashmir is symbolic as it illustrates that we are a secular state, that Kashmir, with a large majority of Muslims has nevertheless, of its own free will, wished to be associated with India.’¹³⁹ Yet for Kashmiris today there is no cause for celebration. India has used fears of the old Other, Islamic Pakistan, to engage in an ongoing civil war within the state and the Jammu and Kashmir Coalition recorded 80 extrajudicial killings in 2019 alone.¹⁴⁰ The nuance of a Muslim-majority state equipped with special status was implausible to the BJP and after finally revoking article 370, Amit Shah now Minister of Home Affairs applauded the decision claiming it at long-

¹³⁷ R.K. Sidhva, Constituent Assembly Debates in *Constituent Assembly of India – Volume IX*, (20th August 1949), accessed at <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/1486379/>

¹³⁸ Mridu Rai, ‘The Indian Constituent Assembly and the Making of Hindus and Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir’ in *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 49 No. 2, (2018), p.217.

¹³⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru quoted by Rai, ‘The Indian Constituent Assembly and the Making of Hindus and Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir’, p.213.

¹⁴⁰ Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society, *2019 Annual Human Rights Review* accessed at <http://jkccs.net/annual-human-rights-review-2019-2/>

last achieved the ‘unfulfilled dream of integrating Jammu and Kashmir.’¹⁴¹ This typically nationalist rhetoric ignored the human consequences and the scores of arrests that followed the decision and made no reference to the increasing attacks on Muslims throughout the rest of the nation that now seem to be sanctioned by the state. Kashmir was made equivalent with Pakistan as an Other and in the process the Islamic identity that distinguishes both the federal state and the nation-state can be used to justify the exclusion of a significant internal minority.

F. The Extra-Political Effects of Othering

Yashwant Sinha, a former Finance Minister of India, declared himself ‘a strong nationalist and a staunch believer in Swadeshi’ in his memoirs, but Sinha served his role under divisive BJP governments.¹⁴² Sinha resigned in 2018 claiming that ‘democracy in India is in great danger’ and in 2020 embarked on a Gandhi peace march opposing attempts to segregate the country by religion.¹⁴³ Gandhi’s Swadeshi politics had always mobilised against an Other, Sinha recognised a problem when the dominant party deemed an internal minority as fitting the criteria to be labelled that outsider group. The much-lauded finance minister could be criticised for the length of time it took him to acknowledge this trend. His resignation was significant but the BJP have successfully

¹⁴¹ Amit Shah quoted in The New Indian Express, ‘Articles 370, 35A were the gateway of terrorism into India: Amit Shah’, (31st October 2019), accessed at <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2019/oct/31/articles-370-35a-were-the-gateway-of-terrorism-into-india-amit-shah-2055180.html>

¹⁴² Yashwant Sinha, *Confessions of a Swadeshi Reformer: My Years as Finance Minister*, (New Delhi, 2007), p.183.

¹⁴³ Yashwant Sinha quoted by Reuters in ‘Yashwant Sinha quits BJP saying India’s democracy in danger’, (22nd April 2018), accessed at <https://www.reuters.com/article/india-politics-yashwant-sinha-idINKBN1HT03Y>

shifted discourse far enough already that Islamophobia is now an extra-political phenomenon. One of the most concerning outcomes of this style of nationalism is the increase in racial or religious violence that has followed it. In India this has often taken the form of state-sanctioned communal riots. It should not pass without notice that Modi himself was the Chief Minister of the state of Gujarat during the 2002 riots in which 790 Muslims were eventually reported dead, alongside 254 Hindus.¹⁴⁴ The riots in Gujarat were indicative of lasting tensions between the two religious groups stretching back to Partition, but they also required a spark. So too for the more recent occurrence in the capital New Delhi in February of this year. This time there was a recognition for the role of politics. The Citizen Amendment Act was introduced two months after Kashmir's special status was repealed and allows an expedited route to citizenship for illegal migrants that are Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Parsi, Buddhist or Christian. An expedited route to citizenship unobtainable for Muslims. The implications reach beyond the policy-choice though with Amnesty International also deeming the Indian police to have 'committed human rights violations with impunity' during the protests that followed and led into the riots.¹⁴⁵

G. Successful Strategy?

There is an extent to which we all are drawn to groups for which we feel an affinity. Though the causes for this are still debated, as in the paper by Edwin Shriver, Steven Young, Kurt Hugenberg, Michael Bernstein and Jason Lanter, the existence of

¹⁴⁴ BBC Staff, 'Gujarat Riot Death Toll Revealed' *BBC News*, (11th May 2005), accessed at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/4536199.stm

¹⁴⁵ Amnesty International India, 'New Delhi/Bengaluru Investigative Briefing', (28th August 2020), p.18.

the cross-race effect, wherein we more easily recognise the faces of those of the same ethnicity as ourselves, proves there is some truth to the maxim.¹⁴⁶ This is an evolutionary legacy. Enshrining that tendency in a divisive form of electoral politics is not a logical conclusion though, particularly in a globalised world. This is an illogical continuation of the nationalist state-building propensity for division which was vital to distinguish territories. The expectation is that because today societies are already more heterogeneous, increasing numbers within these populations would be able to identify with the out-group and resist this trend. That is what was seen in Lebanon, wherein exclusionary rhetoric against Syrian refugees struggled to mobilise mass support because of the shared religious identity, shared regional identity and the limitations of a poorly defined national identity that overlapped with the Syrians. Elsewhere, in India and Hungary and other nationalist polities, this has not been the case. National identities are often strong bonds and nationalism is a political manipulation that is more effective in strong states.

Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt's post-Marxist text, 'Declaration', critiqued contemporary liberal politics for its obsession with the individual and attempted to formulate a form of class politics that could override this.¹⁴⁷ In practice this has been unsuccessful, but the identification of the problem is accurate. Part of new nationalism's success has been that it capitalised on the notion of the individual in a way left-wing politics has not been able to. Though the nation is a collective by definition, the mobilisation of tendencies such as a separation between Self and Other appeal to an

¹⁴⁶ Edwin Shriver, Steven Young, Kurt Hugenberg, Michael Bernstein and Jason Lanter, 'Class, Race, and the Face: Social Context Modulates the Cross-Race Effect in Face Recognition' in *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, pp.260-274.

¹⁴⁷ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration*, (New York, 2012).

individual within the crowd. It sets you or me aside from he or she, just as it sets us more broadly against them. Here nationalism is again proximal to populism. Analyses of populism in action have often drawn heavily on crowd theory, the political mob is almost a cliché. Laclau used the work of the early French crowd theorist Gustave Le Bon and showed that part of the destructive power of this mode lay in the fact that ‘the individual experiences a process of social degradation by becoming part of a group.’¹⁴⁸ They sacrifice part of their own decision-making potential to the simplified mind of the mob, just as they sacrifice part of their more complex and multi-faceted identity to become have just one face. Identity, the fundamental which is so often built from the Self against the Other, has become a much stronger coalescent than shared perspective or social status. In the past identity politics enabled discriminated groups to raise their voice and challenge norms. Current identity politics, nationalism, glorifies being in the majority. This is a strategy of electoral campaigns, constructing the logics that define national identities, making a vote for your part a vote for the nation and it is ruthlessly effective. In the 2018 Hungarian election Fidesz won 44.87% of the vote and 133 seats out of 199. In the 2019 Indian election the BJP won 251 seats more than their closest rivals in the Lok Sabha assembly.

Victories of this scale make it clear that the nationalist Self and Other has great democratic effect. The reason for this is that it builds internal alliances which manifest as vast voting banks. Where previously it might be expected that a traditional and wealthy class might have voted in one direction whilst the majority working class voted in the other, a party campaigning under a national banner can appeal to both. Hannah Arendt wrote of the power of a ‘temporary alliance between the mob and elite’ whilst

¹⁴⁸ Gustave Le Bon quoted in Laclau, ‘On Populism’, p.29.

describing totalitarianism in the aftermath of the Second World War.¹⁴⁹ New nationalism provides the means for this alliance in contemporary politics. Paradoxically, Lebanon's failures with this mode are amongst the most instructive examples of this in action. Reporting on the protests of 2019, Badia Fahs found one of the outcomes to be the devolution of sectarian identity.¹⁵⁰ The protests 'sparked a discovery and recognition of the "other" by many Lebanese' but it was an Other that they found common cause with.¹⁵¹ The difference that had been created and maintained by 'the elites of Hezbollah and Amal' in the Shi'a population 'to impose their authority over the community' was to ensure that a vertical solidarity existed in place of a horizontal solidarity.¹⁵² The other sects' elites were equally culpable. This had previously posed an obstacle to Lebanese national identity, but in practice should be seen as working like a miniature version of nationalism. When blown back out to the broader context the maxim of Martin Shaw is correct then, that 'identity politics is a means by which political elites reproduce their power.'¹⁵³

Though clearly effective in the electoral period, there are limitations to the usage of the nationalist Other. In Gerard Delaney and Krishan Kumar's introduction to nationalism they misleadingly proclaim it to one of the most successful ideologies in

¹⁴⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (Milton Keynes, 2017), pp.427-445.

¹⁵⁰ Badia Fahs, 'The Nabatieh protestors smashed the notion of a Shi'a community solidly behind Hezbollah and Amal' for *Carnegie Middle East Center*, (2nd September 2020), accessed at <https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/82388>

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Martin Shaw, 'Review: The Contemporary Mode of Warfare? Mary Kaldor's Theory of New Wars' in *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring, 2000), p.172.

‘linking the projects of the elites with the masses.’¹⁵⁴ The targeting of an internal minority, already weak, to sever their link with the voting majority prevents solidarity and prevents change but it does not realise any greater project. Sumit Sarkar’s opinion of negative cohesion is that it serves instead to distract from internal ‘inequities and tensions.’¹⁵⁵ It is the archetypal politics of smoke and mirrors, wherein the construction of the identity is the end-goal, rather than the enacting of any actual policies. In fact, the only consistent knock-on effect of nationalist discourse is that it increases exclusionary immigration attitudes, which of course fuels further successes for a campaign platform that exploits those attitudes. A study on nationalism in Switzerland, by no means a world-leader in the style, found that ‘economic inequality in a country was related to higher levels of nationalism.’¹⁵⁶ Nationalism, a politics that achieves nothing, succeeds in the areas that most need real change. While once nationalists were emancipatory heroes and nation-builders, today they only build electoral alliances. Even then, those cross-cutting alliances are flimsy and unsustainable without methods that constantly reinforce the division of Self and Other. Enshrining that difference in a falsified history is a prime example of the consolidation of this method.

¹⁵⁴ Gerard Delanty and Krishan Kumar (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Nations and Nationalism*, (London, 2010), p.4.

¹⁵⁵ Sumit Sarkar, ‘The Limits of Nationalism’, p.5. Accessed at <https://www.india-seminar.com/2003/522/522%20sumit%20sarkar.htm>

¹⁵⁶ Green et al. ‘Nationalism and Patriotism as Predictors of Immigration Attitudes in Switzerland’, pp.369-393.

CHAPTER VI

THE NATIONALIST MYTH

*'The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.'*¹⁵⁷

In 1917, the British liberal historian Ramsay Muir remarked that 'it is probable that the most potent of nation-moulding factors... is the possession of a common tradition, a memory of sufferings endured or victories won in common, expressed in song and legend, in the dear names of great personalities that seem to embody in themselves the character and ideals of the nation, in the names also of sacred places wherein the national memory is enshrined.'¹⁵⁸ There is much of note in Muir's rather lengthy analysis. He draws out the central importance of 'national memory' to a nation's feeling of togetherness and finds this to be reinforced not just in the work of state historians, but also in 'song and legend.' Reapplying the tools of a historian, the provenance of this source is also significant. Muir was writing during the First World War, a conflict defined by the differing nationalisms it brought together to great destructive effect. Witnessing people willing to fight, kill or die for their country as those across Europe did in their tens of millions, brought to the fore questions around how exactly nationalism was able to mobilise such emotive responses. In the section before we focused on the centrality of the divide between the Self and the Other in nationalist politics as a carry-forward from populist strategies. This section will show the repeated and effective usage of history as well as 'legend' to sharpen that divide. It

¹⁵⁷ L.P. Hartley and Douglas Brooks-David (ed.), *The Go-Between*, (London, 1997), p.1.

¹⁵⁸ Ramsay Muir, *Nationalism and Internationalism: The Culmination of Modern History*, (London, 1917), pp.48-49.

is with this innovation added as a cement that those uneasy vertical alliances across class lines within a population can achieve some stability, but nationalism's reliance on history predates its electoral incarnation.

Nationalists do not have a monopoly on identity construction, though at Muir's time of writing that may not have been so clear. In a world that is now more closely connected and often celebrates difference, there have been innumerate challenges to national belonging. By the end of the Second World War the major interstate division was Communist against Capitalist. Within seemingly well-established states there were to be waves and waves of emancipatory movements. Groups fought for racial equality, gender equality and equality of sexuality often with the same fervour as those Muir had witnessed. However, with the possible exception of movements for racial equality, none of those mobilisations could be characterised by their usage of history – in the LGBTQ community, for example, they had been prevented in the past from openly displaying their identity, meaning they couldn't draw on foundational myths for their communities. The observations of Muir - who went on to serve as a Member of Parliament after the war making clear even in his career path the intertwined nature of history and politics – are only accurate when applied to national identity construction, not to identity politics more broadly. Patrick Geary corroborates this and carries the argument further, subverting the research field to its political purpose in claiming that 'modern history was conceived and developed... as an instrument of European nationalism.'¹⁵⁹ From the inside looking out, history was used to form stadial theories of progression that implicitly critiqued any state structure that did not match European standards of modernity. This became a justification for colonialism and the exportation of the nation-

¹⁵⁹ Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe*, (Princeton, 2002), p.15.

state. Internally, history could be used to make national unity seem eternal and therefore insurmountable. Within this structure the history of the nation becomes a part of nationalism itself.

Rousseau believed that national feeling could be educated into a population and hypothetically, an accurate education around a shared people's past could ingrain a conscientious, informed and non-confrontational identity for a particular nation. In reality however, this is impossible. Nationalist histories revolve around iconic figures, flashpoints and events calculated to provoke the strongest emotional response. They thread these together to build a coherent narrative that projects the nation backwards as a geographical, political and cultural entity through time, but any coherent historical narrative is immediately suspicious. All histories are selective of what they include, that is part of the logic of the field, but nationalist histories should be held to a higher standard as they alone have such vast audiences and manifest such permanent results. Grievances from centuries before, when neither territory existed in its present form, are used to fuel ongoing nationalist hatreds. Refusing to vote for a nationalist in an election becomes a gross insult to all of those who have ever lost their lives under the flag. Attempting to challenge the facts that support these assertions misses the point as they are not attributed to scholars or footnoted meticulously. Facts are sacrificed whenever they inconvenience the ideologues of nationalism, whenever they obscure the permanence of the distinction between inside and outside, and whenever they fail to strengthen the nationalist base.

A. History and Nationalism

As with many of the strategies for consideration in the course of this analysis of nationalism, the usage of history differs in each context. Before engaging with the model historic example of Germany or the contemporary cases of Hungary or India it is first helpful to draw on some general understandings of the way nationalism interacts with this form of collective memory. Though David Archard's study uses two case studies of his own, the first the British at Dunkirk and the second the Afrikaners' covenant, the fact that his conclusions about the relationship between nationalism and accurate history are mostly positive requires further reflection.¹⁶⁰ As a historian Archard's acceptance for myth is surprising. Of his two selected studies he summarises that 'they have some basis in fact even though they are far from being the whole truth and nothing but the truth,' but does not believe that this should limit the ways in which they have been popularised and used.¹⁶¹ Archard, edging closer to the concerns of this analysis, does warn against any application of history that might enable a 'pejorative characterisation of non-nationals' but if he had broadened his study further he would know that this warning was as far outdated as Hume's warning that only the vulgar carry national characters to extremes.¹⁶²

Archard found that 'as a doctrine nationalism comprises both factual and normative claims.'¹⁶³ When two professors of history, Jo Guldi and David Armitage, wrote 'The History Manifesto' bemoaning the way the discipline has lost its real-world

¹⁶⁰ David Archard, 'Myths, Lies and Historical Truth: A Defence of Nationalism' in *Political Studies*, Vol. 43, pp.472-481.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p.474.

¹⁶² Ibid, p.479.

¹⁶³ Ibid, p.472.

applicability, they could perhaps have forecasted a role for history in supporting the factual claims of the steadily rising political trend of nationalism.¹⁶⁴ This faith would have been misplaced though as according to Archard's observations, nationalist histories do not provide the evidence base for the factual claims of the politics, but rather stories that might inform the normative claims that are being made. Archard's article does well in identifying a role for the manipulation of history into myths or legends but less well in championing a truthful invocation of the past. When we talk about nationalism today it is the nationalism of competitive electoral parties whose primary aim is securing places in government. Within that context a certain degree of manipulation, or 'spin' as it is termed in political rhetoric, is expected as parties compete for the support of a limited group of voters. All the same, the interchangeable usages of history and myth familiar to nationalists the world over represent a different kind of falsity.

In democracy generally, taking opposing perspectives on a certain social issue is beneficial to the politics, it allows voters to align themselves with whichever party's viewpoint best replicates their own. Changing the past or using mythical narratives as part of that democratic posturing can endanger democracy by obscuring the type of choice that is being made. It is precisely because myths are so effective at 'simplifying, dramatizing, synthesising and suggesting what is the case' that their utilisation in nationalism is concerning.¹⁶⁵ If national identities are simplified and dramatized they become fixed and exclusive. If those national identities are employed as the lowest common denominator in domestic politics, the possible results of the debate can be

¹⁶⁴ Jo Guldi and David Armitage, *The History Manifesto*, (Cambridge, 2015).

¹⁶⁵ Archard, 'Myths, Lies and Historical Truth: A Defence of Nationalism', p.477.

stark. Myths, like most forms of story-telling, can serve some role in teaching lessons in the abstract but if a nation is to use myth to form a 'sense of historical continuity... crucial to the motivation of behaviour in the name of one's nation' then myth is reaching beyond its rightful boundaries.¹⁶⁶ Glorified lies can lead to heinous crimes committed in ignorance.

Every nation has certain myths of origin or exceptionality that are present in the shared consciousness of the people and they are not always destructive. These myths sit alongside a national anthem, national animal, national flower, as items that are known and hold a symbolic meaning but that most accept to have no role beyond this. If 'national myths are... mythic to the extent that they misrepresent what is actual for a purpose,' it is the purpose in that statement on which the justification of the utilisation of myth will hang.¹⁶⁷ Often, nationalist states will misrepresent their origins in order to consolidate power whilst in other states the luxury of a simple and repeated story does not exist. This complicates feelings of belonging but in tandem muddles the methods by which nationalist groups can attempt to build strong multi-group alliances. In Lebanon for example, the myths of Christian exceptionalism and Mediterranean exceptionalism passed alongside the favoured claim to Phoenician ancestry. Kamal Salibi summarised in his account that 'the general run of Christians gave their enthusiastic support to Phoenicianism,' but 'most Moslems dismissed it as nonsense.'¹⁶⁸ At the point of Lebanon severing its ties with the French colonial power all three myths would have served French interests and the interests of the Lebanese Christians as they would have

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, p.475.

¹⁶⁸ Kamal Salibi, 'The Lebanese Identity', in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1971), p.84.

distinguished the state from the surrounding Arab nations. Ultimately though, the myth remained disagreed upon contravening Salibi's concern about mythic purpose, different to Archard's, that 'for a historical fiction to serve a political purpose... it must be generally accepted.'¹⁶⁹ One possible solution would be for the Lebanese to come together in some artificial forum and establish a shared fictional past that in no way limited the future aspirations of any of the varied identity groups within the state. The solution instead proposed by Salibi instead was that for 'divided societies... to gain the degree of solidarity that is needed to maintain viability, their best chance lies in getting to know and understand the full truth of their past.'¹⁷⁰ If that ideas sounds naïve, the aim should at least be to construct an inclusive narrative that incorporates difference. This might challenge nationalist electoral parties which seek to use myth to re-divide.

B. Divided Nations Uniting

For those nation-states which formed from previously divided territories one of their chief means of unifying via a shared identity was with a historical claim, accurate or inaccurate. As Ernest Renan put it 'to forget – and I will venture to say – to get one's history wrong are essential factors in the making of a nation.'¹⁷¹ Renan, the French Orientalist and scholar was first commissioned to make a study of Lebanon during which time he uncovered a number of Phoenician inscriptions, but his comment is more

¹⁶⁹ Kamal S. Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions*, p.216.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.217.

¹⁷¹ Ernest Renan (trans. and ed. Alfred Zimmerman), 'What is a Nation?' in *Modern Political Doctrines*, (London, 1939), pp.186-205.

closely applicable to the French and then model German case than it is to the ongoing Lebanese struggle.¹⁷²

As referenced in the chapter before, the Germans unification project managed the transition from city-states to nation-state by mobilising against a French Other. For the principal early ideologue of German nationalism, Johann Gottfried Herder this ‘othering’ was merely a by-product of the creation of a unique national culture which he deemed of primary importance. Herder knew that for this to be successful the Germans would have to ‘establish for ourselves an entirely new mythology.’¹⁷³ Mythology in Herder’s terminology sat closer to that of Archard, it was an occasionally falsified history which would provide some of the normative claims important to German identity. John Coakley praised one element of this national mythology, the epic poem the *Nibelungenlied*, for precisely that achievement as it ‘displayed the impressive extent of national cultural history.’¹⁷⁴ Herder dreamed of building a nation distinguished by a shared culture made of positive characteristics tracked through a mythologised history, but he was followed by other nationalists whose usage of history was less discerning and sits closer to that deployed by nationalists today. These theorists strayed towards a ‘pejorative characterisation of non-nationals’ yet were just as important, if not more so, to the eventual unification of the state in 1871.

The positive claims for shared culture and the negative approach of ‘othering’ came together in the work of Herder’s contemporary Johann Fichte. Fichte was later to

¹⁷² Ernest Renan, ‘Mission de Phenicie’, (1864-1874).

¹⁷³ Johann Gottfried Herder and Ernest Menze, Karl Menges (eds.) and Ernest Menze, Michael Palma (trans.), *Selected Early Works, 1764-1767. Addresses, Essays, and Drafts; Fragments on Recent German Literature*, (University Park, Pennsylvania, 1991), p.229.

¹⁷⁴ John Coakley, ‘Mobilizing the Past: Nationalist images of History’ in *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 10, No. 4, (2004), p.547.

be characterised by Hans Sluga as the ‘first National-Socialist philosopher’ positioning him in a destructive lineage, but this representation can itself be critiqued for its simplification.¹⁷⁵ What is undeniable is that Fichte set a dangerous precedent for later nationalists inside and outside of Germany. His falsification of German origins was ethnically focused and inspired by Tacitus’ ‘Germania’, fusing pseudoscience and cultural history.¹⁷⁶ Fichte’s work is targeted at an accessible audience and was written in speech form, using direct invocations to an audience such as the repeated phrase ‘I invite you’, with the aim of establishing a connection between the readers of his work and the artificial German ancestry he was seeking to create.¹⁷⁷ The actual content of Fichte’s history is also carefully selected with that purpose in mind. It is entirely bereft of dates or corroborated events and instead focuses purely on promoting the Germans as an ‘Urvolk’ or primordial people. If his people can be shown to be primordial they gain a footing above the later-to-develop groups and equivalent with the already well-established nations - these would be the externally projected characteristics. Internally, a primordial people would be inherently bound together even if they currently existed in different territories.

Whilst dates and events are missing, Fichte does elaborate on the fundamental identity of the Germans. He finds them to be of Teutonic stock which has since been disproved as he includes Scandinavians in this category but excludes the Slavic people. At the time of writing however, this racialised history was not subject to much

¹⁷⁵ Hans Sluga, *Heidegger’s Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany*, (Cambridge, 1993), p.29.

¹⁷⁶ Cornelius Tacitus, and A. R. Birley (trans.), *Agricola and Germany*, (Oxford, 1999), pp.35-63.

¹⁷⁷ Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Gregory Moore (ed.), ‘Fourth Address: The Principal Difference Between the Germans and Other Peoples of Teutonic Descent’ in *Addresses to the German Nation*, (Cambridge, 2009), p.49.

challenge, particularly when it sat side-by-side with such bold rhetoric as ‘only the German – the original man... really has a people.’¹⁷⁸ Fichte knew that he was writing purely for other Germans, not as a genuine historian. His forages into pseudohistory all served a nationalist political purpose for the ultimate aim of creating a German nation. When ethnicity re-emerged as a foundation for political belonging under the Nazi regime it was within an already well-established nation-state that was destabilised under immense external pressures. Modern Germany has evolved considerably from these dubious histories, consigning them to the past themselves. In modern India which has the complacency of a less turbulent domestic history alongside the pain of a crushing colonial legacy, there has proved less of a willingness to shake off these crutches for identity and nationalism.

The challenge for the first Indian nationalists was harder than that of the Germans, working as they did almost two centuries later. They existed within a state that had only ever been united in full under the British Raj and which was subject to consistent abuses by the colonial power. The nationalists sought to create a nation whilst simultaneously having to dispel an invasive force. The eventual Indian success saw figures such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru forever memorialised, but alongside them in the Pantheon of Indian nationalism sits Vinayak Savarkar. In 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi controversially offered flower tributes at Savarkar’s portrait in Parliament and in 2020 celebrated the day of his birth in a tweet.¹⁷⁹ The

¹⁷⁸ Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Gregory Moore (ed.), ‘Eighth Address: What a People is in the Higher Sense of the Word and What is Love of Fatherland’ in *Addresses to the German Nation*, (Cambridge, 2009), p.100.

¹⁷⁹ The Indian Express Staff, ‘PM Narendra Modi pays tribute to Vinayak Damodar Savarkar’ *The Indian Express*, (May 28th 2014), accessed at <https://indianexpress.com/photos/picture-gallery-others/pm-narendra-modi-pays-tributes-to-vinayak-damodar-savarkar/2/> Tweet by Narendra Modi, (28th May 2020), @narendramodi https://twitter.com/narendramodi/status/1265850817690492936?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Et

perspective of Savarkar and his importance to Indian independence has waxed and waned according to which government have been elected raising questions around who exactly states choose to remember, and how they can reproduce nationalist icons.

Savarkar's importance to Indian nationalism is an objective fact but his contribution to the Independence movement is perhaps better categorised as part of India's national mythology, rather than its history.

Savarkar's legacy is Hindutva, the ideological justification for an exclusivist Indian national identity based around the Hindu faith.¹⁸⁰ Hindutva has been used as a template for othering much more in the years since Independence, and particularly in the years of BJP governments, than it was ever used against British rule. The doctrine is set out in a sprawling pamphlet of 55 pages which forms a manufactured history of the Hindus, they being the people 'whose past, present and future are most closely linked with the soil of Hindustan.'¹⁸¹ Savarkar's history, like Fichte's, contains only three references to dates across its span and maintains that 'the main resources of our history had been and must ever be our national traditions remembered.'¹⁸² Matching Fichte even more closely, Savarkar roots his work around the central premise that 'no people in the world can more justly claim to get recognised as a racial unit than the Hindus.'¹⁸³ He takes the ethnic claim of a primordial people which lies at the core of Fichte's

[weetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1265850817690492936%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.indiatoday.in%2FIndia%2Fstory%2Fpm-narendra-modi-pays-tributes-to-veer-savarkar-on-birth-anniversary-1682774-2020-05-28](https://www.indiatoday.in/India/story/fpm-narendra-modi-pays-tributes-to-veer-savarkar-on-birth-anniversary-1682774-2020-05-28)

¹⁸⁰ V.D. Savarkar, *Essentials of Hindutva*, (1921-1922).

¹⁸¹ Ibid, p.54

¹⁸² Ibid, p.16.

¹⁸³ Ibid, p.33.

addresses but combines this with a religious categorisation creating a slippage in terminology that defines exclusively who belongs in the future state of India. Of course, in India, defining belonging by the Hindu faith alone still does not constitute an excessive narrowing. The Census data of 2011 reports that 79.8% of the population are Hindus against only 14.2% of the population being Muslims.¹⁸⁴ All the same, whilst the dominant thread of Indian nationalism today revives a religious separation between Self and Other it is more surprising to see this thread in Savarkar's work written when the major opponents to Indian nationalism were the British imperial forces.

Looking first at the context of his work, the history of Savarkar's activism has itself been the object of deliberate falsification. Much has been made of the 50-years prison sentence he was served by the British – ostensibly for organising an armed riot that followed the British announcement of the Morley-Minto reforms which sought to divide the electorate by sect to provide protections against Hindu dominion for India's Muslim population - but less time is given to discussing the numerous mercy pleas Savarkar then went on to petition the imperial power with. Shashi Tharoor's book 'Why I Am a Hindu' records Savarkar as writing in 1913, 'I am ready to serve the government in any capacity they like... The Mighty alone can afford to be merciful and, therefore, where else can the prodigal son return but to the parental doors of the government.'¹⁸⁵ These letters were displayed until recently at the site of Savarkar's imprisonment, but as of February 2020 the Union Minister of Culture under the BJP Government has reported that there is no record of these items at the museum.¹⁸⁶ History it seems is at

¹⁸⁴ All India Religion Census Data 2011, <https://www.census2011.co.in/religion.php> (accessed 14/01/21).

¹⁸⁵ Shashi Tharoor, *Why I Am a Hindu*, (Oxford, 2018), p.170.

¹⁸⁶ New Indian Express staff, 'No record of Savarkar's mercy petitions to British with Andaman administration: Ministry of Culture' *New Indian Express*, (4th February 2020), accessed at

the whims of the controlling power. 'Hindutva', written after Savarkar's release, has the almost Herderian aim to establish a positive cultural unity across the various states yoked together by British rule via celebration of the 'common homage we pay to our great civilisation,' but the absence of reference to the most prominent obstacle is deafening.

Rather than Savarkar opposing the British utilisation of separation implied by the Morley-Minto reforms then, his contention was more likely to be with the vesting of power in a Muslim minority. His text fuses the ethnic and the religious, 'princes of Aryan blood' and the gods 'Hanuman Sugriva, Bibhishana' to create a mythically creative ancestry that still finds no room for India's Muslims.¹⁸⁷ Peter van de Veer's book on Hindu nationalists more broadly argued that religious nationalists must combine the importance of history to nationalism, with the 'anti-historical' perspective implied by that general religious capacity to 'deny historical change or else try to prove its ultimate irrelevance.'¹⁸⁸ Savarkar used Hindu myth to define a people then denied the excesses of British force, preferring instead to enshrine in history the 'century after century' conflict caused by 'the sword of Islam of Peace!'¹⁸⁹ There is a certain irony in a figure being falsely remembered for a history they falsely constructed, but the farce becomes tragedy when the implications for the burgeoning Indian nationalist movement long after Independence are considered.

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2020/feb/04/no-record-of-savarkars-mercy-petitions-to-british-with-andaman-administration-ministry-of-culture-2098921.html> 04/02/2020, (accessed 14/01/2021).

¹⁸⁷ Savarkar, 'Essentials of Hindutva', p.7.

¹⁸⁸ Peter van de Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*, (California, 1994), p. xiii.

¹⁸⁹ Savarkar, *Essentials of Hindutva*, p.19. p.18.

C. Myth Becoming Reality

Savarkar's Hindu nationalism remained dormant during much of the movement for Independence but had reemerged as part of a new Indian nationalism. When the British withdrew and the twin-states of India and Pakistan formed through the traumatic Partition, nominally secular India looked to have no place for an exclusivist ethnoreligious doctrine. In the years after the event, Partition was drawn on and influenced occasions of communal violence, but these were not coordinated at the national level. It was only with the rise of the BJP that Hindu nationalism started to gain any traction. Though the party was founded in 1980, they first won major support across the country in 1990 during a two-month rally which the historian Ramachandra Guha described as employing 'religious, allusive, militant, masculine and anti-Muslim' imagery.¹⁹⁰ The goal of the march was to reach Ayodhya, the site of the Babri Masjid which Hindu nationalists had long claimed sat on the birthplace of Rama, one of the incarnations of the deity Vishnu. This was Savarkar's infusion of the land with mythical values made real. In the wake of the procession, which followed a car restyled to look like the chariots of old, there were numerous incidents of violence and communal riots which prompted huge numbers of arrests.

Each instance revived tensions and created self-reproducing trauma, adding to the historic aura around the BJP's parade. The first visit to Ayodhya was ultimately unsuccessful but in 1992 another procession was led. On this occasion the group, reported as containing up to 150,000 people, successfully razed the mosque to the

¹⁹⁰ Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*, (New York, 2017), p.xxiii.

ground.¹⁹¹ The Babri Masjid demolition is the most visible example of what Aparna Devare critiqued the Hindu nationalists for, ‘justifying their actions based on myth.’¹⁹² It became a strong rallying point for the BJP and proved them to be a party that would embody an aggressive Hindu identity and achieve manifest results. Savarkar’s dream was finally realised. Utilising this falsified version of history as a means of staging events of political activism led directly to three terms in government for the BJP, in 1996, 1998 and 1999. Few repercussions accompanied those spells in power. In 2020, former leaders of the party were amongst the 32 people acquitted at trial for any role in inciting the 1992 violence. The petitioner for the case, Iqbal Ansari, on hearing the result responded with his own selective appeal to history – one different to that of Savarkar or the BJP - ‘let’s all live in peace... Hindu and Muslim have always lived in peace in Ayodhya.’¹⁹³

Today the BJP are well established having won the previous two elections by landslides. There is no longer any need for the same sort of stunts that earlier raised them to be genuine contenders for the Lok Sabha parliament. At Modi’s accession in 2014, as noted previously, he paid tribute to Savarkar’s portrait. His party have successfully manufactured a lineage that combines Savarkar’s mythical history, Savarkar himself as a prominent fighter for Independence, and the party as the realisation of Hindu nationalism in Indian politics. Now that the BJP are in power, their role as gatekeepers of history is even more unassailable. This is a much-desired

¹⁹¹ Soutik Biswas, ‘Babri Mosque: India court acquits BJP leaders in demolition case’ *BBC News*, (30th September 2020), accessed at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-54318515>

¹⁹² Aparna Devare, *History and the Making of a Modern Hindu Self*, (Abingdon, 2011), p.9.

¹⁹³ Iqbal Ansari quoted in Soutik Biswas ‘Babri Mosque: India court acquits BJP leaders in demolition case’, accessed at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-54318515>

evolution for nationalists as it enables them to start actively altering facts as well as just selecting what they choose to include in their narratives. They can start making their history, blinkered though it is, a true history. A prime example of this was the BJP's attack on the public figure H.S. Doreswamy. Doreswamy was critiqued by a BJP-affiliated Member of the Legislative Assembly for being a 'fake freedom fighter' and 'a Pakistani agent' seemingly because of his vocal opposition to Hindu nationalist policy in the Karnataka region.¹⁹⁴ As Savarkar is heralded as an icon of Independence, the 102-year-old Doreswamy who was also arrested by the British during the Quit India movement but has no mercy pleas to his name, is derided by the ruling party. As part of his defence Doreswamy has been writing his own CV, a uniquely personal history intended to stand up against that of the Hindu nationalists. When interviewed he said, 'you can read it and tell me if there is anything anti-national in it.'¹⁹⁵

D. Shared History, Shared Identity?

The pivot of Savarkar's elevation and Doreswamy's degradation is proof of the selective choice of memory as nationalist parties seek to compete, then the subsequent attempts to make that artificial history real. Archard wrote that British nationalist histories, as an exemplary case, should champion those times that might 'condense an exemplary display of Britishness into a single event' with the aim of providing instructive lessons from the past appropriate to a contemporary crisis, or to raise morale

¹⁹⁴ Amrita Dutta, '102-year-old reads CV as BJP puts him to freedom fighter test' in *The Indian Express*, (9th March 2020), accessed at <https://in.news.yahoo.com/102-old-readies-cv-bjp-213040887.html>

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

by showing a similar disaster to have been overcome.¹⁹⁶ When these single events, or figures, are referenced repeatedly by a party in power that is not facing a particular challenge, the intention is instead to shape the outlook of the general population in a way that might best help a party to achieve their broader political aims. John Coakley's study of the uses of nationalism identifies five common applications for nationalist historiography, 'definition... reinforcement... compensation... legitimisation... and inspiration.'¹⁹⁷ All are applicable to the way Hungary under Viktor Orbán applies history for political ends, yet Coakley groups Hungary apart from the more well-established Western nations when considering the origins of the major historical trends deployed by nationalists across the European states.

Coakley finds that 'the dominant versions of national history were created and propagated over a long-time frame by the ruling political elites of the states of western Europe, whereas in central and eastern Europe these were more commonly created by counter-elites.'¹⁹⁸ This is an important observation when considering the two forms of nationalism, justified and unjustified, for it argues that history could be used to consolidate or to emancipate. For Coakley then, when Hungarians 'stress their Scythian ancestry' and draw from 'the fabled warrior peoples of the east' it was as part of a narrative that opposed foreign rule.¹⁹⁹ However, Coakley was writing in 2004 shortly after Orbán's Fidesz party had lost the domestic election as a centre-right party. Since then they have returned to power advocating a much more potent nationalism paired

¹⁹⁶ Archard, 'Myths, Lies and Historical Truth', p.475.

¹⁹⁷ Coakley, 'Mobilizing the Past: Nationalist images of History', p.542.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, p.536.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, p.543.

with different historical themes. That disputed Scythian ancestry might still be employed, as in the work of László Botos, but the ends are different. When he calls the Hungarians the ‘descendants of the Scythian-Hun people, who at one time ruled all of Asia’ it is to define them as different and exceptional, to remind them of what ‘our enemies encouraged us to forget, that we were Huns.’²⁰⁰

Botos’ history straddles the generations of Hungarian nationalism. It glorifies the same connection to a mythical and aggressive ancestry which would have served as instructive to a population countering foreign rule but is equally suited to independent Hungary’s pursuit of an exclusive and racialised national identity. Hungary under Fidesz has now become part of that first grouping of states categorised by Coakley, as has India under the BJP, so ‘when elites hold state power, the task of creating communal history’ is ‘almost routine.’²⁰¹ The type of elite is different, it’s no longer only a wealthy and aristocratic class as it was in the western states, but in these nationalist democracies Modi the Hindu and Orbán the ethnic-Hungarian hold state power and shape the state-histories they desire. As evidence of this Michael Toomey tracked that the ‘notable intensification on the part of Orbán and many of his fellow party members,’ was ‘facilitated by politicised retellings of Hungary’s past.’²⁰² The past they choose to tell is significant though. Whilst Independence from the Soviet Union might seem to be the obvious moment to enshrine in the collective memory that does not serve enough of a purpose for Fidesz. Their nationalist foundation is in the

²⁰⁰ László Botos quoted and translated in John R. Haines, ‘Viktor Orbán’s “Illiberal” Hungary Looks Eastward’ for *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, (September 2014), p.1.

²⁰¹ Coakley, ‘Mobilizing the Past: Nationalist images of History’, p.535.

²⁰² Michael Toomey, ‘History, Nationalism, and Democracy: Myth and Narrative in Viktor Orbán’s “Illiberal Hungary”’, *New Perspectives: Interdisciplinary Journal of Central & East European Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2018), p.87.

sovereignty of the state, as assured by the creation of the Third Republic in 1989, but they skip over this recent history to instead celebrate the rule of Miklos Horthy the regent of Hungary from 1920-1944. The success of 1989 is hard to manipulate as a historical artefact as it is in living memory. Furthermore, the victory is one shared by the Hungarian population at large, and by all sides of the political spectrum. There is no unique point Fidesz can make by granting it any extra attention in rallies, or speeches or memorials. Horthy, on the other hand, is a marginalised figure only previously claimed by certain segments of the Hungarian right which means there are opportunities for exploitation.

Prior to the concerted push by Fidesz that Toomey described, Hungarian nationalism lacked a political face. Under Fidesz, success has been won by challenging the European Union and in this respect, Horthy makes the ideal ancestor. Horthy has been lauded by some on the Right in Hungary for his unwillingness to negotiate with foreign powers or to acknowledge international treaties which shrunk the Hungarian state. By establishing a parallel with him, Orbán has a historical basis for his rhetoric based around the rejection of European rule. István Deák also noted that Horthy's government pursued a 'nationalist, Christian policy', not unlike the current Fidesz ideology.²⁰³ Perhaps most important in Fidesz's role as the representatives of the people in the Horthy tradition, Deák also notes that Horthy's regime was 'never even remotely threatened by a popular movement of the Left.'²⁰⁴ Considering that Fidesz's first spell out of power from 2002-2010 was when they lost the election to the Hungarian Socialist

²⁰³ István Deák, 'Hungary' in Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber (eds.), *The European Right: A Historical Profile*, (Berkeley, 1965), p.364.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p.365

Party, that element of Horthy's success would be appealing to replicate. In combination then it is to Orbán's advantage to popularise a nationalist history that looks favourably on Horthy's rule as it provides him with legitimation for the nationalist and anti-European sentiment that makes up many of his party's public statements whilst also expunges from history the Communist past of Hungary and their period of ideological colonialism. Isolating an individual who ruled mostly in isolation also helps construct what Toomey called 'an exclusivist understanding of the Hungarian nation, which renders him and his party the sole representatives of "true" Hungarians, and his political opponents as treacherous usurpers.'²⁰⁵

The defining of "true" Hungarians is reminiscent of Savarkar's claims of the Hindus as "true" Indians, or Fichte's focus on the primordial Germans. There is nuance to history and the invocation of Horthy poses Orbán a problem around Jewish belonging in the state. Horthy was undeniably anti-Semitic but he also virulently opposed the Nazi order to deport the Hungarian Jewish population. Orbán's own attacks on Soros suggest a willingness to air his own anti-Semitic views but in Europe open prejudice against Jewish people is less socially acceptable than certain other forms of racism and considerably more likely to be challenged than Indian Islamophobia. In 2014, Orbán's government installed a 'Memorial to the Victims of the German Occupation', seemingly dedicated to Hungarian Jews killed by the Nazi power once they occupied Hungary and deposed Horthy. The memorial was controversial and critiqued by some for rewriting history by 'attempting to absolve the Horthy regime of responsibility for the death of...

²⁰⁵ Toomey, 'History, Nationalism, and Democracy: Myth and Narrative in Viktor Orbán's "Illiberal Hungary"', p.89.

two-thirds of its Jewish population by putting the blame entirely on Nazi Germany.’²⁰⁶ Orbán was trapped having to make a statement that contradicted his own political beliefs in defence of Fidesz’s chosen hero who had himself acted in a way that belied his own political beliefs. The erection of this memorial could have lost Fidesz a portion of their voting base if it visibly contradicted the anti-Semitism implicit in the degradation of Soros and the veneration up of Horthy. The objective lesson is that it is harder to maintain a fluid and selective usage of history when monuments are constructed as they give history an immutable form, but this memorial contained two careful stylings. The first is that it was named ambiguously for the ‘Victims of the German Occupation’, merging the suffering of the general population with the particular abuses against Hungarian Jews and the Roma population. The second is that the Hebrew translation of the accompanying inscription mistranslated the word ‘victims’ as ‘sacrificial animals.’²⁰⁷ When dictated by a party in power, the defining of the people, the Self and the Other can slide easily from nationalist rhetoric to deliberate political separation evidenced quite grimly in this instance.

E. History is Rarely Confined to the Past

The cautionary tale of the memorial in Szabadasag Square does demonstrates the limits of history as a political object. History might support nationalist narratives but it is less easily aligned with the justification of political action or policies. With that being said, Orbán’s government have for the most part been successful at establishing

²⁰⁶ Daniel Nolan, ‘German Occupation Memorial Completed Under Cover of Darkness’, *The Budapest Beacon* (July 21st 2014), accessed at <https://budapestbeacon.com/german-occupation-memorial-completed-under-cover-of-darkness/>

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

an implied connection between Horthy and their leader for narrative purposes, whilst reframing their political struggles as an extension of Horthy's to direct the support won in a useful direction. Horthy, for example, repeatedly attempted to rally against the Treaty of Trianon a now obscure footnote to the First World War in which the Kingdom of Hungary sought peace with the Allied nations. Trianon, notes Szilvia Peremiczky, lost Hungary 'two-thirds of its former territory' and 'much of its agricultural base, its mining industry... as well as its status as a serious player in the Great Game of Europe.'²⁰⁸ The Treaty was finalised over 100 years ago and to most inside and outside the country would now be deemed irrelevant. However under Orbán Kristian Gerner sees Trianon as having become an 'obsession.'²⁰⁹ Orbán addressed the Treaty when he planned his 'national unification' project and made it the subject of a 'National Unity Day' on which the people commemorate their cultural losses.²¹⁰ There is much of the cultural history of Herder in this, but it has more direct political implications. Confident that 'National Unity Day' would engender support, Orbán accompanied it with a Citizenship law which granted Hungarian citizenship to ethnic Hungarians living in the surrounding nations.

Fidesz's comfortable victory in the 2010 election, and subsequent electoral triumphs, has enabled these brazen fusions of policy and history as part of a broad new nationalist narrative. This is anomalous. Most nationalist parties go through a slower

²⁰⁸ Szilvia Peremiczky, 'Antisemitism Redivivus: The Rising Ghosts of a Calamitous Inheritance in Hungary and Romania' in Alvin H. Rosenfeld (ed.) *Resurgent Antisemitism: Global Perspectives*, (Bloomington, 2013), p.175.

²⁰⁹ Kristian Gerner, 'Between the Holocaust and Trianon: Historical Culture in Hungary', in Martin L. Davies and Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann (eds.) *How the Holocaust Looks Now: International Perspectives*, (New York, 2006), p.98.

²¹⁰ Toomey, 'History, Nationalism, and Democracy: Myth and Narrative in Viktor Orbán's "Illiberal Hungary"', p.96.

process of first ensuring their chosen history will be accepted by the majority and remain the accepted version of events, while also trying to keep enough flexibility that they can continually adapt it to reflect the present circumstances. Francis Fukuyama argued that the policies that do the most to shape national identity are ‘rules regarding citizenship and residency,’ like those in Hungary and the ‘curricula used in the public education system to teach children about the nation’s past.’²¹¹ At its worst this can be indistinguishable from indoctrination, though it is often only recognised as such after regime-change. Evidence of this was the project in Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein where for years curriculum committees attempted to write out ‘passages and chapters extolling the history and ideology of the Ba’ath Party, the presumed qualities and character traits of its leaders, Saddam Hussein’s leadership, and the wars that Iraq fought during his reign’ so as to ensure they did not become part of the accepted history as understood by the next generation.²¹² Iraqi history under Hussein though of the nation, was not entirely nationalist. Hussein used it to glorify himself, his sect and his ideology. Modern India and modern Hungary have not yet reached this stage.

It is however a concerning trend that ex-colonies are using falsified histories for political gains, especially to espouse exclusivist definitions of national identity. It is indicative of just how widely the nationalist mode has spread. A control over curriculum, and particularly history, was a key element of imperial powers’ attempts to reproduce their power in the colonies. In the Indian case a continuation of this trend has been argued for by some scholars. R. B Bhagat determined that British censuses and

²¹¹ Francis Fukuyama, *Identity: Contemporary Identity Politics and the Struggle for Recognition*, (Croydon, 2019), p.142.

²¹² Khalil F. Osman, ‘Chapter 4: Education, resistance, and the reproduction of primordial sectarian identity’ in *Sectarianism in Iraq: The Making of State and Nation since 1920*, (Abingdon, 2015), p.190.

their collection of ‘demographic data on religion’ were fundamental in raising ‘Hindu-Muslim consciousness’ and that they ‘shaped the Hindu and Muslim relationship in both colonial and postcolonial India.’²¹³ The BJP’s Hinduisation of the Independence movement and the prominent role they afford to Hinduism’s Gods and Goddesses are then reproductions of the old imperial tendency for division. On the other side of the world, in the central and eastern European states that were formerly communist-governed, Coakley identified the ‘importance of perceptions of the past in legitimating contemporary ideologies’ as a means of subverting the monolithic memory of ideological imperialism.²¹⁴ Distorting history around the Hungarian experience of that phenomenon, remembering a leader who surrendered to the Nazis in the Second World War rather than the moment of Independence and the forming of the Third Republic is clear proof of the instilling of a fundamentally flawed new ideology of nationalism.

Hungarian and Indian nationalists are both employing a strategy then which once offered a ‘powerful legitimation to imperialism and colonialism.’²¹⁵ That strategy is now offering a powerful legitimation to new nationalism and to new nationalists as they stand in, and win, elections. The importance of history to identity is now being recognised everywhere though. The authors of the History Manifesto may have struggled to find historians in power, but their craft retains its political clout. In once-imperial Britain the statues of a slaver was pulled down in Bristol as part of the Black Lives Matter movement, many people were in support. Winston Churchill’s statue was

²¹³ R.B Bhagat, ‘Census Enumeration, Religious Identity and Communal Polarization in India’ in *India, Asian Ethnicity*, Vol.14, No.4, p.434.

²¹⁴ Coakley, ‘Mobilising the Past: Nationalist Images of History’, p.531.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

informally guarded by reactionaries fearful it would receive the same treatment, even as British spirit during the Second World War was invoked to raise morale around Brexit. History is too multifaceted to support a single narrative, even a nationalist one yet it always seems closest to the nationalist invocation. Archard believe that ‘Britons may come – to exhibit the virtues ascribed to their compatriots at Dunkirk, if they are convinced that they share these national characteristics, and are inspired by the example to display them.’²¹⁶ That isn’t what nationalist histories do anymore. Nationalist history may well have once bolstered the cultural surge for German unification, but they have since fuelled division in Modi’s India and Orbán’s Hungary.

The truly effective nationalist histories today are those histories that remove all nuance from major events and distort the facts surrounding remembered figures. These singular narratives might work well in identity politics as they establish clear good-bad, us-them divides and dress them to ensure they appear everlasting but they have simplified the way we understand the nation and belonging more broadly. Most dangerously, they are a perfect partner to these leaders’ denial of facts reported in the present day. Fake News, fake history, the only source of information left in the eyes of voters are the nationalist leaders themselves. Ernst Toller, who was exiled from Nazi Germany said that ‘the people are tired of reason, tired of thought and reflection. They ask, what has reason done in the last few years...’²¹⁷ Voting populations today share the same perspective making them susceptible to new nationalism. Identity has become

²¹⁶ Archard, ‘Myths, Lies and Historical Truth’, p.475.

²¹⁷ Ernst Toller quoted in E.J. Dionne Jr. ‘The path to autocracy is all too familiar’, *The Washington Post*, (August 8th 2018), accessed at https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-path-to-autocracy-is-all-too-familiar/2018/08/08/6f3602f8-9b25-11e8-b60b-1c897f17e185_story.html

much more about the storyteller, the nationalist leader, than it is about the accuracy of the story.

CHAPTER VII

LEAD AND THEY SHALL FOLLOW

*'When I, the People, learn to remember, when I, the People, use the lessons of yesterday and no longer forget who robbed me last year, who played me for a fool – then there will be no speaker in all the world say the name: "The People," with any fleck of a sneer in his voice or any far-off smile of derision.'*²¹⁸

The construction of a falsified history, though often a political project, is part of the idea that underpins nationalism in each state. Its realisation requires the translation of the whole nationalist idea into a political reality - often under the auspices of a standalone leader who becomes the sum of the idea and the adherents of the idea. We have already sketched the way in which successful nationalist leaders reach beyond a singular political moment and become part of the fabric of the nationalist history, to be drawn upon by future leaders. The complexities of an increasingly fluid distinction between the Self and the Other necessary for nationalist-populism mean contemporary movements are as reliant on figureheads as emancipatory movements towards self-determination in the past ever were. The effective characteristics of leadership now, however, seem to be very different.

That is not to say leaders in the past were faultless and should be aspired to. The journalist Robert Fisk, reporting on the latest of a string of political assassinations during the Lebanese Civil War, summarised expertly the way in which collective memories distorted around these figures once they passed. Of Bashir Gemayel, killed in

²¹⁸ Carl Sandburg, *I am the People, the Mob*, (1916).

a retributive attack, he noted the continued support of his followers and asked of them ‘who would now doubt that this young man would have made a fine president? What Christian would want to recall that it was Bashir’s Phalange that entered the camps of Sabra and Chatila in the week of his death to kill up to two thousand of their inhabitants?’²¹⁹ Though the target of Fisk’s musings were the supporters of the warring sectarian leaders, the parallels to nationalist leaders are obvious. Their flaws are celebrated and the damage they do their nation is sold as their greatest accomplishment. This is part of the past, present and future of nationalist leaders, divisive around the world, who all seek a return to imaginary traditionalist societies of the past that never quite existed, via violent and inflammatory rhetoric. Nationalism, when viewed through history, has maintained many of its implicit trends though they are at their most pronounced today. These trends are most visible when the roles of leaders are held up to the light. Suddenly the boundaries between the justified nationalism of old and the unjustified nationalism of today are blurred.

A. Manifesting the Idea

Previously we have considered the work of the German ideologues, writers and poets who conceived of a united Germany and the way in which that new nation-state might define itself from those around it to draw together a population. The debate around this idea would have remained an occupation of the intellectual classes but for the intervention of Friedrich Jahn. Jahn was a contemporary of Johann Gottfried von Herder and Johann Gottlieb Fichte but his interpretation of nationalism required a closer relationship with the actual German people. Jahn, noted Hans Kohn, was obsessed with

²¹⁹ Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War*, (Oxford, 1991), p.93.

military reform and demanded for a national education program ‘the writing and studying of patriotic history.’²²⁰ His nationalism was similar in its aggression to that of Jakob Friedrich Fries and was rooted around a physical ideal for the German man which he attempted to create in his Turnverein gymnastic schools. As a leader, Jahn did not exist in isolation. In fact, the literal proximity he shared with his students is indicative of his willingness to work side by side amongst those who would in future make up the mass of the nation. Though symbolically effective, Jahn’s nationalism was interpreted as dangerous. Like Fries he was punished, serving a year-long prison sentence in 1819.

Despite, or more pertinently because of, Jahn’s virulent nationalism and his transition from lofty academic to man amongst the people, he garnered a vast base of supporters. He became known as ‘Father Jahn’ as the ideology spread, and he embraced the idea of personifying German nationalism.²²¹ To become more accessible Jahn translated the language he used and the way he communicated into ‘boorishness... of a refined art’ but partnered it with other more recognisable adaptations.²²² As though acknowledging the incomplete nature of a purely linguistic or physical advocacy, Peter Vierek’s study recounts the rumour that Jahn also invented a ‘true German costume’ of cloth that aimed to set him below the people he preached to.²²³ Retrospectively, the gimmicks employed by Jahn might seem crude or offensive. His physical and aggressive nationalism had hugely destructive descendants across Europe in the lead up to the First World War. Within Jahn’s time and against the interests of the dominant

²²⁰ Hans Kohn, ‘Father Jahn’s Nationalism’ in *The Review of Politics*, Vol.11, No.4 (October 1949), p.430.

²²¹ Heinrich von Treischke, Eden and Cedar Paul (trans.), Gordon Craig (ed.), *History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century*, (Chicago, 1975), p.101.

²²² Vierek, *Metapolitics: From Wagner and the German Romantics to Hitler*, (London, 2004), p.67.

²²³ Ibid.

intellectual and political elite, he was exceptionally successful and guaranteed that the idea of German unification ‘spread further than its former elitist public.’²²⁴

The historic example of Jahn, perhaps unwittingly, has been replicated by nationalist-populists today who fuse their championing of the nation with an apparent opposition to the traditional elite. This dual drive is achieved predominantly through a linguistic turn that attempts to address the voting majority on their own terms. Johann Fichte used ‘I invite you’ in his written addresses to the German nation and Jahn advanced on the artificiality of that connection with his public lectures and adoption of the common tongue. Leaders today recognise from whom their power, or potential power, is drawn and similarly thrive on public appearances and an accessible speaking style. It is effective. Though Donald Trump, former President of the United States, was rightfully derided for his meandering speeches, the elections he participated in featured exceptionally high turnouts, with the 2020 election, despite the pandemic, seeing the highest percentage of the population voting since 1900. Trump has also re-popularised the political rally to great effect, recognising it as a unique opportunity to preach a single narrative to mass of supporters. For contemporary politics in the national-populist mode these rallies have multiple positives. They ensure a direct connection between leader and the rank-and-file, serve as shows of strength that can be summoned at will, and also work as valuable morale boosters.

Viktor Orbán is another nationalist leader to have recognised the effectiveness of the rally. He shared platforms with the Polish Law and Justice Party (PiS) to inflate their crowd numbers and match causes, while on other occasions his organisers ‘brought people into the capital from the countryside in fleets of buses’ for rallies and

²²⁴ Hagen Schulze and Sarah Hanbury-Tenison (trans.), ‘The Course of German Nationalism: From Frederick the Great to Bismarck, 1763-1867’, (Cambridge, 2000), p.64.

marches.²²⁵ There is an implicit understanding that the traditional political elite had grown distant from those they purported to represent, so these direct interactions ensure a sense of connection between the people and the leader. To reinforce the idea that they are distinct from the old political class even when not stood directly in front of the general population, national-populists have abandoned the established political vocabulary. When these leaders debate other politicians, the difference is most clear. For example, they typically argue in an affected voice, that once again celebrates “boorishness.” This is an example of what Pierre Ostiguy theorised as the ‘low’ in politics - which he categorised as including slang and swearing with the aim of making one closer to the “people”.²²⁶ In and of itself, there is nothing objectively wrong with foregoing the standardised formality of political language. Though familiar to demagogues, it is also part of the foundation of genuinely representative politics for progressive leaders as well as the emancipatory politics of anti-colonial movements. Once this could have been seen as part of a demystification of politics; akin to the demystification of religion that took place with the Protestant translation of Latin rites, so each Christian could participate consciously in their faith. When wielded by the current crop of national-populists the motivation is less well-intentioned, though the results could be just as seismic.

²²⁵ Krisztina Than, ‘Tens of thousands join rally for Hungary’s Orban before April vote’ *Reuters*, (15th March 2018), accessed at <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-hungary-election-rallies/tens-of-thousands-join-rally-for-hungarys-orban-before-april-vote-idUKKCN1GR1T7?edition-redirect=uk>

²²⁶ Pierre Ostiguy, ‘The High and the Low in Politics: A Two-Dimensional Political Space for Comparative Analysis and Electoral Studies’ *Working Paper 360*, (July 2009), accessed at <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download;jsessionid=B8226F6CAFF2D8238D8708B24BFEF2FF?doi=10.1.1.216.6422&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

B. Using the Megaphone

In Benjamin Moffitt's seminal analysis of the rise of populism he pays special attention to the importance of a leader figure. Considering leaders from across the political spectrum, he found that the most effective populists often 'disregard the appropriate social cues and table manners in the usually gentrified domain of political performance.'²²⁷ The claim of bad manners is euphemistic, for Moffitt elaborates further that this 'can also take the form of political incorrectness' and that political incorrectness 'frequently takes the form of claims of favouritism or slurs against minority groups.'²²⁸ Political correctness is an often ill-defined politico-cultural legacy of the established liberal order which has become a rallying point for various rightist groups seeking a means of reconnecting their politics with a majority. The theory holds that the constant policing of what is deemed socially acceptable has left behind certain sections of the population who are casting around for some leader or some group to represent their "outdated" perspective. Nigel Farage, instrumental in the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom, summarised of his xenophobic rhetoric that 'we don't go what are you thinking? We say it out loud.'²²⁹ The danger of this new mode is that establishing a consensus of this type enables an easy slippage of views. From fairly noncontroversial statements that seem daring just because of the novel way they are expressed these leaders can ramp up their rhetoric in stages relying on the appeal of shock factor and a gradually built relationship with their supporters to reach an eventual crescendo. Very

²²⁷ Benjamin Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation*, (Stanford, 2016), p.60.

²²⁸ *Ibid*, p.61.

²²⁹ Nigel Farage quoted by Francisco Panizza, 'Populism and Identification' in Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo and Pierre Ostiguy (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, (Oxford, 2017), p.420. (pp.406-426).

few national-populists have begun their political careers with aggressively nationalistic proclamations which could be undermined by accusations of racism.

Once the leader and the supporters are tightly knitted together by successful rallies, unique media campaigns and the opposition of the established political mainstream, boorish rhetoric can be replaced by dehumanisation of the Other. In the United States Trump said that immigrants ‘aren’t people. These are animals.’²³⁰ This sort of statement simultaneously plays to two different parts of his support base. It fuels the racism of the more extreme followers and increases the acceptability of this language to the other supporters who may initially have had different reasons, economic or otherwise, for backing him electorally. There are numerous examples of this in each context. Orbán’s language we have already dissected in the chapter on the Self and the Other, but he also described refugees as a ‘poison.’²³¹ Narendra Modi has been more careful, but his close ally and Minister of Home Affairs Amit Shah referred to Bangladeshis seeking refuge in India as ‘termites... to be picked up one by one and thrown into the Bay of Bengal.’²³² These strategies are based as much in ignorance as they are in careful political manipulation but are effective in part because of their simplicity. They are far removed from the complex networks of five contextual basis and strategic models set out in Andrea Grove’s 2001 analysis of nationalist leaders in

²³⁰ Alina Luft and Daniel Solomon, ‘How dangerous is it when Trump calls some immigrants animals’ *The Washington Post*, (25th May 2018), accessed at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/05/25/how-dangerous-is-it-when-trump-calls-some-immigrants-animals/>

²³¹ Guardian Staff, ‘Hungarian prime minister says migrants are “poison” and “not needed”’ *The Guardian*, (27th July 2016), accessed at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/26/hungarian-prime-minister-viktor-orban-praises-donald-trump>

²³² Amit Shah quoted in Devjyot Ghoshal, ‘Amit Shah vows to throw illegal immigrants into Bay of Bengal’ *Reuters*, (April 12th 2019), <https://www.reuters.com/article/india-election-speech-idUSKCN1RO1YD>

Northern Ireland and Zimbabwe.²³³ This is a simpler, more efficient, and more destructive nationalism, different to the nationalism of the German unification period but different too to nationalism as it was active only two decades ago. There is a heavy reliance on dog-whistles, the mobilisation of disparate groups without the isolation of any from within the fold, and scapegoating – that constant of nationalism which has re-emerged as a means of devolving all political issues to a basic and singular narrative. It would be unwise, though not necessarily unfair, to relate these new nationalists to some of the most infamous leaders from history. Instead we should root our analysis in present day as Modi and Orbán are products of, as well as contributors to, the prevailing political mood. That is why they remain so well-supported.

C. Disguised Contradictions

Rather than keeping supporters in spite of their usage of vulgar language and twisting of convention, the new era of national-populists keep their supporters because of those innovations. They engage effectively with what Francis Fukuyama called a ‘politics of resentment,’ which works within identity politics.²³⁴ The desired voting group are labelled under a shared identity, then shown by a leader how their group’s dignity has been ‘affronted, disparaged, or otherwise disregarded.’²³⁵ The classification of the ‘low’ borrowed from Ostiguy is applicable when analysing this in action. Language is “lowered” to establish an immediate connection with the in-group. The excluded group, the Other, also undergo a “lowering,” sometimes to the point of

²³³ Andrea Grove, ‘Theory, perception, and leadership agency: A multiple processing model of nationalist mobilization’, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol.7, No.2, pp.1-32.

²³⁴ Fukuyama, *Identity*, p.7.

²³⁵ *Ibid*, p.8.

dehumanisation, to validate extreme emotional responses and guarantee that there is no possibility for the reunification of the two groups, or for moving from one categorisation to the other. Crucially, however, this politics requires a second lowering of the leader's own supporters. National-populists recognise that the typical paradigms of politics based on economic class are no longer effective mobilisers and that a 'humiliated group seeking restitution of its dignity carries far more emotional weight than people simply pursuing their economic advantage,' therefore they must ensure that their followers feel 'humiliated.'²³⁶ Making clear the humiliation of one's own supporters, without losing that support, is a delicate balancing act. The closest parallel comes in the contradiction embodied by the leaders themselves who Liesbet van Zoonen shows as 'project(ing) a persona that has inside experience with politics but is still an outsider.'²³⁷ These two-faced leaders create voters who are at once both the beaten, endangered, afflicted group as well as the rightful heirs to the nation-state with a storied, glorious and powerful past. Orbán, reflecting on his own rise to power stated that it was built off the back of a shared Hungarian desire to 'regain our country... regain our self-esteem... regain our future.'²³⁸

The next chapter aims to deal with the role new media has played in amplifying nationalist outreach and narratives, in part through 'Fake News.' The deliberate propagation of false information, alongside falsified histories set out in the chapter before, could be read as evidence for the claim often made by nationalism's opponents

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Liesbet van Zoonen, *Entertaining the Citizen: When Politics and Popular Culture Converge*, (Lanham, 2005), p.84.

²³⁸ Viktor Orbán, 'Will Europe Belong to Europeans' speech July 22nd 2017 *Visegrad Post*, accessed at <https://visegradpost.com/en/2017/07/24/full-speech-of-v-orban-will-europe-belong-to-europeans/>

that nationalist leaders do not actually respect the same people they claim to be a part of. They may meet their supporters and engage face-to-face, but they do not tell them the truth. It is difficult to establish a factual basis for the accusation that nationalists have a lower level of respect for the voting public than other politicians – in fact populism often targets the same accusation at traditional political elites – but Larry M. Bartels’ article on ethnic antagonism and commitment to democracy in the US finds that the narratives of nationalists such as Trump have corresponded with a lowering of respect in due democratic process.²³⁹ The survey item with the highest average correlation with antidemocratic sentiments is ‘discrimination against whites is as big a problem today as discrimination against blacks and other minorities.’²⁴⁰ Losing faith in democratic process, despite being part of the included voting bloc is indicative of a broader loss of respect of self and others.

More abstractly, it can be argued that the way in which nationalist leaders build their bases is via a lowering of the sense of Self in their supporters. This is sold as part of your service to the nation. Rather than this being reminiscent of the not-so-glamorous martyrdom that leads young men and women to become soldiers and die for their flag, nationalism today results in a lowering of self by participation in the mob. Ernesto Laclau’s work on populism drew heavily on the contributions of 19th and 20th century crowd theorists, finding in their analysis a prophecy for the form of unity that could emerge around populist figureheads. The crowd theorists wrote of the mob as spontaneous political occurrences with a vast destructive potential but there is an overlap with national-populist voting blocs today. In India, BJP leaders channel the

²³⁹ Larry M. Bartels, ‘Ethnic antagonism erodes Republicans’ commitment to democracy’ *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, (August 31st 2020), pp.1-8.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

support of the vast Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) volunteer group who operate at times like foot soldiers for the party, as the brownshirts once did, particularly during elections. They have at least 5 million members across India and have been noticeably present during incidences of communal violence.²⁴¹ This is a more organised form of extra-political group than most nationalists have access to, but the example is transferrable. When a leader mobilises by an emotive appeal to identity, instead of on a policy platform, when a leader mobilises at vast moblike rallies, instead of on a more traditional campaign trail, the followers of that leader take on some characteristics of a political mob. They retain these characteristics even once removed from the scenario that formed them meaning an increased potential for violence and a decreased potential for compromise remains diffused through national-populist movements.

It can be an empowering feeling to be one within many, but there is a sacrifice required. You must strip away a part of yourself to participate blindly in the drive of the crowd. The abstract lowering made possible by nationalist leaders preaching this emotive and simplistic politics, as summarised by Gustave Le Bon - is that the individual experiences a process of social degradation by becoming part of the group, 'by the mere fact that he forms part of an organised crowd a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilisation.'²⁴² The notion of sacrifice required to participate in the nationalist mob implies a sort of selflessness, but the electoral groups under the sway of nationalist leaders lower their sense of self without being selfless. This is the degradation. Selfless groups would not so readily target their ire at other

²⁴¹ Furkhan Latif Khan, 'The Powerful Group Shaping the Rise of Hindu Nationalism in India' *NPR*, (3rd May 2019) <https://www.npr.org/2019/05/03/706808616/the-powerful-group-shaping-the-rise-of-hindu-nationalism-in-india?t=1611425117958>

²⁴² Gustave Le Bon quoted in Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, p.35.

disenfranchised groups. Groups with a degraded sense of self will accept the degradation of others whilst adoring the leader who purports to represent them. Reaching selfish individuals within the crowd is one of the defining features for success within the new form of political leadership.

National-populists utilise the recognition of selfish individuals that their interests are served best as part of a group united under a shared identity wherever they exist in the state. Applying the populist idea of an empty signifier - national identity becomes this empty signifier with the nationalist figurehead holding the power to define, and constantly redefine, what fills that deliberately ambiguous category. Disparate groups are yoked together by this individual who broadens national identity to ensure it addresses their varied different concerns. These leaders lie to some groups, promise different nationalist voters directly contradicting outcomes, channel the emotion of a rally in response to political challenge and in the process hold together a significant enough majority to win elections all based around a sort of faux solidarity. Identity politics originated in minority groups as they sought to access civil liberties denied to them by the state. These groups' leaders are remembered as charismatic firebrands who fought injustice. Nationalist politics enshrines being in the unthinking majority, led by snake-oil salesmen who promise different remedies to all.

Whilst nationalist leaders rally against the traditional political elite of the liberal era this manipulation of the selfish individual within the crowd is uniquely possible following the norms the post-war years have established. The liberal outlook held up the individual as the foundation of idealised democracy. It follows that only an individual who thinks freely for themselves can be trusted with self-determination. It was in the same post-war period, the 1950s, that the concept of identity was elaborated by the

psychologist Erik Erikson, but there was an unforeseen consequence. Once an individual is understood through the prism of identity it becomes possible to corrode the individualist ideal. Nationalists can speak to individuals, just as the liberal outlook does, but with a much greater effect as they group them by identity thereby marshalling huge voting blocs. This mass identity is not hegemonic. Modi's majority is 55.93% seats held in the Lok Sabha, Orbán and Fidesz secured 49.6% of the vote.²⁴³ All the same, a large enough number have proven willing to buy into these group identities, side-line parts of themselves and be represented entirely by a leader. Cas Mudde reflected this in his analysis that the current political era wants 'more leadership and less participation' just because they 'do not want to be bother with politics all the time.'²⁴⁴ Policy-based politics is considerably more complex and taxing than identifying with a leader who seemingly makes a deliberate effort to identify with you.

When a leader can convince their voters to marginalise outlying elements of their selves and commit instead to the monolithic group identity it is less surprising that the crucial multi-class alliances form. National identity has always proved able to mobilise vertically and in the process secure significant proportions of the eligible voting population. The success of this style has been significant enough that it has prompted an awareness across the political spectrum of the need to shift the way politics is thought about. Class identity has been rejected as a sole mobiliser even by portions of the Left. Judith Butler, for example, has pushed for an inter-sectional Left that would

²⁴³ 'Parliament of India, Lok Sabha: House of the People' Seventeenth Lok Sabha Party-wise Representation of Members, accessed at <https://loksabha.nic.in/members/PartyWiseStatisticalList.aspx> and 'Hungarian Election Officials Confirm Two-Thirds Majority for Orbán's Party', *RFE/RL*, (April 15th 2018), <https://www.rferl.org/a/hungary-election-officials-confirm-two-thirds-majority-for-Orbán-s-party/29168838.html>

²⁴⁴ Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', p.558.

ameliorate the various tensions of the movement and create a wider ranging solidarity.²⁴⁵ Nationalism achieves this but with one sole identity. It feels good to belong to and is easily rallied behind. It demystifies politics and makes it accessible so can observe, as Laclau observed of populism, a ‘sense of omnipotence’ and ‘identification with the leaders.’²⁴⁶

D. The Biggest and the Greatest and the Most Spectacular

If supporting a nationalist leader requires the voter to undergo a number of internal and external “lowerings”, it might be expected that groups of these voters would appear weak and disenfranchised. This is not the case. Nationalist politics has, through its mainstream appeal, reinvigorated popular involvement in the political. Though the leaders centre power in themselves Hedva Ben-Israel remarked that ‘by following such a leader, even blindly, ordinary people do not feel enslaved but, on the contrary, feel elevated.’²⁴⁷ This is an elevation that surpasses the dizzying but temporary rush we assume of the mob. Nationalist voters see their politicians achieve positions of genuine power within the establishment, and in the Hungarian and Indian examples they have seen those politicians retain their positions through multiple elections.

One clue to the empowerment felt under the nationalists is explained by Fukuyama in his recent work on identity politics.²⁴⁸ We reflected on the framing of nationalism as a politics of resentment, but Fukuyama complements this with some

²⁴⁵ Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, (London, 2015).

²⁴⁶ Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, p.39.

²⁴⁷ Hedva Ben-Israel, ‘National Leadership, National Character and Charisma’ in Vivian Ibrahim and Margit Wunsch (eds.), *Political Leadership, Nations and Charisma*, (London, 2012), p.53.

²⁴⁸ Fukuyama, *Identity*.

musings on the actual purpose of identity movements. Traditionally, he found, identity politics focused on the goal of ‘isothymia,’ defined as achieving equal recognition within a society for the group you are a member of. Nationalist leaders, by their lowering, sell the nation-group as disadvantaged within the nation-state. They portray immigrants and national elites as specially privileged to the detriment of the national majority. Within this framework they guide their followers to seek isothymia. However, isothymia alone would not constitute a destructive drive. Nationalism pairs isothymia, paradoxically, with what Fukuyama calls ‘megalothymia’ which is a feeling of desired superiority. ‘Megalothymia and isothymia’ says Fukuyama ‘joined hands’ in the nationalist movements we witness today – with the result that those preaching a downtrodden national identity’s need for reestablishment are also seen to be ‘taking big risks, engaging in monumental struggles, seeking large effects.’²⁴⁹ The example in each of these cases is set by the leader and the relationship between the nationalist leader and their followers is a microcosmic example of the same phenomenon, isothymia and megalothymia in combination. A nationalist leader needs to be seen as level with their people to ensure their support, but also superior to them to justify their role as the figurehead. This is yet another internal paradox of nationalist politics, but the loyalty guaranteed to these leaders, or the faith that they will bring about change, ensures none of these manifest contradictions prove obstructive.

To build loyalty whilst reassuring of the capacity for real effect, populists, claimed Moffitt, must show themselves to be both ‘ordinary and extraordinary to the people.’²⁵⁰ We have explained in detail the attempts made by national-populists to

²⁴⁹ Ibid, p.xv.

²⁵⁰ Moffit, *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation*, p.52.

appear ordinary to the voting population and therefore increase their relatability and Moffitt also sees this as a deliberately employed strategy. National-populists are not actually of “the people”. Instead they employ ‘performances of ordinariness’ with performance the essential word.²⁵¹ Just as Jahn performed in an invented German costume, so too do the current range of leaders. The importance of these performances lies in the distance they open up between the traditional elite and them as an outlier in the eyes of the public. Orbán has deliberately displayed himself as a true and humble Hungarian with George Soros set as the antithetical rich cosmopolitan as it serves a useful narrative line for his nationalism. It is kept quiet by Orbán that he, though not from an especially privileged background, benefitted from a scholarship from Soros’ own foundation which enabled him to study at Pembroke College, Oxford.²⁵² Others of Orbán’s inner-circle attended the prestigious Central European University, a private research centre in the capital Budapest, which was forced by the government to close its Hungarian campus and move to Austria in 2018. The closure of the university is not solely a performance of separation Orbán and Fidesz can engage in by distancing themselves from the ‘intellegentsia’, but it does play a part.²⁵³ Though professors and students at a private university can easily be sold as an academic and liberal elite the closure of CEU also represented a shift away from European unity. All the same, the irony of Orbán and Fidesz distancing themselves from an institution some of their

²⁵¹ Ibid, p.58.

²⁵² Paul Lendvai (trans. Ann Major), *The Hungarians: A Thousand Years of Victory in Defeat*, (London, 2003), p.499.

²⁵³ Franklin Foer, ‘Viktor Orbán’s War on Intellect’ *The Atlantic*, (June 2019), accessed at <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/06/george-soros-viktor-Orbán-ceu/588070/>

members have actually studied at should not be lost. Yet this is a repeated pattern in nationalist performances, and in other cases the duality is far more flagrant.

Elsewhere we see leaders distancing themselves from the financial or political elite though they are undeniably of these groupings. Donald Trump in the US and Boris Johnson in the UK fit into those categories respectively. The innovation of Trump in particular has been to distance themselves from the rest of the financial and political elite whilst performing their ordinariness with such consistency as to make their own eliteness attainable. In a conversation on identity politics and the conclusive move beyond simplistic appeals to class it may seem out of place to refer to Karl Marx, but there is one of his observations which loosely maps onto this phenomenon and the rewards the national-populists have been able to reap from it. In Marx's writings on 'The Class Struggles in France' he references the lumpenproletariat.²⁵⁴ Lumpenproletariat is an outdated category with no direct parallel in contemporary society but for Marx they were situated as vagrants, below the working class. Marx is broadly dismissive of this group, but for the fact that they have an invisible connection to the financial elite. As he thought of it, the financial aristocracy were 'nothing but the rebirth of the lumpenproletariat on the heights of bourgeois society.'²⁵⁵ When applied as a frame of analysis for Trump's sweeping successes across the American Midwest, winning victory over Hillary Clinton whose husband had previously served as President, a useful conclusion can be drawn. Achieving political power by familial connection is out of reach of the vast majority. Achieving Trump's financial might without familial connections is also close to impossible, he inherited huge wealth from

²⁵⁴ Karl Marx, 'The Class Struggles in France, 1848-1850' in Jon Elster (ed.) *Karl Marx: A Reader*, (Cambridge, 1999), pp.244-253.

²⁵⁵ Ibid, p.247.

his father, but crucially he portrays himself within that financial elite in a way that at least appears replicable. The lumpenproletariat at the bottom of society were reproduced in the financial aristocracy at the top, they shared characteristics but had different opportunity. Trump and other nationalist leaders reach the top whilst taking care to appear to share characteristics with their supporters across all other groups, particularly those that had felt abandoned by those who claimed to represent them.

National-populist leaders can become the ultimate example of their disenfranchised base despite the contradiction that they are successful. They represent the poor though they are rich. They are situated outside the establishment even while they win electoral power. They play up and perform their struggles, so their voters will celebrate for a shared victory. Ben-Israel showed of national leadership that it can become charismatic through the ‘human need of the collectivity of followers to see their own idealised self, which is personified in their leader.’²⁵⁶ This is a much more powerful connection between follower and leader than is common to most other politics. Nationalist leaders can use this powerful connection to whip up a mob-like fervour that is shocking when compared with the established ways of campaigning. They speak to the individuals within crowds, relying on their supporters to recognise that the ‘hero worship’ they direct towards the leader is ‘in a real sense also self-worship.’²⁵⁷ Rather than the paradoxical “highering” and “lowering” of leader and supporter compromising the direction of nationalist politics they are actually fundamental to the chance for electoral success and the translation of that electoral success into a sustained power base on which to build. The actual policy work comes

²⁵⁶ Ben-Israel, ‘National Leadership, National Character and Charisma’, p.52.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

second in this emotive politics and on that basis it is justifiable to include a psychological analysis alongside the political analysis, of how and from where these leaders, many of them initially non-political, emerge. Though much has been made of the manipulative performances engaged in by the national-populists, Sigmund Freud's ruminations on the mob in some way demystifies the power they have managed to obtain and the niches they have been able to carve out. Nationalist leaders, 'need often only possess the typical qualities of the individuals concerned... and need only give an impression of greater force and more freedom of libido; and in that case the need for a strong chief will often meet him half-way.'²⁵⁸ The crowd creates them even as they are creating the crowd. There is a need in the mob the leaders create, and that need is then met by the leaders who created them.

E. Cracks in the Façade

Dissecting the style and strategies of national-populist leaders goes some way to revealing their flaws and destabilising the platforms they have managed to build. Orbán and Modi may still hold majorities, but Trump lost in the 2020 American election and Johnson's popularity in the UK keeps oscillating. Seizing unprecedented victories, it appears, is harder than maintaining power. Appealing to any number of different selfish individuals in a multi-class crowd and offering all of them change leaves high expectations for a term in government. It becomes increasingly difficult to maintain vertical alliances when you have to enact policies that will benefit some and impede others. Whilst in exile after his first term as President of Argentina, Juan Perón

²⁵⁸ Sigmund Freud, 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego' in James Strachey (ed.) *The Standard Edition of the Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol.18, (London, 2001), p.86.

described himself as ‘something like the Pope.’²⁵⁹ Groups from across the political spectrum made overtures to him, trying to ensure his support and he found that he could keep everyone onside via careful politicking. As a pseudo-Pope everyone would love him, so long as he didn’t ‘deny anything (because of) my infallibility... which as in the case of all infallibility, is precisely based on not saying or doing anything... the only way of assuring such infallibility.’²⁶⁰ After an 18-year exile Perón returned to power in Argentina but the unity he had enjoyed when out of power evaporated as soon as he had to enact legislation. The national-populists have to differing degrees suffered from the same affliction. When combined with manifestos that stress key lines, rather than policy proposals many of these leaders’ terms have proved erratic.

Perhaps being drawn from outside the political system, these leaders underestimate the difficulty of nation-state governance. At the worst their time in power can prove exceptionally damaging to the very populations they convinced to support them. A potent and present example of this has been the COVID-19 pandemic. As an international crisis hindsight would show that the most effective strategy would have been an internationally agreed upon set of restrictions on movement to limit the spread of the virus and the sharing of best practice on how to treat patients who were infected. Instead, each state acted for itself. Though health-wise this was inefficient, it did enable a comparison of the ways different styles of leaders managed their own outbreaks. The national-populists did not fare well. Trump caught the virus and in April last year fired a senior US government vaccine expert for rejecting his push to use hydroxychloroquine

²⁵⁹ Juan Perón quoted in Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, p.195.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

as a treatment.²⁶¹ Jair Bolsonaro, the Brazilian Prime Minister and nationalist, caught the illness and in August 2020 when Brazil had the second most deaths in the world said ‘I regret the deaths... That’s life.’²⁶² At one point the UK under Boris Johnson has the fifth most active cases in the world despite its small size, whilst India under Modi has the second most in the world. Modi did defer to the work of experts, stating that ‘politicians talk about this and that... I will do what the scientists say, this is not the job for us politicians to decide’ but was critiqued strongly for the fund he established at the same time to aid coronavirus relief.²⁶³ The fund sought public donations and was named the Prime Minister’s Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund, or PM Cares. Detractors have pointed out that a similar fund had existed since 1948, but without Modi’s name attached, whilst the government has since obscured where the funding is actually going.²⁶⁴ In Hungary Orbán, perhaps unsurprisingly, blamed the start of the second wave of the virus on foreigners, repeating a narrative in which he attributed the first cases to visiting Iranian students.²⁶⁵ Considering the Islamophobic rhetoric Orbán has employed throughout his politics it is likely that this accusation was

²⁶¹ Michael D. Shear and Maggie Haberman, ‘Health Dept. Official Says Doubts Over Hydroxychloroquine Led to His Ouster’ *The New York Times*, (April 22nd 2020), accessed at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/22/us/politics/rick-bright-trump-hydroxychloroquine-coronavirus.html>

²⁶² Jair Bolsonaro quoted in ‘Face up to it you will probably all get coronavirus Jair Bolsonaro tells Brazilians’ *The Telegraph*, (1st August 2020), accessed at <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/08/01/face-will-probably-get-coronavirus-jair-bolsonaro-tells-brazilians/>

²⁶³ Scroll Staff, ‘Coronavirus: PM Modi criticises politics over vaccines, says scientists gave go-ahead’ *Scroll India*, (January 22nd 2021), accessed at <https://scroll.in/latest/984859/coronavirus-pm-modi-criticises-politics-over-vaccines-says-scientists-gave-go-ahead>

²⁶⁴ Aditya Kalra and Alexandra Ulmer, ‘Donations pour in but India’s “PM Cares” coronavirus fund faces criticism’ *Reuters*, (April 8th 2020), accessed at <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-health-coronavirus-india-fund-idUKKBN21Q1A3>

²⁶⁵ ‘Viktor Orbán under fire as virus second wave bites’ *Euractiv and AFP*, (October 21 2020), accessed at <https://www.euractiv.com/section/coronavirus/news/viktor-orban-under-fire-as-virus-second-wave-bites/>

made deliberately, to fuel wider nationalist narratives. Regarding actual handling of the spread of the illness Orbán drew policy from a series of ‘national consultations.’²⁶⁶

These consultations have been remarked upon for their opaque methodology, and with note to their name, the desperate attempt to share the responsibility for handling the virus with the population.

COVID-19 has exposed a general deficiency in the leadership capabilities of the national-populists. The same characteristics that created their electoral appeal; their distance from political tradition, their subverting of norms, the fanaticism of their supporters, poorly equip them for crisis-management. Fukuyama remarked of Trump, though it is applicable to most of the wave, that ‘the virtues that one associates with great leadership basic honesty, reliability, sound judgement, devotion to public interest, and an underlying moral compass – were totally missing.’²⁶⁷ Substance has given way to style. Many of the virtues listed by Fukuyama have been applied freely to the nationalist leaders of independence movements but this only emphasises the gulf between nationalism then and nationalism today. In India this has been brought into especially sharp focus. Modi, distanced from the political elite by his work as a tea-seller, has twice defeated the Indian National Congress, headed by Rahul and Sonia Gandhi, both descendants of the Indian Independence icon Jawaharlal Nehru. His success in government conversely, has been contested. In a journalistic article, the economist Mihir Sharma believed that Modi alone of the national-populists has been

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Fukuyama, *Identity*, p.x.

able to preserve his appeal throughout times of crisis.²⁶⁸ He acknowledges that the basic performance of all populists is to ‘detach the electorate’s perception from inconvenient facts, providing an alternative narrative in which they, and they alone, are the stars,’ but that this isn’t enough when responding to disasters.²⁶⁹ In those instances, these leaders must also act. They must ‘make the sort of big decisions around which their supporters can construct a convincing narrative: a decision that comes across as brave, or stern, or wise, or fatherly, or ideally all of those things.’²⁷⁰ This is what Modi has done so effectively and it has kept him ahead of the criticism. His supporters can always point to a step he has taken, and he acts swiftly enough that those steps are viewed as actions rather than reactions.

Sharma uses as one example a crisis actually manufactured by Modi. In 2016 the government adopted a policy of demonetisation stripping high-value bank notes from the currency with the aim of limiting illegal activity around counterfeiting. Kapil Komireddi argued of demonetisation that ‘the last time a monetary decision produced such tumult in India was in the fourteenth century.’²⁷¹ Tughlaq’s, leader at the time of that fateful decision he notes ‘name has become synonymous with stupidity’ yet ‘placed next to Modi, he appears Solomonic.’²⁷² Demonetisation produced an economic downturn which affected the poorest people in India disproportionately and there were

²⁶⁸ Mihir Sharma, ‘Why Modi May Be the Most Popular Populist’ *Bloomberg*, (11 September 2020), accessed at <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2020-09-11/why-india-s-modi-remains-popular-despite-coronavirus-crisis?sref=5pwAnts9>

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Kapil Komireddi, *Malevolent Republic: A Short History of the New India*, (London, 2019), p.105.

²⁷² Ibid.

reports of people dying in the rushes to exchange notes. Despite this, Rikhil Bhavnani and Mark Copelovitch's study on the political effects revealed that the BJP actually did better electorally in those areas that were worst affected.²⁷³ The conclusion drawn by Sharma is that 'it does not matter whether the decision you make pans out or not. All that matters is that people believe you did something big, something only you would dare to do, and that you did it for the best reasons.' When leaders have such a control of the narrative that all that is ever required are spontaneous bold actions around which they can drum up support whatever the outcome, nationalist voters are gambling with peoples' lives.²⁷⁴ It is because of this lack of accountability and lack of culpability that the national-populist mode uniquely affords its leaders that nationalism is such a dangerous new politics. Holding different ideals within a democratic state is acceptable. Pursuing catastrophic policies in the name of an emotive and reactionary politics is not.

Though we have already recounted the way in which Narendra Modi's Hindutva principles require him to align more with Vinayak Savarkar than the Mahatma Gandhi he still sits as the most recent figurehead of Indian nationalism. That nationalism may well be internally exclusive and Islamophobic rather than unitary but there is some continuity in strategy. Gandhi, like Jahn, adopted a traditional form of dress to align him with the Indian majority. Modi, like Gandhi, under pressure from a series of farmers' protests wore a 'pheran' gifted to him by a farm labourer when announcing healthcare provision.²⁷⁵ Looking at this lineage of leaders reveals some of the more

²⁷³ Rikhil R. Bhavnani and Mark Copelovitch, *The Political Impact of Economic Shocks: Evidence from India's 2016 Demonetization*, (July 2020), pp.1-53.

²⁷⁴ Mihir Sharma, 'Why Modi May Be the Most Popular Populist' *Bloomberg*, (11th September 2020).

²⁷⁵ India Today Staff, 'PM Narendra Modi wears Kashmiri "pheran" gifted by J&K farm labourer at virtual event' *India Today*, (December 27th 2020), accessed at <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/pm-narendra-modi-wears-kashmiri-pheran-gifted-by-j-k-farm-labourer-at-virtual-event-1753440-2020-12-27>

permanent issues with nationalism. There has been a continuation in stylistic mode that necessitates some betrayal of the nationalist supporters by the nationalist leaders. It would be a gross insult to level the same critique of leadership virtues at Gandhi that Fukuyama targeted at Trump, but neither are beyond reproach. As a case in point, there was shock in the UK when as part of the Black Lives Matter movement Gandhi's statue was defaced with white paint. The cause for the vandalism was Gandhi's now discovered anti-black prejudice, though defenders have argued that whilst ignorant Gandhi might have had a more progressive outlook than many of his contemporaries. The argument requires significant additional context, but the incident brought questions about the differing perspectives communities have of nationalist leaders, even venerated heroes, back to the fore. There is a certain inevitability to such radical figures dividing opinion.

One nation's nationalist icon is unlikely to be celebrated in a neighbouring state. The further you go back in history, the more likely these leaders made their names in sustained campaigns against other states. Nationalists today though focus on the internal politics of their state, so comparisons of this type are unhelpful. The subaltern studies historical movement held Gandhi and other heroes of Indian Independence accountable for a different reason however, one with conclusions that have remained relevant. For the subaltern school, despite the success in overthrowing the British Raj, they argued that Independence obscured a second internal conflict. In the course of the movement DN Dhanagare paraphrasing Ranajit Guha set out that 'the elite domain always tried to mobilise and integrate them (the disenfranchised majority) but primarily to fight for elite objectives; however, the subaltern masses managed to break away from the elite

control and put their characteristic stamp on campaigns initiated by the elite groups.’²⁷⁶ Dhanagare’s analysis of Guha draws out the manipulative relationship between the elites and the masses, but he does allow for some input and shaping from the lower-status majority. There are clear echoes of this in the nationalist politics of today. In time, subaltern studies’ influence on academia has waned, there were splits in the school and the focus of the history by its definition narrowed the available pool of evidence. Subalternism, if revived today, might find contemporary nationalism and the rallies and speeches of nationalist leaders worth exploring. Nationalist leaders purport to represent the native working class more than any other type of politician, whilst maintaining strata of support in the middle and upper classes. During and after Indian Independence the majority of the working classes ended up supporting Gandhi and Nehru’s nationalist movement but elements of them had been ‘far more radical in their methods, sometimes even goals, than the elite and middle-class dominated nationalist movement in India was.’²⁷⁷ Indian nationalism succeeded in its one goal, with many of the plaudits due to those unifying figureheads, but it also directed subaltern discontent – a possible force for change, outwards against an external target.

F. Insidious Authoritarianism

The European institution of the nation-state remained even after independence and the first Prime Minister of India, Nehru, also retained much of the British bureaucratic infrastructure. The BJP’s nationalism works within the limits of that

²⁷⁶ DN Dhanagare, ‘Subaltern Consciousness and Populism: Two Approaches in the Study of Social Movements in India’ *Social Scientist*, Vol.16, No.11, (November, 1988), p.20.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p.26.

template and now directs the modern equivalent of subaltern discontent against internal minorities and scapegoats. The subaltern studies group were right then to observe parallels between the ‘neo-colonial’ and the ‘neo-nationalist.’²⁷⁸ Looking beyond India, the nation-state has become ubiquitous and across some of those states Marc Edelman identified a possible ‘global authoritarian populist axis.’²⁷⁹ The leaders listed, ‘Trump, (Rodrigo) Duterte, (Recep) Erdogan, Modi, Orbán, (Vladimir) Putin’ could without exception also have the nationalist label added to their descriptors. Only, to consider authoritarian nationalists or multiple nationalists working with the proximity implied by a global axis seems nonsensical. For all of their flaws, nationalist leaders claim to be of the people and they claim to hold the interests of their state above all else. When Orbán shares rallies with Polish PiS supporters or endorses Trump in the US election questions should be raised about the true focus of these leaders. What nationalist would want another nationalist in power? Would that not potentially endanger Hungarian interests? When Orbán has gone abroad the disparity between his nationalist face and his outward face is even starker. Despite Fidesz’s adulation of Horthy and usage of anti-Semitic tropes against George Soros, the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu fondly referred to Orbán as a ‘friend of Israel’ on his visit to Jerusalem.²⁸⁰ Orbán’s relationships with other leaders have proved less divisive than his rhetoric at home.

This duality is not unique to Orbán. Modi’s passionate nationalist advocacy was curbed following Chinese encroachments onto Indian territory, even in the aftermath of

²⁷⁸ Ibid, pp.19-20.

²⁷⁹ Marc Edelman, ‘Sacrifice zones in rural and non-metro USA: Fertile soil for authoritarian populism’ *Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative: Conference Paper 33*, (2018), pp.7-8.

²⁸⁰ Ilan Ben Zion, ‘Netanyahu greets Hungary’s Orban as “true friend of Israel”’ *AP News*, (July 19th 2018), accessed at <https://apnews.com/article/938bb193c0894691bf42a6457d1fae4c>

a Chinese ambush of Indian soldiers in the mountains. In Modi's case, the underlying dynamic seems clearer. It is much harder to project a strongman image when under real external pressure, particularly when that pressure is directed by an immensely strong global power. Though embarrassing, both leaders' international inconsistencies are unlikely to undermine them. In fact, domestically, these leaders are strengthening their holds on the state. Making concessions on the global stage diverts the unwanted attention of external observers. Nationalism has never drifted so far from self-determination as it is now drifting under the national-populist sail. On occasion, we are gifted with images that perfectly summarise the new status quo. As Modi laid the foundation stone of the new Indian parliament building on December 10th 2020, attention was drawn to the fact that on the stone, the Prime Minister's name is sized larger than the dedication to parliament.²⁸¹ Modi is growing to supersede the body through which he has power. In Hungary, Nicole Lugosi remarks that the democratic choice consists of Fidesz or Jobbik – 'twin parties competing for many of the same voters.'²⁸² Though twin parties, Fidesz win comfortably because Fidesz means Orbán and Orbán has come to mean Hungary. Perhaps these democracies have grown too large and politics has grown too simple. Campaigning in a nation-state now rewards simple slogans and platforms of single figures around which mass support can be mobilised, with nationalists as the most attractive electoral propositions. If that is the case, nation-states need to adapt. If they don't change, democracy might.

²⁸¹ Sudheendra Kulkarni, 'How Modi's Parliament "Bhoomi Pujan" Breached the Constitution's Basic Structure' *The Wire India*, (23rd December 2020), accessed at <https://thewire.in/politics/narendra-modi-parliament-bhoomi-pujan-constitution-basic-structure>

²⁸² Nicole Lugosi, 'Radical right framing of social policy in Hungary: between nationalism and populism' *Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy*, Vol.34, No.3, (9th March 2020), pp.216.

If a leader can centralise the nation around themselves, their power is all but assured. The state becomes part of political debate, rather than the structure in which political debate occurs. With the claim to truly represent the nation, leaders are able to subvert even the nation-state to their self. Moffitt remarked of populist leaders that their ‘extraordinary symbolic function goes beyond mere articulation... the leader does not simply represent “the people” but is actually seen as embodying “the people.”’²⁸³ In national-populism the leader embodies the people and the nation. They become the voice of the entire national population and to speak against them is to speak against that national population and the entire cultural-history of the state. In December 2019, Meenakshi Ganguly’s article for Human Rights Watch provided evidence for the claim that in ‘Modi’s India’, dissent is ‘anti-national.’²⁸⁴ In October of the same year a sedition case was raised in the state of Bihar against 49 celebrities who wrote a letter addressed to the Prime Minister speaking out against mob lynching. Though the case was eventually dismissed, the ancient crime of ‘Lese-majeste’ last tried by the British monarchy in 1715 has seemingly re-emerged with the nationalist afforded the garb of the monarch.

How then has new nationalism crept so close to authoritarianism? Voting majorities empower leaders but not every democracy shifts to autocracy. Part of the answer lies in the fact that though nationalist leaders have demystified politics making it more accessible to many, they have simultaneously capitalised on a general apathy for actual political process. This provides such leaders with the implicit support brought

²⁸³ Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation*, p.64.

²⁸⁴ Meenakshi Ganguly, ‘Dissent is “Anti-National” In Modi’s India: Government Continues to Clamp Down on Criticism’ *Human Rights Watch*, (December 13, 2019), accessed at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/12/13/dissent-anti-national-modis-india#>

about by lack of opposition, required to translate any desire for increased power into actual political reality. In other hands this might be less threatening, but national-populist leaders have proved noticeably willing to chase this effect. Under the veil of COVID-19 Orbán introduced emergency powers, ostensibly to help handle the virus but with much wider ranging remits enabling him to ‘rule by decree.’²⁸⁵ The impetus for this shift towards autocracy lies with the leaders then. Bartels’ study on the erosion of democracy in the US to some extent reflect this noting that ‘perhaps the most important contextual factor facilitating the translation of antidemocratic sentiments into consequential political behaviour is political leadership.’²⁸⁶ When antidemocratic sentiments are an omnipresent feature of every national-populist speech, the system comes full circle. Leaders preach antidemocratic sentiments, then use the voices of their supporters to make those sentiments a reality, all in the name of the nation. It is anachronistic, but not inopportune to reproduce Hannah Arendt’s thoughts, borne in the aftermath of the representative case of a nationalist movement shifting to totalitarianism, to consider who is ultimately responsible. As she summarised, ‘the mob will always shout for the “strong man” the “great leader.”’²⁸⁷ For the mob hates society from which it is excluded.’

Perhaps some of the responsibility lies also with those not within the nationalist fold then. They who have failed to present an alternative to the national-populist appeal, who have failed to adapt to a new mode of politics. These movements which have

²⁸⁵ Shaun Walker and Jennifer Rankin, ‘Hungary passes law that will let Orbán rule by decree’, (30th March 2020), accessed at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/30/hungary-jail-for-coronavirus-misinformation-viktor-orban>

²⁸⁶ Bartels, ‘Ethnic antagonism erodes Republicans’ commitment to democracy’, p.2.

²⁸⁷ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p.138.

capitalised so effectively on the political malaise have been hung on individuals who have been able to modernise, or at least give the impression of modernising. It was only in 1995 that Boris Johnson wrote in print of the English working class that they are ‘likely to be drunk, criminal, aimless, feckless and hopeless, and perhaps claiming to suffer from low self-esteem brought on by unemployment.’²⁸⁸ Pointing to a 25-year-old article might not achieve immediate political capital but it does work to point out again the inconsistencies in this style of leadership, inconsistencies which could prove to bring about downfalls. Thus far, national-populists have mostly kept ahead of their opponents. Where their mistakes have been revealed or their style and coarseness has been replicated it has proved ineffective at siphoning voters away. Of an example of the latter, the direction of abuse against national-populist parties and voters, Santiago Abascal of the Vox movement in Spain remarked with genuine surprise ‘you haven’t understood anything... every time you insult us, you are insulting the millions of Spanish people who listen to us and identify our core message.’²⁸⁹ National-populist leadership isn’t the ‘low’ alone. It is the ‘low’, combined with a development of the political crowd into a permanent mob, with the ideal of national identity as the glue and the leader as representative of the nation and the people. In the personal aims of the leaders for more and more power, if not in the strategies employed, the leadership component displays a drift further than any previously from the German historical case. New nationalism is not an insurmountable politics and their leaders are not irresistible,

²⁸⁸ Boris Johnson column in *The Spectator*, 1995.

²⁸⁹ Santiago Abascal quoted in Saturnino M. Borrás, ‘Agrarian Social Movements: The absurdly difficult but not impossible agenda of defeating right-wing populism and exploring a socialist future’ in *Wiley Journal of Agrarian Change*, (2020), p.19.

but with their current dominance over narrative via new and traditional media, any reversal of this shift seems distant.

CHAPTER VIII

MEDIA MANIPULATION

*'We bombard people with sensation. That substitutes for thinking.'*²⁹⁰

For any party and politician to win electoral success they must ensure their messages are amplified to the voting public through media channels. This has been the case throughout the modern age, ever since technologies developed to enable mass communication throughout any size of nation-state. The new generation of national-populists' success is partially afforded to their mastery of traditional methods of propaganda, combined with innovations in new media. This is incomparable with the first generation of nationalists, exemplified by the German case study, who had no access to mass media channels but also differed in the actual aims of their movement.

Over a century later, in 2000, Anthony Mughan wrote a book setting out the way in which he believed the media had contributed to the 'presidentialisation' of the notoriously party-based parliamentary system in the UK.²⁹¹ Political reporters and their channels had grown to give preferential treatment, intentionally or unintentionally, to figure-head leaders, resulting in more air time for these types. The elections had started to be swung by party leaders rather than policy positions. Whether the air-time secured was for praise or criticism, all publicity, it is said, is good publicity.

Mughan's book captured a new trend in the media right at its inception and the UK was not the only country affected by the stylistic change. In the past ten years,

²⁹⁰ Ray Bradbury quoted in an interview, 2003.

²⁹¹ Anthony Mughan, *Media and the Presidentialisation of Parliamentary Elections*, (London, 2000).

concurrent with the rise of the national-populist leaders and parties, the media has become increasingly susceptible to these performative ploys, granting shrewd strategists the chance to have their political campaigns dominate across all available outlets. When considering the characteristics of new nationalism, we have attempted to draw parallels and determine contradictions with the early German incarnation to demonstrate a development from justified to unjustified movement. In this chapter those comparisons are unhelpful. Even with Friedrich Jahn's gymnastics colleges there was no means by which the German ideologues could reach anything but a fraction of the population. Instead, in media outreach, the pace-setters have been the former imperial states, Russia, the USA and the UK. It is they who have set the templates for media amplification and manipulation.

New nationalism is built around the components we have explored in earlier chapters. This chapter instead sets out to explain the ways in which the nationalist political whole is shared with the majority via a willing conduit. How the messages are translated. How the idea becomes real. We will not claim that the media is an impartial external factor just broadcasting anything that is input however. Accurate reporting of looming or realised economic, health and ecological crises might well have signalled the end of the nation-state system, let alone nationalism, creating a vacuum to be filled by a more stable global structure. It could have reduced protest voting and the sense of externality that national-populists have been able to convert into new movements. Instead, national-populists have been aided by the inadequacies of the conventional mainstream media. They have gone on to subvert those channels once their limitations were felt switching to social media with great effect. Sam Haselby set a template for this analysis asking, on social media no less, if Benedict Anderson was right about the

importance of the newspaper and the novel as literary forms that created nations ‘what will cable news and social media be the basis of?’²⁹² The answer appears to be the new ultra-nationalist formations defined throughout this thesis.

A. What is Being Amplified?

Nationalism involves the creation of an exclusive national identity. For the most part, the media currently amplifies this identity messaging, rather than creating new identity definitions from scratch. Identity politics is newly in vogue and hence is channelled regularly in the media, just as pre-existing political movements had their respective time in the spotlight and at the forefront of most messaging. An integral claim to nationalism though, as a form of identity politics, is that it is not just a political movement but a politicising of something fundamental – the need for group connections Dale Eickelman’s study of communities in the Middle East found that ‘tribal loyalties are far from being remnants of the past’ which hints at the profound nature of the desire for communal solidarity in societies around the world.²⁹³ This is only made clearer with his qualification that ‘group feelings need not depend on presumed “blood” relationships, but the bonds of solidarity must take precedence over all other bonds of association.’²⁹⁴ Though geographically focused and anachronistically worded, Eickelman’s understanding is not far removed from the central nationalist premise today with loyalty to the nation taking precedence over all other bonds, sectarian or otherwise.

²⁹² Sam Haselby Tweet, (August 5th 2020), <https://twitter.com/samhaselby/status/1291118861174157312>

²⁹³ Dale F. Eickelman, *The Middle East and Central Asia: An Anthropological Approach 4th edition*, (London, 2001), p.72.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p.23.

The sociologist Max Weber defined the feeling of belonging together as ‘Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl’ whilst his contemporary Émile Durkheim grounded all religion as an artifice created to carry the need for multiple companionship.²⁹⁵ Durkheim focused on the symbolic celebration of being together, but religion has for many now been replaced by the celebrations of nationhood. That replacing of one allegiance for another took place somewhere between Durkheim’s time of writing in 1912 and John Bowlby’s trilogy of psychological analyses of what, by then, was deemed an innately human urge, written between 1969 and 1982.²⁹⁶ A modern sociological position expressed by Roger Brubaker and Frederik Cooper, drawing on the natural predecessors of Durkheim and Weber as well as the psychological conclusions of Bowlby, frames this intangible feeling as an ‘emotionally laden sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded group, involving both a solidarity or oneness with fellow group members and a felt difference from or even antipathy to specified outsiders.’²⁹⁷ As parameters for what the nation, as one chosen community, might offer these are all helpful inputs. From a political science perspective, it is the emotional side of that intangible need that is most interesting. It is that feature which new nationalism’s media outreach has managed to capitalise on so well.

²⁹⁵ Émile Durkheim (trans. Joseph Ward Swain), *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, (London, 2012).

²⁹⁶ John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, Vol.1, Vol.2, Vol.3, (1969, 1972, 1980).

²⁹⁷ Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, ‘Beyond “Identity”’ in *Theory and Society*, Vol. 29, No.1 (February, 2000), p.19.

B. Existing Channels

The two leftist thinkers Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, writing in 2012 shortly before the acceleration of the rise of nationalism, identified the creation of four ‘fabricated new figures of subjectivity’ as the cause for the slide in popularity of a leftist revolution.²⁹⁸ Though fanciful, one of those types, the ‘mediatised’ is a particularly astute observation of the legacies of the neoliberal system. The ‘mediatised’ they suggest, is created by control over information and communication networks but they hoped it would be one of the subjectivities that future movements might have the potential to ‘invert’ and ‘create figures that are capable of expressing their independence and their powers of political action.’²⁹⁹ In actuality, the creation of mediatised figures has proved decisive in the successful take-up of new nationalism’s particular political broadcasts, dressing their identity politics as a salve for our human need for community. Rather than a vehicle for the creation of a future left-wing movement, the existing media structure has been an essential cog in the transition to national-populism. This is true both in states whose nationalism is a descendant of their imperialism, such as the UK and Russia, and states whose nationalism is a descendant of their ‘justified’ nationalism and anti-colonialism.

There has been precious little written about the relationship between nationalism and media beyond Anderson’s idea that the media was a unifier because of its reach rather than its content, advanced by Ernest Gellner as an aside in his seminal work ‘Nations and Nationalism.’³⁰⁰ In Gellner’s words ‘It matters precious little what has

²⁹⁸ Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration*, (New York, 2012), p.9.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*.

been fed in to them (the media): it is the media themselves, the pervasiveness and importance of abstract, centralised, standardised, one to many communication, which itself automatically engenders the core idea of nationalism.’³⁰¹ Though this theory holds weight when applied to nation-building, it is antiquated when considering nationalism within established nations. The content of the media does matter. Love of the nation has been a central concept diffused throughout populations for decades prior to this current nationalist resurgence, and this resurgence continues to support itself on tailored content selection and framing in news reporting and opinion pieces. Nationalists are converting the media into the most effective propaganda outlet imaginable. As early as 1995, Michael Billig sketched the way in which the nation had been continually ‘flagged’ in the mainstream media arguing that these constant messages’ ‘unobtrusiveness arises, in part, from their very familiarity.’³⁰² The nation is a now-universal political category, a possible counter is that it would be impossible to report any news without relating it to a national context – however Billig also observed rhetorical episodes that ‘constantly remind us that we are “us” and, in so doing, permit us to forget that we are being reminded.’³⁰³ This form of signalling reminds us not just of the nation as an area, but the nation as a people. We don’t only ‘see reminders of “ourselves”’, we ‘see reminders of “them” and foreignness,’ the crucial aspects of the Self and Other divide that characterises nationalism.³⁰⁴

³⁰¹ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.127.

³⁰² Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, (London, 2010), p.174.

³⁰³ *Ibid*, p.175.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid*.

Besides the consistent, almost subliminal, nature of nationalist content in most contemporary media output, there is an innate agreeability between media styling and nationalist narratives. This is demonstrable even in those countries as yet resistant to the success of overt national-populist leaders and parties. Mirca Madianou's study of news channels in Greece, rarely a hyper-nationalist state, made this clear.³⁰⁵ Whilst reporting on two events; the Kosovan NATO crisis, and the obstruction of a Greek military training exercise by Turkey, Madianou observed the repetitive usage of an 'us and them' frame of reference. Verbally, 'deictic words' were employed in the reports on the military training exercise, which are most often used to 'demarcate "us" (in this context the Greeks and Greek Cypriots in the joint military exercise) and "them", the Turks.'³⁰⁶ Again, these deistic words are the same as those identified in cultural nationalist appeals and constructions, as well as in the political rhetoric of the nationalist leaders. When news is communicated through the same template even real events can be co-opted into the overarching narrative most beneficial to these groups, aiding them to win, or consolidate, power. Suddenly, the arbitrary division between Self and Other, the clearly falsified history, and the aggressive speeches of the figureheads are given the sheen of plausibility. Yet it isn't sudden. We are receptive to media all the time.

The framework itself is problematic but it can be exploited further to increase media's potential as an aid for nationalist politics. Tamar Liebes' work on the Arab-Israeli conflict drew strong conclusions about the impartiality of journalists that are no less relevant in the internal political battles being waged in democratic states

³⁰⁵ Mirca Madianou, *Mediating the Nation: News, audiences and the politics of identity*, (Abingdon, 2011).

³⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p.79.

worldwide.³⁰⁷ Liebes noted what she termed a ‘personalising’ of the news, by an industry which holds impartiality as its chief virtue. When the news is personalised viewers might witness what Liebes called an ‘asymmetrical portrayal of the humanity of the two sides.’³⁰⁸ Though Liebes’ study was on the deliberate asymmetric portrayals reflecting each journalist’s internal bias the same asymmetric portrayal is present in news and election coverage today, even whilst most media channels are considerably more careful to write-out partisanship. Instead, as noted in the prior chapter on leadership, the asymmetrical portrayal can now come through accurate reporting of Viktor Orbán’s, or Amit Shah’s in the BJP, ‘low’ language and frequent polemics against refugees or Muslims. If reporters don’t have the means to understand the damage this rhetoric might cause when repeated verbatim, nationalist messages are being issued with a greater frequency, greater ease and will result in a greater uptake than is possible by any other means. One contested solution is to refuse politicians who employ this language air-time, but as nationalism has entered the mainstream that has become close to impossible.

When national-populism is considered specifically this is an even more unlikely course of action. The reasons for this are shown in Claudia Alvares and Peter Dahlgren’s inquest into the relationship between populism and the ‘affective journalistic style of tabloids,’ prompted by their surprise at the results of the 2014 European Parliament elections where national-populist parties won huge numbers of seats.³⁰⁹ One

³⁰⁷ Tamar Liebes, *Reporting the Arab-Israeli Conflict: How Hegemony Works*, (New York, 1997).

³⁰⁸ *Ibid*, pp.73-74.

³⁰⁹ Claudia Alvares and Peter Dahlgren, ‘Populism, extremism and media: Mapping an uncertain terrain’, *European Journal of Communication*, Vol.31, No.1, p.53.

of the key themes of this style explained by Alvares and Dahlgren is the ‘focus on personalities,’ resulting in ‘populist leaders... framed as “underdogs”, becom(ing) key themes.’³¹⁰ With the charisma of these leaders making for irresistible watching, the same problematic views they espouse make them indispensable in election coverage. Their whole performance seems almost custom-built for the mediatised public. Similarly, journalism, which is now ‘geared for emotional response’, seems to be tailored for the twisted identity politics designed by nationalists as it ‘connects very much with individuals’ domestic, personal lives.’³¹¹

Throughout the prior chapters one pillar of the ‘unjustified’ moniker employed to describe new nationalism has been the manipulative nature of the political logic it seeks to normalise, that the best way forward is in-group against out-group. Scapegoating is a time-honoured tactic of political distraction but it never resolves the issues faced by those who submit to its reductive explanations. The explanations provided by nationalism are reductive because there is less of a focus on the details of a position because that is deemed to be less aligned with the drive towards a complete buy-in from voters in all elements of their lives, beyond just the polls. Exactly because it is a politics borne from identity, a politicising of an identity, it requires an emotive connection and focuses on developing this rather than debating policy positions. As Madianou demonstrated, the framework of Us against Them, Good against Bad is always a ‘simplification of a significantly more complex situation... common in the news and even more so in the reporting of conflicts and wars.’³¹² Nationalist politics is

³¹⁰ Ibid, p.53.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Madianou, *Mediating the Nation*, p.89.

similarly without nuance and has endeavoured to ensure that method of framing fits by imagining conflicts and wars within the state. This time between, for example, the nation and the immigrants. Though the professed aim is to empower the people, nationalist victories would be impossible without the ‘sensationalist tendency of journalism – to maximise anxiety and uncertainty,’ both thrive on fear rather than strength.³¹³ Not only then is nationalism reductive then in the way it shies away from confronting existing issues, it actually creates new issues and new enemies as it is articulated.

C. Manipulation of the Mainstream

Modi has been able to sell his willingness to act as proof of the success of his actions which is possible only whilst already in power. Orbán’s relationship with the media is more turbulent. During the Coronavirus pandemic, Orbán used the virus as justification to introduce emergency decrees. These decrees were praised in the Hungarian media, but also included provisions to arrest journalists who did not tread the party line. The way in which these interpreters of nationalism articulate their power through the media might differ, but the result should be expected to be the same. They need the same output. Nationalists need to appear to have the support of the entire nation, to be huge and insurmountable figures – where cracks in that façade might exist, they are willing to distort the picture and obscure them. Once in power, controlling the narrative and employing the nationalist frame through the mainstream media is unsurprisingly considerably easier. Their aim is then to ensure that everything positive

³¹³ Alvares and Dahlgren, ‘Populism, extremism and media: Mapping an uncertain terrain’, p.54.

that happens under their party's rule is a result of their party being in power, and every crisis is the result of unsupportive opposition or malicious anti-nationals.

In most democracies the downside to holding political power is that you will also be held accountable, in theory by a strong opposition party. Modi and Orbán have not been in power forever. Their parties achieved mainstream success for the first time under their leadership, competing in Modi's case with an entrenched party in the INC who had held power regularly since independence and in Orbán's case with a coalition of leftists who had unseated him once already, prior to his pivot towards the right. Both nationalists have been able to subvert the traditional democratic principle of accountability by maintaining a tight grip on the framing of political debate. In Nicole Lugosi's study of political rhetoric in Hungary she sets out the importance of framing when considered electorally, finding that 'while particular framing strategies do not directly cause populist support, framing does indirectly set the agenda and influence policy-making decisions.'³¹⁴ As an element of soft power this is exceptionally effective. Being able to predict and completely avoid discussion around the most obvious lines of attack to be levelled at you by your political competition can make you invincible. You decide the terms on which other parties can compete.

With many nationalist parties, immigration has been a commonly introduced political battlefield. Mainstream parties tend not to have had strong positions on immigration, it was considered part of the political reality and systems were already in place to manage it. When on the defensive against parties whose entire standing is based around this former non-issue it has been possible to witness back-peddling,

³¹⁴ Nicole Lugosi, 'Radical right framing of social policy in Hungary: between nationalism and populism', p.210.

confusion in message, and a general lack of preparedness in parties who have dominated in elections for decades. The whole mode and purpose of politics has changed under these new parties and they have a huge advantage in these particular debates. In India this is particularly clear. In the 1980s, episodes from the Ramayana, the Hindu epic, were televised for children.³¹⁵ When the BJP now campaign on a platform of Hindu nationalism, making promises to defend this religious identity, whilst the INC or the Marxist party campaign on economic or social policy manifestos, there are a whole generation pre-set to receive positively the identity framework. They see the cultural as becoming political and they vote in their masses.

Working within the system and framing events or debates in the way most favourable to the party is not a new political strategy, it makes logical sense for any incumbent. There is however a more concerning trend identified for the first time after the US elections in 1992 by James Carey.³¹⁶ Carey made two crucial observations after Bill Clinton's victory, related more to the playing out of the election than the eventual result. Until that point, journalism in the twentieth century he felt could be 'defined as the struggle for democracy and an independent media against propaganda and subservience to the state.'³¹⁷ Independence of the media is essential if voters are to be provided with the impartial information required to make their own free choices about who they would like to represent them. That, thought Carey, was slowly slipping away. Some might argue that a truly independent media was impossible in an era in which

³¹⁵ Arvind Rajagopal, *Politics After Television: Religious Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Indian Public*, (Cambridge, 2001).

³¹⁶ James Carey, 'The Mass Media and Democracy: Between the Modern and the Postmodern' *International Affairs*, Vol.47, No.1, (Summer 1993), pp.1-21.

³¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.3.

funding was pumped into political campaigns, but even more concerningly for Carey was that the secondary function of the media was also being eroded. That media which ‘acts more as a watchdog on the state’ and had ‘been typical of the modern period’ seemed to him ‘to be coming to an end.’³¹⁸ If Carey was able to conclude back in 1992 that there was a narrowing gap between the state and the media, and that the media was sacrificing its role in holding actors to account, the situation has only worsened since then. Nationalism as a politics is present in states across the world, we have shown it to often conceal a creeping authoritarianism and the exploitation of these tendencies in the media only adds to this.

There are two types of actual manipulation through the media managed by nationalists. Orbán’s Hungary exercises the first and Modi’s India the second. Both are problematic for their own reasons but Orbán’s is the more overt of the two. There is a political calculation to be made wherein a tighter hold on power enables a more authoritarian media policy, thereby tightening the hold on power further. Orbán and Fidesz claim to draw their power from the people, but they are also doing everything they can to protect against the opinion of those people changing – or if it comes to it, creating a strong enough apparatus that they could bypass public opinion if necessary. Hungary is not alone in this, in the UK where the hold on power is more marginal Boris Johnson can be seen to act similarly. Johnson is not nearly as strong a leader as Orbán, but he has the advantage of a background as a journalist. During the protracted post-Brexit period, Johnson was able to publish articles in the popular and well-established

³¹⁸ Ibid, p.4.

newspaper ‘The Daily Telegraph.’³¹⁹ This directly reflects Carey’s concern about the separation between state and media. For an actual leader to write a full-length article praising their own policy, which itself was in contravention of international law, in the pages of a newspaper they used to work for, makes a mockery of the media as an impartial commentator, or a body of accountability. That the article was also rife with factual errors might reflect the incompetence of the leader, or, more cynically, a deliberate willingness to distort facts.³²⁰ The old political adage holds that the executive, the legislative and the judicial should be separate bodies. The media too should be at arm’s length. Johnson and Brexit are side-notes in any nationalist study however but Orbán has also written repeatedly for a news outlet, Magyar Nemzet Daily, most recently in September 2020. In Orbán’s article he rallies against the ‘dictates of loopy liberal doctrine.’³²¹ The article is an open political attack afforded respectability by its placement within the pages of a ‘independent’ outlet. Orbán himself recognised the opportunity, acknowledging that with rallies made impossible by COVID-19 ‘instead of an address we have an essay.’³²²

Using the media to host the opinions of the party in power is becoming increasingly common in Hungary due to an aggressive policy of buying-up a wide range of outlets. A report by the International Press Institute, European Centre for Press and

³¹⁹ Boris Johnson article in *The Telegraph* (12th September 2020), quoted in full on British Government page, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-article-in-the-telegraph-12-september-2020>

³²⁰ John G. Peet tweets, <https://twitter.com/JohnGPeet/status/1304748871999016961>

³²¹ Viktor Orbán article for Magyar Nemzet Daily, (September 21st 2020), English language translation accessed at About Hungary <http://abouthungary.hu/speeches-and-remarks/pm-orban-in-magyar-nemzet-together-we-will-succeed-again/>

³²² Ibid.

Media Freedom with support from other groups found that ‘media ownership is heavily concentrated in the hands of the government, either directly or through pro-government investors.’³²³ Contemporary Hungary was born from a recent history of ideological domination of the Soviets. Ideological domination required comprehensive censorship and control of the media. Orbán and Fidesz have used that recent history to justify their own preventative methods of control over what is reported and how it is framed. István Elek, one of Fidesz’s media policy advisors admitted freely that ‘positive discrimination promoting the representation of right-wing values in the press is morally justified by the suppression of these values under socialism as well as their discrimination in the transformation years.’³²⁴ Fidesz first won power shortly after those transformation years and, though in a coalition government initially, immediately begun a process of what Péter Bajomi-Lázár termed ‘extensive political purges in the public services media.’³²⁵ Rather than reactive censorship the first step was proactive, cleaning out the media of dissenting voices and possible opponents. When Fidesz returned to power in 2010 they had a significant majority and their policies could be bolder and wider-ranging. To complement the stripping out of problematic voices they introduced a National Media and Telecommunications Authority whose mission their website euphemistically describes as ‘media supervision.’³²⁶ If there is any doubt about the true goal of this body

³²³ International Press Institute, European Federation of Journalists, Reporters Without Borders, Free Press Unlimited et al., *Conclusions of the Joint International Press Freedom Mission to Hungary*, (3rd December 2019), p.3. accessed at <https://ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Hungary-Conclusions-International-Mission-Final.pdf>

³²⁴ István Elek quoted in Péter Bajomi-Lázár, ‘Hungary’ in *Party Colonisation of the Media in Central and Eastern Europe*, (Budapest, 2014), p.53.

³²⁵ Péter Bajomi-Lázár, ‘Hungary’ in *Party Colonisation of the Media in Central and Eastern Europe*, (Budapest, 2014), p.53.

³²⁶ National Media and Communications Authority (Hungary), ‘Media Supervision’, accessed at <https://nmhh.hu/szakmai-erdekelttek/mediafelugyelet>

it warns that those who flaunt the rules could be subject to ‘fines of up to 200million forints.’³²⁷

The results of Orbán’s assault on media impartiality are the eradication of contesting narratives and the aforementioned total dominance over the framing of events. Policy Solutions Institutions analysis of the ‘Midday Chronicle’ a popular news bulletin in Hungary found in 2011 that ‘74% of all domestic political news items covered either the government or Fidesz and the Christian Democrats.’³²⁸ Orbán has secured a majority stake of the available air-time, has ensured that during that air-time he and his party are portrayed favourably, and in doing so guarantees Fidesz’s continued electoral success. The media contribute to public opinion and in Hungary they popularise governmental messages. Reviewing the policy implementation and the results, Péter Bajomi-Lázár and Dorka Horvath’s study in 2013 determined that Hungarian media could be accurately termed as propaganda.³²⁹ In their work this is distinguished from the ‘political marketing’ approach that is familiar to all democratic campaigns.³³⁰ Propaganda has much darker overtones. Orbán’s government meet all nine of their criteria for political propaganda and when ‘coupled with the government’s efforts to marginalise alternative political views, indicate that the Orbán government has attempted to establish ideological hegemony.’³³¹ Since 2013 it is plausible to deem this

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Policy Solutions Institution, ‘Fidesz is also flowing from the tap on Kossuth radio’ *hvg.hu*, (28th July 2011), accessed at https://hvg.hu/itthon/20110728_kossuth_radio_fidesz#utm_source=20110728_thomas_melia_nemeth_zsoltandutm_medium=Flyerandutm_campaign=hvg.hu

³²⁹ Péter Bajomi-Lázár and Dorka Horváth, ‘The continued relevance of the concept of propaganda: Propaganda as ritual in contemporary Hungary’ *Global Media and Communication*, Vol.9, No.3, (2013), pp.219-237.

³³⁰ Ibid, pp.221-223.

³³¹ Ibid, p.222.

attempt fully successful. Fidesz's rampant success can be viewed as a predictor for one of the ways nationalists will co-opt the media when the opportunity arises. More broadly it is representative of a political shift from national-populism to national-autocracy.

In nationalist states where there is a wider proliferation of media outlets Orbán's methodology might not be so effective. In these instances, controlling the media with the same ease Orbán has managed would be a herculean task. In India, the way in which the BJP's Hindu nationalist agenda has spread through a receptive population has meant that at times the party has had no need to force positive coverage, the media willingly represent their perspective. There are however outsiders to this. 'The Caravan' is a small independent outlet who commented that 'the mainstream media... have helped to not only whitewash bigotry' but more crucially have rejected their role as watchdogs and instead 'scrub Modi's failures and missteps out of the public discourse.'³³² That 'The Caravan' can exist is representative of a greater media freedom, but also the assumption of Modi and his party that their voices will be marginalised by the sheer volume of supportive channels praising every move of the Hindu nationalists. The validity of this assumption is most clear with a survey of Indian media output around Pakistan, India's external Other. Vaishnavi Chandrashekhar's article deems India's media 'war-crazy' noting that 'if India and Pakistan ever resolve their conflict, it won't be thanks to the Indian media.'³³³ The media have almost become agitators under a

³³² Mitali Saran, 'Worms in the Chocolate: The Indian Media's Collective, Voluntary Amnesia', *The Caravan*, (1st July 2019), accessed at <https://caravanmagazine.in/perspectives/indian-media-collective-voluntary-amnesia>

³³³ Vaishnavi Chandrashekhar, 'India's Media is War-Crazy' *Foreign Policy*, (March 1st 2019), accessed at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/03/01/indias-media-is-war-crazy/>

nationalist government, pushing for more nationalism and the translation of rhetoric into action. Chandreshekhar noted the impact of this trend observing that while ‘India’s television networks have been baying for blood,’ so too ‘have ordinary citizens on social media.’³³⁴ There is a clear danger in the media consensus matching that of the government, particularly when said government operates around an exclusivist nationalist agenda. The BJP’s anti-Muslim rhetoric which defines them as a party is normalised by reporters and journalists with the result that opposition parties seem to voters to be even out of step with national opinion. The messages of the party are being amplified by the mainstream media, then amplified even more broadly a second time by the population who access these channels.

Evaluating the extent to which the media’s close matching of governmental messages is a result of blind devotion, or a calculated ploy to capitalise on the prevailing mood is impossible. Some in the media have crafted particular niches for themselves under the BJP and would be unwilling to see any change that might disrupt that. If they can keep the party popular by deliberately failing to scrutinise the government, the government will always be assured of their support without needing to apply pressure themselves. Prior to this, their security as media outlets was assured by the popularity of the nationalist voice as a way of framing news. Chandreshekhar quoted a critic of India’s jingoistic media though who believed this failure of scrutiny was being taken further wherein certain journalists were agreeable to the prospect of ‘reproduc(ing) unverified speculative information’ that suited the government.³³⁵ In 2021, the case of Arnab Goswami, a popular news anchor, has threatened to expose that

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Ibid.

alongside channels showing an unwavering support for the BJP because of a tacit agreement with their politics, there might also exist a subversive form of media manipulation that operates more subtly than Orbán's dominance. Goswami founded Republic TV in 2017, which the academic Christophe Jaffrelot has compared to Fox News in the USA.³³⁶ The parallel is evocative. Fox have become well known for conservative partisanship in their reporting and derided outside of the US, but Goswami recognised an opportunity and exported the aggressive polemical style of reporting to India. The bullying interviews Goswami has conducted are perfectly suited to the politics they are championing and there is a clear preference in the debates Republic TV airs. A study by 'The Caravan' found that Republic TV airs 8 anti-BJP debates for every 100 anti-opposition debates.³³⁷ Republic TV and Fox News can both be critiqued for the same issues in their output then. Both attack anti-nationals, use spurious evidence in their claims, hold different parties to account with differing severity, and use their platform to attack opposition politicians in the same language popularised by the leaders of parties they support.

There is, however, a greater cynicism to what Goswami represents within the Indian media. Having a political preference is not ideal as a reporter, but also not altogether easy to avoid. Mainstream channels are usually able to strip away bias where it becomes overwhelming. Goswami is not only problematic for his unwillingness or inability to strip out his personal perspective though, his actual credentials as a voice

³³⁶ Edward Anderson and Christophe Jaffrelot, 'Hindu Nationalism and the "saffronisation of the public sphere": an interview with Christophe Jaffrelot' *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol.26, No.4, p.473.

³³⁷ Christophe Jaffrelot and Vihang Jumble, 'One-Man Show: A study of 1,779 Republic TV debates reveals how the channel champions Narendra Modi', *The Caravan*, (15th December 2020), accessed at <https://caravanmagazine.in/media/republic-debates-study-shows-channel-promotes-modi-ndtv>

for, let alone supporter of, his nation are flawed. Gabriel Tarde, writing in the nineteenth century, claimed that ‘to discover or invent for the public a new and great object of hatred is still one of the surest means of becoming one of the kings of journalism.’³³⁸ Goswami’s rallying against the Muslim other, in Pakistan but also internally, had set him on a path to become a ‘king of journalism,’ whilst embedding Hindu nationalism further within the state. Yet in November 2020 when Goswami was arrested in connection with a suicide case and when transcripts of his text messages were shared by police there was shock at how clearly partisan Goswami was in his private life, but also the limits of his true nationalism. Goswami’s messages first proved the close relationships he had maintained with BJP politicians, this perhaps his supporters may have expected. More surprising was his initial response to the 2019 Pulwama terror attack which killed 40 Indian soldiers. Goswami wrote ‘this attack we have won like crazy,’ in reference to his increased viewing figures in the aftermath.³³⁹ Another of Goswami’s messages appeared to show him as having prior knowledge of the counterattacking airstrikes launched by India in Balakot which Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan referred to in a tweet considering it proof of an ‘unholy nexus between the Modi govt & Indian media.’³⁴⁰

³³⁸ Gabriel Tarde (trans. Ernesto Laclau), ‘Le Public et la foule’ in *L’Opinion et la foule*, (Paris, 1901), p.70.

³³⁹ The Wire Staff, ‘WhatsApp Chats: Imran Khan Says Modi Govt “Used” Balakot for Domestic Gains’, *The Wire India*, (19th January 2021), accessed at <https://thewire.in/south-asia/arnab-goswami-whatsapp-chats-imran-khan-republic-pulwama-balakot>

³⁴⁰ Imran Khan tweet, (January 18th 2021), https://twitter.com/ImranKhanPTI/status/1351027746336628736?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1351027746336628736%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_c10&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fthewire.in%2Fsouth-asia%2Farnab-goswami-whatsapp-chats-imran-khan-republic-pulwama-balakot

The irony of Goswami's case and the half-truths it brings to light is that even with his distinctly anti-national response to an attack on Indian troops on Indian territory, he is likely to preserve his reputation and position as one who decides who the enemy of the Hindu nation is. On his arrest, the BJP president described it as parallel 'an assault on press freedom,' with the implicit takeaway being that journalists should be free to write whatever they want, as long as it parrots the narrative of the nationalists in government.³⁴¹ Even without the controversy, Goswami's style of reporting encourages violence in the streets and a lack of compromise in the Indian media. Even without his existence there are scores of other voices and channels toeing the BJP line whether that be to preserve their positions, secure benefits, or from a genuine conviction in the moral superiority of the Hindu nationalist position, itself a result of prior modes of framing. When two relatively recently independent nations can guarantee a form of media assent by outward force or subversive manipulation, their new nationalism is assured. These methods aren't confined to Hungary or India, they are becoming essentials in the national-populist playbook, with enough variation between just these two to suggest infinite possibilities for each bespoke movement. Considering the singularity of their political platforms a compliant media is an essential aid. In this sphere of the media, the mainstream, India and Hungary in fact outstrip some of the old imperial states' attempts to manufacture consent, but in other ways they are willing to replicate effective strategies trialed elsewhere.

³⁴¹ Jagat Prakash Nadda quoted in Poulomi Ghosh, 'Arnab Goswami arrested: Shameful, says BJP chief JP Nadda; "Who speaks if you are next", asks Smriti Irani' *Hindustan Times*, (4th November 2020), accessed at <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/arnab-goswami-arrested-shameful-says-bjp-chief-jp-nadda-who-speaks-if-you-are-next-asks-smriti-irani/story-GrIKydNoV1sGVvgDXFKbzH.html>

D. Fake News

The preceding section sets out the way in which the mainstream media have been used to amplify the messages of nationalists in Hungary and India, but there is still some surprise that such radical messages would be amplified. According to Rashad Ali at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue though, which includes amongst its aims the targeting of disinformation, this is exactly as expected. Ali believes that certain states should now be considered extremist actors because of their ‘advocacy of a system of belief that claims the superiority and dominance of one identity-based ‘in-group’ over all ‘out-groups.’’³⁴² These views have entered the mainstream themselves, they are ‘advocated by the state’ in the cases of both Hungary and India - though the entire system of belief is based on false premises.³⁴³ Even with this coalition between the media and national-populist leaders there are limits though. National-populists have grown to realise that campaigning is much easier whilst you are in opposition. Once in power, even with the raft of controls adopted to attempt to maintain a favourable narrative, there are times when the government will be held to account. A new strategy has developed to manage this. When convenient, nationalists have proven willing to cut themselves free of the mainstream media and even turn their supporters against these outlets.

In 2016, the Oxford English Dictionary declared ‘post-truth’ their word of the year. The word entered popular usage during Donald Trump’s election campaign in 2015-2016 but its repercussions have been lasting. Journalists, Patrick Cockburn declared, ‘are sometimes patronisingly congratulated for providing the first draft of

³⁴² Rashid Ali, ‘Extremism’, *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*, accessed at <https://www.isdglobal.org/what-we-do/areas-of-work/extremism/>

³⁴³ Ibid.

history...’ but as we showed when considering the need for nationalists to formulate false histories for the purposes of unity, ‘often the first draft is better than the final draft.’³⁴⁴ When denial of truth and falsification of fact are used to redraft journalistic accounts of events as they happen it is an even clearer exercise in power than the editing of history. Madianou’s early study revealed the extant potential in news to distort meaning since there is a ‘lack of contextual or background information (as)... common practice in news in general.’³⁴⁵ This allows anything to be said. When combined with Dahlgren’s corroboration that additionally ‘in the discursive atmosphere of post-truth, rational critique has lost some of its bite, as the “authenticity” of the emotional gains ground,’ reversing the tide of ‘Fake News’ seems impossible.³⁴⁶ The battleground on which elections are fought will be forever skewed if half of voters dismiss the information provided to them by a wealth of previously trusted sources. Can it even constitute democratic choice if the evidence on which decisions are to be made is itself unreliable? With the decial of ‘Fake News’ one of the key checks and balances on power is rendered impotent.

Nationalists in Hungary, India and across the world reject inconvenient truths with the hastily-applied moniker ‘Fake News,’ and have managed to package this as part of their national-populist crusade. Turning the free press into an enemy of the people would have been entirely impossible a few decades ago, but Dahlgren explains why it is so suited to this new wave politics. In his words, ‘one could argue that the

³⁴⁴ Patrick Cockburn, ‘The first draft of history: How war reporters get it wrong, and what they can do to get it right’ *The Independent*, (18th April 2016), accessed at <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/first-draft-history-afghanistan-iraq-syria-libya-isis-taliban-patrick-cockburn-front-line-war-reporting-a6988001.html>

³⁴⁵ Madianou, *Mediating the Nation*, p.81.

³⁴⁶ Peter Dahlgren, ‘Media, Knowledge and Trust: The Deepening Epistemic Crisis of Democracy’, *Javnost – The Public*, Vol. 25, No.1-2, (2018), p.22.

stage for the populist revolt has in part been set by decades of systematic deception on the part of power elites,' and the same is held in many of the founding narratives of these movements.³⁴⁷ It follows that once they gain power 'much of the political energy is aimed precisely at the established media and practices as journalism,' which they see as having propped up corrupt politics.³⁴⁸ Just as Fidesz justified their positive discrimination towards right-wing news as a response to what they perceived to be decades of left-wing censorship. 'Fake News' and its replacement with the peddling of ridiculous claims under Trump became an almost humorous aside to his presidency in the US, the danger it posed to conventional journalists was initially underestimated. Today, there is a pseudo-alliance between national-populist (and other) states' targeting of mainstream journalists, an international cabal against journalism discrediting its practitioners globally to shore up each states' sovereignty.

An article written by Arthur G. Sulzberger, the publisher of the New York Times, argued that 'in the past few years, more than 50 prime ministers, presidents and other government leaders across five continents have used the term "fake news" to justify varying levels of anti-press activity.'³⁴⁹ At its most flagrant and least controlled anti-press activity has taken the form of actual violence. UNESCO drew up a report on journalists covering political protests, where they can provide a voice to opposition groups, and evidenced '125 instances of attacks on or arrests of journalists covering protests in 65 countries between 17 January 2015 and 30 June 2020.'³⁵⁰ These

³⁴⁷ Ibid, p.24.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Arthur G. Sulzberger, 'The Growing Threat to Journalism Around the World' *The New York Times*, (March 23rd 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/23/opinion/press-freedom-arthur-sulzberger.html>

³⁵⁰ Frank Smyth, 'Safety of journalists covering protests: preserving freedom of the press during times of turmoil' *UNESCO*, (2020), p.2.

incidences were occasionally actioned by state forces and occasionally by supporters who had bought in to the narrative that the press was not to be trusted. A further report by the Committee to Protect Journalists recorded 688 journalists arrested since 2015, with a peak in 2020 of 274 in one year.³⁵¹ Nationalists, it can be seen, have proved willing to resort to any means to control the narrative. The badging of a journalist as ‘Fake News’ has become equivalent to anti-national, or enemy-of-the-state.

In Sulzberger’s report he refers to Orbán by name, critiquing him for the ‘massive fines’ he has levied ‘to force independent news organisations to sell to government loyalists’ as we set out earlier in this chapter, as well as the prison sentences for journalists enabled by his emergency decrees.³⁵² In India, Emily Schmall exposed that journalists have been attacked with greater frequency under Modi’s rule, and that ‘the attackers are now much more open, furious and fearless.’³⁵³ Within the state of Kashmir, which operates as the internal front of India’s nationalist war, the strategy is more overt. The government has deemed it essential to entirely obscure events in the northern state and as the journalist Gowhar Geelani reports echoing Carey’s earlier concerns, ‘the fear is so palpable that most newspapers have chosen to become the extension arm of the state rather than being a watchdog of society.’³⁵⁴ Geelani was speaking about the situation before the New Media Policy, introduced in

³⁵¹ Committee to Protect Journalists, ‘Number of Journalists Arrested’, https://cpj.org/data/imprisoned/2018/?status=Imprisoned&start_year=2015&end_year=2018&group_by=location

³⁵² Sulzberger, ‘The Growing Threat to Journalism Around the World’.

³⁵³ Emily Schmall, ‘Attacks on Indian journalists highlight growing intolerance’ *AP News*, (March 2nd 2020), accessed at <https://apnews.com/article/1ecd0989fd8f33b1f33d23d9b15d55e8>

³⁵⁴ Gowhar Geelani quoted in Bilal Ahmad Pandow, “‘The idea is to kill journalism’: Kashmiri journalists on what it’s like working under lockdown, an internet blackout and a new draconian media law’, *Index on Censorship*, Vol.39, No.3, (September 11th 2020), p.17.

2020 to target Kashmir specifically, but had already been arrested under the Unlawful Activities Act and described the government's aim as to 'kill independent journalism and criminalise opinions in Kashmir.'³⁵⁵ The same politicians who were so keen to preserve Arnab Goswami's prominence and protect the opinions he was sharing have in Kashmir successfully implemented a policy whereby 'the entire process of information seems to be censored.'³⁵⁶ Outright censorship is an advance on the 'Fake News' method of marshalling consensus to the point of being almost 'dictatorial.'³⁵⁷ That is the evolution of the national-populist logic in areas they deem to be problematic and it is not an exaggeration to say that what happens in Kashmir as a trial case, could well be rolled out elsewhere. National-populists winning elections is one thing, if they then betray the United Nations ideal that a 'free, uncensored and unhindered press or other media... constitutes one of the cornerstones of a democratic society,' they should be critiqued for their political execution as well as their content of their politics.³⁵⁸

For now, Kashmir represents the exception rather than the norm. However, Peter Pomerantsev's book on contemporary governments' 'war on reality' argues that new states nationalist and otherwise, are censoring opposing voices with an evolved strategy.³⁵⁹ The law professor Tim Wu claimed that states have moved 'from an ideology of info scarcity to one of info abundance which sees speech itself as a

³⁵⁵ Ibid, p.18.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ United Nations: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 'General Comment No.34' *Human Rights Committee*, (12th September 2011), p.3.

³⁵⁹ Peter Pomerantsev, *This Is Not Propaganda: Adventures in the War Against Reality*, (London, 2019).

ensorial weapon.’³⁶⁰ The reasoning is that as media channels have increased in variety and become omnipresent, the best means of censorship is to drown voices out, rather than erase them completely. This is closer to the Indian approach of relying on the laudatory nature of most media reporting on the government, to render independent critical voices only of minor effect.

Pomerantsev finds the strategy to have originated in post-ideologically-imperial Russia, where it has even more nebulous characteristics. Pioneered under the governmental advisor and self-proclaimed political technologist Gleb Pavlovsky, the aim is to complicate every story and obscure every event. In action, this works ‘less by oppressing narratives but by co-opting them until there is no more space for an opposition to exist in.’³⁶¹ Pavlovsky and others created a massive choreography, funding ‘scarecrow parties’ such as the ‘neo-nationalist’ Liberal Democrats to break off support for rivals in the state whilst working ‘in concert with commercial media, owned by the oligarchs.’³⁶² When even opposition parties have ties to the party in power, trust in politics is completely lost and the dominant party can appear almost omnipotent. Any reporting on this only increases the power of the mode as it decreases trust and the sanctity of knowledge even further. It might seem paradoxical that this coordinated political and media strategy of confusion could do anything but complicate the singular narrative of the state, but in fact it increases the pull of a now-hegemonic identity politics which always had less recourse to facts and more of a reliance on an emotive

³⁶⁰ Tim Wu quoted in *Ibid*, p.44.

³⁶¹ Peter Pomerantsev, ‘Russia: A Postmodern Dictatorship?’ *Institute of Modern Russia*, (October 2013), p.3.

³⁶² *Ibid*, p.5.

appeal. When, in addition, the media popularise political slogans that are ‘wilfully contradictory’ such as ‘conservative modernisation’, ‘managed democracy’ or any justification of action based on the national interest, the choreography is complete – conflicting appeals are made to conflicting groups all of whom end up believing that the government, in Russia Vladimir Putin’s government, are the only suitable choice for power.³⁶³

Different tailored versions of the same story draw in different groups of voters, no-one believes anything is happening independently of anything else, the vast majority believe only in what they can be sure of, their own national identity. Russia is part of the new vanguard of nationalist states but that is less significant than Pomerantsev’s conviction that their style is spreading. In Hungary, formerly a Soviet satellite, perhaps it only hasn’t yet because of the tight grip Orbán has managed to maintain by the more conventional means of media manipulation. With the boom in new media, there is even more to control and even more ways of doing it.

E. New Media, New Leaders

New nationalism is closely tied to the mutating influence of media and is particularly closely aligned to social media. National-populists were amongst the first to recognise the power of this fresh sphere and have proved remarkably successful at channelling support across a range of platforms. Returning to Carey’s 1992 article, which charted the near-success of Ross Perot, an independent candidate in the US election, there is a foreshadowing of the current vogue as Carey noted with awe that ‘Perot ignored local newspapers, radio and television and, in effect, told the national

³⁶³ Ibid, p.3.

press that he could win without them.’³⁶⁴ Whilst the co-opting of the mainstream media has been a preferred tactic for national-populists post-election, securing a position, and a popular following in the first place is possible through social media where there are less rules on the content that is shared. Perot himself ‘laid down new rules’ including ‘avoid specifics; stay away from journalists; hold as few press conferences as possible; stay away from the serious interview programs.’³⁶⁵ National-populists have followed a very similar game plan. To date, Modi has never attended a press conference – why would he when the BJP can hold far more effective mass rallies?

The uninhibited access national-populists get to their supporters on social media, the ease of constantly restating their positions and responding to events as they happen, has rendered traditional media easy to avoid whenever it won’t repeat nationalist messages verbatim. Donald Trump is considered an innovator in this style of constant access but again this has spread across borders, into every corner of the world social media has reached. The final two chapters of Christian Fuchs’ book ‘Nationalism on the Internet’ analyses two occasions of the usage of social media for sharing nationalist messages, one example as an electoral strategy and one as a means of consolidation.³⁶⁶ Fuchs first examines the building of support for nationalists in the run-up to the German elections to the Bundestag in 2017 and in his second case study evaluates Facebook posts from Sebastian Kurz, Heinz-Christian Strache and Herbert Kickl shortly after they

³⁶⁴ Carey, ‘The Mass Media and Democracy: Between the Modern and the Postmodern’, p.1.

³⁶⁵ Ibid, p.2.

³⁶⁶ Christian Fuchs, ‘Nationalism on the Internet: Critical Theory and Ideology in the Age of Social Media and Fake News’, (New York, 2019).

came to power in Austria at the head of a nationalist coalition government. The conclusion is clear, these strategies work.

One of the major advantages of social media campaigns, besides their relative cost, is their increased outreach. According to studies in 2020, the global social media usage rate is 49 percent with over 3.6 billion people having at least one account.³⁶⁷ In India, a vast nation-state with different languages spoken in different regions a coherent strategy in the usually fractured world of social media not only stands-out online but proves a vital support to the BJP's concerted mainstream media push. With the continuing farmers protests now recorded daily in the mainstream media and rapidly becoming a public relations disaster, social media has provided a valuable auxiliary for the government. In response to tweets from international celebrities critiquing the treatment of the farmers, Indian celebrities responded on masse with some even sharing government statements from their personal accounts. As an exercise in turning the tide of public opinion this was invaluable. The celebrities listed in the Times of India article following this show of support had a total of at least 126 million followers viewing their pro-government, pro-national messages, many of whom are revered in India.³⁶⁸ This is a prime example of amplification. Social media has a secondary facet for nationalist politics though. Social media sites can also play host to identity construction or reconstruction, reaching beyond mere repetition of selected themes and restructuring the actual core national identity.

³⁶⁷ H. Tankovska, 'Number of social network users worldwide from 2017 to 2025' *Statista*, (January 28th 2021), accessed at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/>

³⁶⁸ Times of India Staff, 'Bollywood celebs, sportspersons rally against international tweets on farmers agitation', *Times of Indi*, (February 3rd 2021), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/farm-stir-bollywood-celebs-sportspersons-rally-against-international-tweets-on-farmers-agitation/articleshow/80671753.cms>

Russian innovation resurfaces in the new media sphere. The popular news channel Russia Today, working in multiple different languages and with over 4.15million subscribers on Youtube, imitates mainstream media approaches but combined with the reach and accessibility across the world provided by social media. Russia Today present their news in a way that is openly favourable to Russian interests, but they also produce cultural content that is less distinctly Russian in its outlook. The boundary between the partisan information and non-partisan information is not always clear and in much of the world Russia Today is also marketed as RT to obscure the link to Vladimir Putin's state. Pomerantsev argued that Russia Today, amongst other outlets and methods, exists 'precisely because they (the Russians) had lost the Cold War,' though they could also not survive without the democratisation of media brought about by the boom of social media.³⁶⁹ Following the collapse of Communism, with the loss of their satellite states and the fracturing of the Soviet bloc Russian influence was on the decline. In response, Pomerantsev believes that the prevalence and subtle effects of these new multi-national modes of manipulation are proof that 'Russian spin doctors and media manipulators managed to adapt to the new world quicker than anyone... in the West.'³⁷⁰ The contemporary Russian approach is two-pronged. One works internally, to shore up power, and one works externally to destabilise other states. The promoting of nationalism is the central commonality.

³⁶⁹ Pomerantsev, *This is Not Propaganda*, p.9.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

The Russian professor Gregory Asmolov described the shift internally in Russia as from ‘sovereign democracy’ to ‘sovereign internet.’³⁷¹ Russian politics has other elements to it under the rule of Vladimir Putin, but this is an overtly nationalist strategy. On the Internet, as a defensive move, Asmolov shows the way in which Russia has formed its own separate ‘national cyberzone,’ which he considers a ‘a type of Internet control’ creating a ‘natural isolation, despite the global nature of the net.’³⁷² There is a reason for this cyberzone architecture beyond control for control’s sake. Rafal Rohozinski and Ronald Deibert explain that on the Russian Internet, ‘control strategies tend to be more subtle and sophisticated and designed to shape and affect how information is received by users, rather than denying access outright.’³⁷³ The isolation achieved is not one that severs Russian ties to the rest of the world, but purely one which ensures that the Russian narrative remains unchallenged by the wealth of other information available online. Russia has expended this much effort building a secure media hub precisely because they are aware of the dangers of information warfare, as they export it themselves. Rumours have gathered about Russian involvement in the US election, the Brexit vote, other European states’ elections and elections to the European parliament.

Beyond these brazen attacks there is evidence for other concerted efforts to destabilise foreign democracies. Pomerantsev discovered a Russian manual entitled ‘information-psychological war operations: a short encyclopaedia and reference guide’

³⁷¹ Gregory Asmolov, ‘Russia: From “Sovereign Democracy” to “Sovereign Internet”?’ *Global Voices*, (13th June 2010), accessed at <https://globalvoices.org/2010/06/13/russia-from-sovereign-democracy-to-sovereign-internet/>

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Ronald Deibert and Rafal Rohozinski, ‘Control and Subversion in Russia Cyberspace’ Ronald Deibert, John Palfrey, Rafal Rohozinsky and Jonathan Zittrain, *Access Controlled: The Shaping of Power, Rights, and Rule in Cyberspace*, (London, 2010), p.16.

which included ominous advice around information weapons which ‘acts like an invisible radiation’ in a way that ensures that ‘the population doesn’t even feel it is being acted upon. So the state doesn’t switch on its self defence systems.’³⁷⁴ It is in this effect, rather than what they do internally, that the Russian example is crucial. Whilst previous chapters have set the German instance of nationalism 200 years ago against fledgling nationalist movements in Hungary and India, Russia is the best parallel to demonstrate the importance of media in building and then maintaining new nationalist movements, in Hungary, India and in numerous other states across the world.

It is significant that as Russia has looked to exert its influence more subtly whilst destabilising challenger states, the promotion of nationalism in these states combined with election-meddling that has benefitted nationalist candidates has been adopted as a strategy. On the face of things, old nationalism, ‘justified nationalism,’ brought no benefit to any state other than that it was active in. It would be expected that a staunchly nationalist state 50 years ago would be aggressive externally, seek advantages for their people in diplomacy and trade, and fight against any external influence over their affairs. With the fall of Communism, the end of the Cold War and the dominance of the Capitalist system, Russia has recognised nationalism as a means of fracturing the global whole. The promotion of nationalist candidates in one state no longer guarantees Russia an enemy there, or an enemy for all that states’ neighbours, instead it disrupts the mostly settled status quo. In Hungary, for example, Orbán is no more of a threat to Russian interests than any of his predecessors, he often aligns with Putin’s positions – but he does pose a challenge to the established European order.

³⁷⁴ Pomerantsev, *This is Not Propaganda*, p.107.

Brexit is an even plainer case of this same logic. Russia recognised early on that the established order maintained many elements of American power, even the end of the Cold War was championed as a great leveller. To challenge that requires states to adopt new ideologies for as Igor Ashmanov one of the founders of the Russian Internet argued, ‘if your ideology is imported... as with liberalism, then you are always playing to foreign rules, which are always being changed by someone else.’³⁷⁵ Promoting nationalism is the ideal solution. Nationalism will always appear a completely bespoke politics to the state it emerges in, though its simultaneous emergence across the world poses questions as to how veritable this claim is. Nationalism defines the enemies of the state, anyone they do not single out cannot be a threat and so any other government who provides them with support will be considered an ally. Finally, nationalism is uniquely suited to the contemporary world in its ability to capitalise on new technology and new media and is ideologically weak enough that it can adapt to any state where democracy exists. Exporting nationalism, or at the least supporting it tacitly where it springs up is the perfect vehicle for Russian interests. Nationalism has not re-emerged because it suits Russia, but Russia has willingly catalysed its development.

Though the Russian incentive for supporting these movements is clear, that the Russian state is able to exert influence in this way is perhaps surprising. Ultimately the answer lies in the self-serving nature of new nationalism. Foreign involvement in elections, or media manipulation, has not been targeted by nationalists because it has been of use to them. The Self and the Other divide isn’t structured around the biggest threat to the concept of the Self, but instead the threat that can best be rallied against.

³⁷⁵ Igor Ashmanov quoted in *Ibid*, p.110.

Strategies of information manipulation and in particular the widespread sharing of conspiracy theories to sow distrust are difficult to rally against and have succeeded in many states in dethroning the established political order. It has been allowed to continue by self-serving nationalism, reminiscent of that caveated nationalism related to personal interest made plain by Arnab Goswami's celebration of a terrorist attack on Indian soldiers. It is important to explain now in full how nationalism, with foreign support and without, has such deep roots in new media.

F. Social Media and the Self

Within Russia's sovereign internet space Asmolov identified three key principles, the third of which was the 're-creation of identity.'³⁷⁶ Where Benedict Anderson's analysis of nation-building reified the importance of 'the emergence of newspapers that created "reading together" communities,' today the internet is all-powerful as 'not only a "reading together" space, but also an "interacting together" space.'³⁷⁷ This return to Anderson is symbolic as it grounds the nation today in social media. The purpose of social media sites is to connect and they are often championed for bringing together different groups with different interests. This purpose and this effect are in truth only accessories to the actual reason these sites were created which is profit. As social media sites are all about self-presentation and the boiling down of identity into constituent parts, some of which will be exploited by advertisers, it is not altogether surprising that some of those advertisers would eventually be political parties. The genius of this new mode is that messages can be personalised with the

³⁷⁶ Asmolov, 'Russia: From "Sovereign Democracy" to "Sovereign Internet"?'.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

approach political adverts possibly choosing to take being specifically modelled to the interests you have set out on your profile. With this as the template for outreach, the most successful of these political advertisers are likely to be nationalists. They alone are equipped with a category, namely the nation, broad enough to be able to make different appeals to almost every existing group however they are classified by interests. This is the technological application of what Laclau called the ‘empty signifier.’³⁷⁸ In action, Pomerantsev calls this ‘micro-targeting’ and it is the result of ‘reimagin(ing) a new version of “the people”’ because “the people” are ‘more fractured than ever... barely existing as one nation.’³⁷⁹

“The people” appear more fractured than ever because of the variety of options for self-definition that now exist and that we are aware of through such regular usage of social media. In conversation with Francis Fukuyama, Toomas Hendrik Ilves the ex-president of Estonia argued that ‘we have ended up with a different kind of identity, of self-choice, that is only possible in the technological era.’³⁸⁰ An increase in possible identities renders most policy-based politics, or even left- and right-wing politics, which have a specified set of positions that they restate in the same way to every audience, completely unsuited to new means of garnering support. They don’t adapt well to new media. Just as the mainstream media has certain characteristics that enshrine national difference, such as the persistence of Us and Them framing, social media also seems to be guaranteeing an opportunity for nationalist exploitation. In Gwen Bouvier’s study of

³⁷⁸ Laclau, ‘On Populist Reason’, p.162.

³⁷⁹ Pomerantsev, *This is Not Propaganda*, p.209

³⁸⁰ Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Francis Fukuyama, ‘The Different Faces of Identity and Politics Today’ (conversation), *Lennart Meri Conference*, (October 14th 2020), accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBo-ww4IUJ8>

student self-identification at her university in Wales she found that self-identification is ‘for the most part... still highly reliant on older classifications surrounding the nation state,’ which was to her, ‘astonishing in this time characterised by some in terms of the blurring of national boundaries.’³⁸¹ Bouvier ends her article with a question, ‘in ideological terms, we might ask who this will ultimately serve?’³⁸² The answer played out in elections in Hungary, India and other democracies from East to West would seem to be nationalist parties.

Self-defining on social media may initially be geared towards traditional categories such as your nationality, but Ilves also spoke of the way in which technology would enable us self-choice. For self-choice, those categories would have to have the flexibility to change as we grow and develop and integrate with different groups. There is a fundamental flaw to this in the structure of most social media. Rather than connecting actually disparate groups, social media builds echo-chambers pressing its users to become friends with others who like the same things and have the same interests as them. The intention may have been to quell conflict, or to keep the social media cyberzone a civil and positive space but in actuality it radicalises each group by their lack of contact with opposing, or even just different, viewpoints.

Whilst the community-based nature of social media fragments the population into separate interest groups, most social media sites have also become a prism through which their users access mainstream media. A study on the social response to journalistic techniques on Facebook found concerningly that ‘online users tend to select information that adheres to their system of beliefs, ignore information that does not’ all

³⁸¹ Gwen Bouvier, ‘How Facebook users select identity categories for self-presentation’, *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, Vol. 7, No.1, (2012), p.51.

³⁸² Ibid, p.52.

as a result of joining groups that ‘share a common narrative.’³⁸³ These groups with shared narratives are easily targetable by the micro-targeting approach of online nationalist campaigns and the impact of this on the ‘construction of social perceptions and the framing of narratives,’ can be seen to influence ‘policy-making, political communications, and the evolution of political debate.’³⁸⁴ The entire front to democratic politics is being shifted by the involvement of new forms of media. The post-war ideal of liberal consensus is becoming an impossibility through what Dahlgren identified as the emergence of ‘competing versions of knowledge and facts’ which generate ‘incompatible views of reality, cementing and isolating incompatible discursive bubbles, and eroding the grounds for political discussion.’³⁸⁵ Yet the outcomes of what Dahlgren summarised are threefold, we witness; a lack of faith in objective fact meaning every event is contested, a retreat further into our identity groups resulting in a lack of willingness to engage with others, and the complete separation of these groups which can then be targeted differently as part of nationalist political outreach. Thus far this is to the benefit of nationalist parties, it suits Russia and those who want a retreat from productive politics into identity contests because as Dahlgren concludes, it has ‘been detrimental and problematised democratic participation.’³⁸⁶

Democracies are trying to reverse this corrosive trend. In the US there were congressional speeches on the subject even whilst Trump was in power.³⁸⁷ In the UK

³⁸³ Ana L. Schmidt, Antonio Peruzzi, Antonio Scala, Matteo Cinelli, et. al, ‘Measuring social response to different journalistic techniques on Facebook’ *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, Vol.7, No.17, (2020), p.1.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p.6.

³⁸⁵ Dahlgren, ‘Media, Knowledge and Trust: The Deepening Epistemic Crisis of Democracy’, p.22.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p.21.

³⁸⁷ House Financial Services Committee, ‘Zuckerburg Grilled by Congress on Libra’, 23rd October 2019.

Pomerantsev was called to speak at a parliamentary hearing.³⁸⁸ So far, however little has changed. National-populists can and will point to traditional parties' opposition to this as a new example of censorship of any voices not accepted by the mainstream. The sites themselves have acted disjointedly if at all, for they have no political obligation to change. Alexander Nix who represented Cambridge Analytica, a company who had access to peoples' Facebook information and used it to operationalise behavioural change, defended their work by saying that 'we are trying to make sure that voters receive messages on the issues and policies they care most about... that can only be good for democracy.'³⁸⁹ The debate has come full circle. Again the media's defence is that they only amplify appeals to needs that already exist, they don't create exclusivist nationalist sentiment they speak to it as it already exists in the general population. These natural instincts now have a technological outlet.

If this criticism has been rebuffed, or at least evaded, others remain unanswered. Nix has less to say about the way in which social media has simplified the political and more threateningly, fed directly into the 'Low' language adopted by nationalists. Whether or not you agree that populations in Hungary, India and elsewhere have demanded the creation of nationalist parties, the way they can interact with fellow-voters and party representatives online has changed the way politics is communicated. Viktor Orbán does not in fact have a Twitter account, but the work of David Boromisza-Habashi drew a connection between his aggressive rhetoric and hate-speech online in the book 'Speaking Hatefully: Culture, Communication and Political Action in

³⁸⁸ Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 'Disinformation and "fake news": Final Report – Eight Report of Session 2017-2019', *House of Commons*, (14th February 2019).

³⁸⁹ Alexander Nix quoted in Pomerantsev, *This is Not Propaganda*, p.235.

Hungary.³⁹⁰ Hate-speech, he argues, is not even recognised as such by the majority of its practitioners, they see it solely as a way of aligning themselves politically and making their stances clear. This is the clearest symptom of a degradation in what is deemed acceptable in the political cultures that have bred new nationalism. Even hate-speech is considered primarily as an identifier.

In India too, there is a similar phenomenon. Sahana Udupa made a study of ‘gaali’ – loosely translated as funny stuff, across Indian social media accounts which she defines as the ground on which a resurgent group of right-wing Hindu nationalist voters online and diverse groups of contesting ideologues create a culture that ‘blurs boundaries between comedy, insult, shame and abuse.’³⁹¹ Here the effect is different to hate-speech in Hungary. Rather than the abuse being used as a form of identification, it is humourized as a means of normalising formally fringe or extremist perspectives. Many of the most violent nationalist phrases originate on social media where there is more room for experimentation and less accountability for what is said. In India, where there is relatively little direct control from the state over media, BJP leaders are much more likely to use social media than Orbán or members of Fidesz. When they do the culture of ‘gaali’ gives them the perfect spaces in which to share their polemics.

T Raja Singh, a member of the BJP, used his personal Facebook profile to make claims such as ‘Rohingya Muslim immigrants should be shot,’ and, according to a Wall Street Journal article, that ‘Muslims who kill cows... should be slaughtered like

³⁹⁰ David Boromisza-Habashi, ‘Speaking Hatefully: Culture, Communication, and Political Action in Hungary’, (Penn State, 2013).

³⁹¹ Sahana Udupa ‘Gaali cultures: The politics of abusive exchange on social media’ *New Media and Society*, Vol.20, No.4, p.1506.

them.’³⁹² Singh escaped without action for much longer than would be expected if he had made such incendiary claims in a public press conference. Initially Facebook did not act allegedly because of the risk it would ‘damage the company’s business prospects in the country’ their ‘biggest global market by number of employees.’³⁹³ Singh has since had his accounts banned but only in light of the new pressure placed on Facebook by the publishing of the article. This is not a self-policing sphere, there aren’t the same rules with content that exist in other media forms. Yet hate-speech is powerful, it should be sanctioned. If your political perspective is such that it requires abusive terms there is something in the core of the ideology that should be questioned. As Udupa and a colleague, Matti Pohjonen write extreme speech does not sit on the fringes of the political, it comes from within it. ‘Across... diverse historical-political contexts, online extreme speech has become a vehicle for and symptom of violent forms of exclusion from the political mainstream and for cultural shaming that erodes the conditions for a dignified life for many.’³⁹⁴

G. Politics’ Willing Conduit

National-populist politics has taken advantage of certain essentialities in the way mainstream media and social media works. This is a credit to each parties’ strategists. Recognising the value of media as a mode of outreach and of sharing their politics with the electorate has resulted in a mismatch between traditional party campaigns and the

³⁹² Newley Purnell and Jeff Horwitz, ‘Facebook’s Hate-Speech Rules Collide With Indian Politics’ *The Wall Street Journal*, (August 14th 2020), accessed at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-hate-speech-india-politics-muslim-hindu-modi-zuckerberg-11597423346?redirect=amp#click=https://t.co/49vZGPni14>

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Sahana Udupa and Matti Pohjonen, ‘Extreme Speech and Global Digital Cultures’ *International Journal of Communication*, Vol.13, (2019), p.3062.

fresher tactics employed by national-populists. This has its limits though. There seems to be a feeling in much of the reporting on elections in the last decade that first it was a huge shock that these parties won seats, and now that it is almost inevitable when another state votes in a nationalist candidate or when established parties like Fidesz and the BJP win a subsequent term. This ignores the fact that part of these parties' media campaigns is pure manipulation. In Hungary the mainstream media is owned by the government. In India there are links between politicians and news anchors. They are not playing by the rules. Questions should also be raised about the global connectivity of these movements. Russian influence has proved educatory to other states, framing the media as a battleground for information war. The dismissal of a massive amount of reporting as 'Fake News' and the targeting of journalists in country after country requires some synchronicity in the rhetoric of the various leaders. Nationalists have deemed a free media problematic to their push for power. That is instructive when we review their movements.

Coercion in the mainstream media has echoes throughout democratic politics. More unique has been the national-populist dominance of social media. There the win at all costs mentality is changing politics almost irreparably. Trump, an innovator on Twitter, was finally 'de-platformed' shortly after losing the American election. Signal Labs recorded a 73% decline in disinformation around the election result after the banning of Trump from the site and it seemed as though the tide may finally be turning against the usage of false information to rally support online.³⁹⁵ Other innovators are unlikely to be too concerned however. Trump's de-platforming did not cause him to

³⁹⁵ Signal Labs referred to in Elizabeth Dwoskin and Craig Timberg, 'Misinformation dropped dramatically the week after Twitter banned Trump and some allies' *The Wall Street Journal*, (January 16th 2021), accessed at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/01/16/misinformation-trump-twitter/>

lose power, it came as a final indignity for a man whose media strategy had reached its limit. He had been allowed to tweet continually provocative statements throughout his term as President, with a loss of power came the loss of that right. In India, the crackdown on Trump may actually have inspired the BJP government's request to twitter to shut down the accounts of some involved in the farmers protests. Twitter's response was that they 'comply with official orders as required' and would suspend 'close to 250 Twitter accounts' as demanded by the Home Affairs Ministry.³⁹⁶ Again, nationalists were able to shift the rules as they required. The government used a high-profile case that had happened overseas to lead their own retaliation against fair protest and enshrined in India's technology laws that governmental bodies can 'seek to block online content deemed as inciting disruption to public order.'³⁹⁷ Rallying support against nationalism is unlikely to be easy on the same platforms that have become so closely associated with nationalists rallying support.

Both Orbán and Modi will have been most interested by the way Trump's speeches and social media presence led to the Capitol siege on 6th January 2021. Seeing armed men protesting a fair election in the heart of the American political establishment was indicative of how much has changed in the last decade. National-populism is a potent enough politics to seize US institutions by force. Most crucially, extra-media mobilisation outside of the mainstream, led directly to extra-political action. This rightly terrifies established political parties, whilst to new nationalist parties it is proof of the kind of devotion their style inspires. Changing the medium has changed the result

³⁹⁶ Zeba Siddiqui and Devjyot Ghoshal, 'Twitter blocks dozens of accounts on India's demand amid farm protests' *Reuters*, (February 1st 2021), accessed at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-farms-protests-twitter-idUSKBN2A12J9>

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

and opened up a rift between even the centre-right and the way these new parties work. Though the Capitol siege has revived efforts to maintain some sense of order on social media, Bhujji and Ibrahim when writing about jihadists use of new medias argued that the ‘flexibility and anonymity with which new sites and forms of media can be created’ will mean that institutions will always be playing catch-up.³⁹⁸ There will always be new means of manipulation. Some journalists have written about the BJP IT cell which funds ‘trolling’ of dissenting voices as a sort of commodified bot farm. It is clear then that the important shift will be in countering these exclusivist messages, rather than overwriting them. It should be remembered that new medias still hold the potential to connect and ameliorate identities rather than distinguish them. Social media is a symbol of the lengthy period of liberal dominance and as is often the case it has, integrated into it, the means for the downfall of the old order. The focus on identity and the ability to consistently produce new narratives are both thorns in the side of democracy. Getting the genie of nationalism back into the bottle is a challenge that will require a concerted effort through and with the media.

³⁹⁸ Kamaldeep Bhui and Yashmin Ibrahim, ‘Marketing the “radical”’: Symbolic communication and persuasive technologies in jihadist websites’ *Transcultural Psychiatry*, Vol. 50, No.2, (2013), p.219.

CHAPTER IX

IDENTITY SUPPLANTING IDEOLOGY

*'We claim at least equal liberty for all, and that amidst the present welter of politics in which reaction is struggling so hard to lift up its head, if we do not guard the liberties we have won with the utmost care and jealousy we shall find them encroached on day by day.'*³⁹⁹

A standard survey of a certain political movement would usually interrogate the contents of their stances on issues and ground them in select case studies that exemplify the context from which the movement emerged. An analysis of new nationalism, national-populism, renders this approach impossible. The movement is wide-ranging and diverse and has numerous ancestral roots – reaching far beyond the German unification movement used as a historical point of comparison - which complicate a simple account of its origins. Even more challenging is the relative dearth of clearly espoused policy positions. A summation of this thesis so far would instead suggest that it is more important to focus on strategies as the components of national-populism, alongside the means of realisation that have converted the theory of the movement into an exceptionally successful electoral politics. Rather than policies we have accounted for methods of outreach, and the framing of topics to best appeal to voters. Populist tactics have been combined effectively with the Self and Other divide and the falsification of history to provide the central content for the nationalist rise. The discussions on leadership and media manipulation are both conduits for the realisation

³⁹⁹ William Morris, 'Free Speech in America' *Commonweal*, Vol.3, No.91, (8th October 1887), p.324.

of the politics but have also underpinned the claim that national-populism and the parties articulating it could drift from their democratic basis, forming a sort of electoral authoritarianism. Such is the fanaticism of the support.

The high-profile defeat of Donald Trump in the 2020 Presidential Election in the States is unlikely to instil any real confidence in the opponents of national-populism elsewhere. The heads of state in Hungary and India, Viktor Orbán and Narendra Modi, for example, remain well-embedded in their respective governments. As do many others across the world. The question remains then, why there have been so few successful challenges to national-populism in other states? The COVID-19 crisis was vital in the undermining of Trump, but it was hardly his first incidence of poor politicking. It took something extra-political, a global pandemic, to delegitimise a leader even impartial observers might have said was unfit for governance from the day of his inauguration. National-populism itself seems to have superseded politics and cannot be contested by any party with a more appealing policy platform. The whole form of democratic politics has mutated mirroring the mutation in nationalism itself. The first of these mutations came prior to the national-populists sweeping to success. The second has come, is coming, during the periods they spend in power.

The catalyst for the mutation of democratic electoral politics has been the fusing of a national-populist politics with a wider vocabulary of “culture war.” For an explanation of this phenomenon it’s necessary to return to 1989 which precipitated the final wave of widescale state-creation, and more specifically brought about Hungarian independence. 1989 was a year of widespread nationalist celebration with state creation the apex of any nationalist movement. An apex also implies a turning point however and while 1989 birthed or rebirthed states formerly in the Soviet sphere of influence, it

also instituted the decline of one of the two major global political ideologies – Communism. The decline of Communism fuelled innumerate predictions for the following decades but most accurate in their depiction of national-populism as it was to emerge decades later were the works of two American theorists, James Davison Hunter and Samuel Huntington. The pair published the first versions of their works two years apart, in 1991 and 1993 respectively and ‘Culture Wars’ and ‘The Clash of Civilisations’ have been made cornerstones of political theory.⁴⁰⁰ Both are flawed works but hold some utility when applied to the sensation we are attempting to describe. Huntington’s premise dismisses the claim of other theorists who wrote of the ‘decline of the nation state from the conflicting pulls of tribalism and globalism.’⁴⁰¹ Instead, he argued that economic modernisation and social change would ‘waken the nation state as a source of identity.’⁴⁰² In this, he was correct. The nation-state has become a source of identity and the politicisation of that identity has been the source of national-populist politics. To believe however that tribalism and globalism haven’t played a part in contributing to this politicisation is incorrect. They both operate in and on national identities.

Most controversially, Huntington thought that ‘the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilisations.’⁴⁰³ Huntington uses the Peace of Westphalia and the subsequent observation of Robert Roswell Palmer to support this assertion, that after 1793 ‘the wars of kings were over; the wars of

⁴⁰⁰ James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, (New York, 1991). Samuel P. Huntington, ‘The Clash of Civilisations?’ *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3, (Summer, 1993), pp.22-49.

⁴⁰¹ Huntington, ‘The Clash of Civilisations?’, p.22.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

peoples had begun.⁴⁰⁴ Reviewing the political in 2021 the conflicts are not between states and groups of civilisations, the conflicts are within states and moreover between each state's people. These pseudo-civil wars taking place in the political sphere and with an obsessive focus on the meaning of belonging to a certain state are as a result of national identities becoming 'far more fundamental than differences among political ideologies.'⁴⁰⁵ However, for all of Huntington's accurate assumptions, it must be reiterated that the essential premise is misguided. The internal fault-lines which have separated the two sides, national-populist and oppositional are not civilizational in their origin. Ironically, they are in some way a product of the policies Huntington's advice led to the US pursuing, though even this only explains one element of their coming about. They are also in part a result of a different tendency observed by Hunter. Viewed as a whole they are a product of the hegemonic liberal democratic system that filled the political vacuum left by capitalism's suppression of communism.

Liberalism, Hunter says was 'an attempt to provide a humane solution to the difficulties posed by the coexistence of a plurality of dissimilar communities in shared political order.'⁴⁰⁶ If we give that political order its most common limits then Hunter's words can be applied to the nation-state. Whilst Huntington looked at the United States as part of a Western coalition against other 'civilisations', Hunter limited his focus to what went on within the US. Though his conclusion was that there was a seething culture war, he first showed the extent to which there had been a long period of cultural

⁴⁰⁴ Robert Roswell Palmer, 'Frederick the Great, Guibert, Bülow: From Dynastic to National War', Felix Gilbert, Craig A. Gordon and Peter Paret, *Makers of Modern Strategy: from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, (Princeton, 1986), p.119.

⁴⁰⁵ Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilisations?', p.25.

⁴⁰⁶ James Davison Hunter, 'The Enduring Culture War' in James Davison Hunter, Alan Wolfe, E.J. Dionne Jr, Michael Cromartie (eds.) *Is There a Culture War?: A Dialogue on Values and American Public Life*, (Washington DC, 2006), p.10.

unification preceding this conflict. As a stand-out example he noted the arrest of a Rabbi, a Catholic priest and a Protestant minister on the frontline of the same protests. To see three religions who had formerly had fraught relations represented alongside each other was proof of the success of liberalism in absorbing difference. For Hunter this artefact of unity only masked a “new” axis of tension and conflict... that is fundamentally cultural in nature.’⁴⁰⁷ Hunter was writing about the emergence of a division not between religious identities in the US, but between those who held fundamentalist religious positions and those who assented to a more progressive and tolerant state. Therein lies one of the paradoxes of liberalism. The same political thrust that enabled a place for different groups in society, could be rallied against by those who now felt excluded by the inclusion of others.

Hunter, however, structured this conflict as occurring, when he restated it in 2007, ‘behind the politics... within the politics... beyond the politics...’ believing that these arguments defined policy positions of groups and individuals, without taking place in the political sphere.⁴⁰⁸ This form of cultural division is no longer behind, within or beyond politics – identity politics and national-populism in particular have made it become politics in its entirety. The culture war now seeks to define who belongs to the state and who does not. It enshrines Huntington’s theories of civilizational difference but shrinks them to take place within the state, the enemy is perceived to be inside. Huntington’s theory of difference is similar to that of the earliest theorists we considered back in the introduction – there is difference and it is fixed. Hunter’s theory of difference sits closer to the second group, that of Hume (at times) and Montesquieu,

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid, pp.15-16.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid, pp.13-14.

who believed there was difference but that this difference was only a result of contexts. Hunter believed after all that the Rabbi, the Priest and the Minister had been able to find common cause in the state despite their differing religious outlooks but that there could still exist within cultures the power to divide and fragment populations whilst talking about unity. This is a power far greater than that held by ideology. Particularly in an era of globalisation where difference exists within every state, not just the US, and particularly in an era when identity had been afforded such a prominent position as part of the liberal worldview.

When national-populism is mobilised as a bastion for one side of an internal culture war, the state majority identity matched to a party who will claim to fight for them against the invaders, it is no surprise it achieves such destructive results. In Hungary the enemy may be migrants, non-Hungarians, in India it can be those who share a religion that isn't Hinduism. The enemy is arbitrary, the conflict is key. A commonly accepted, though not always accurate, rule is that it is impossible to lose an election whilst you are fighting a war. When those wars can be framed as occurring internally by one party whilst being denied by the other half of the existing political spectrum who still utilise theories of class division or suggest policy programmes to address structural change, the contest is completely one-sided. The culture war is convincing to voters. As Hunter summarised 'even communities and populations that would prefer other options, and much greater reason and harmony in the process, find themselves divided.'⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid, p.30.

A. Nationalism as Cultural Unification?

Nationalism is a politics which requires deep roots in society. Ideological-based politics has always begun as a project of elites, financial, academic, cultural or otherwise. Ideology requires a shared view of the world, or at the lesser end of the scale a shared view of the workings of the state, from which coherent positions can be extrapolated. Nationalism often does not. Today nationalism is a very loose political category able to hold immediately contradictory positions, with repeated invocations of the name of the state doing a lot of the heavy lifting. We previously referenced Ernst Toller writing on the rise of the National-Socialism and the Nazis in Germany as coming at a time when the people were ‘tired of reason, tired of thought and reflection.’⁴¹⁰ Though I would hasten again to distance national-populism in its current form from the most destructive moment in modern politics, Toller’s analysis of the context in which they succeeded is instructive. There was crisis in Germany after the Treaty of Versailles. No policy platform seemed to have a solution to economic depression and a wide-range of foreign controls, the people, as he says, were tired with trying to engage with the spread of possible parties and candidates that proposed ways out of that vacuum. In their masses they chose a radical option. If we look to the formation of Germany as a different peak for German nationalism you also see widespread popular engagement. Nationalism in its early German context had also begun as a movement of the intellectual elite class but it was a project they shared effectively with the general population.

⁴¹⁰ Ernst Toller quoted in E.J. Dionne Jr. ‘The path to autocracy is all too familiar’, *The Washington Post*, (August 8th 2018), accessed at https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-path-to-autocracy-is-all-too-familiar/2018/08/08/6f3602f8-9b25-11e8-b60b-1c897f17e185_story.html

Nationalism with the aim of state-creation usually requires more popular buy-in than any movement at any other time. This was true for German unification and whilst the change in new nationalism was most pronounced in the previous chapter on the manipulation of the media, new and old nationalism overlap again in this sphere. We have examined already the way in which Friedrich Jahn carried the idea in public speeches and with his classes, going as far as to imitate the language used by the German peasantry, but he also employed the negative elements of nationalism. The distinction between Self and Other by the degradation of the Other, for example. Jahn worked within a wider context, one established by Johann Gottfried Herder at the beginning of the movement. Herder's German nationalism was inherently cultural and stemmed from his philosophical considerations on the causality for difference with his work making no reference to any ethnic German identity. For Herder, what distinguished the Germans was their language. This objectively differentiated them from the French or the English admittedly, but it was not the kind of intractable difference associated with nationalist identity theory today. The Germans were differentiated by their language yet for each and all people alike their own tongue was a 'precious individuality.'⁴¹¹ In his conception a shared language converted groups into homogeneous unicellular bodies, which he thought should then be celebrated in their own unique cultures. That way you would grow nationalism from a linguistic national identity. For the Germans this tongue was their 'Muttersprache' – mother-tongue, and it

⁴¹¹ Jürgen Trabant, 'Herder and Language' in Hans Adler and Wulf Koepke (eds.) *A Companion to the Works of Johann Gottfried Herder*, (Woodbridge, 2009), p.119.

influenced the way they conceived of the world, as Herder thought that the language we spoke in affected the way in which we were able to think.⁴¹²

Wulf Koepke termed this state Herder hoped the Germans would build as a ‘Kulturation,’ reaffirming the importance of cultural unity to the nationalist cause.⁴¹³ The princely states that pre-existed the German nation were loosely linked by language but for their previous history this had been insufficient to bond them together as a nation-state. For the Kulturation to succeed it had to mobilise across internal borders and crucially, through both the high and low cultures of the German states. In his attempts to craft a high cultural formation Herder aligned himself with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe who was termed a ‘would-be pupil’ of the philosopher-prophet.⁴¹⁴ Goethe’s appeal to Herder was that he did not imitate any of the antique classical stylings but rather wrote in a new fashion, one that could become a cultural keystone for the German state. Harold Bloom, the literary critic, lauded Goethe’s Walpurgis Night scene for its ‘radical originality’ and it was this originality that Herder found most important in the German Romantic movement aligned as it was with the ideal of a German state.⁴¹⁵ Goethe, fittingly, has maintained his place in the German cultural pantheon but his cultural contribution alone was not sufficiently cohesive. More wide-ranging and fundamental in its importance was the broadening of language, one of Herder’s central ideas. Christian Jansen notes how Herder redefined the word ‘volk’

⁴¹² Johann Gottfried Herder, ‘Fragments’ in Günter Arnold (ed.) *‘Werke in zehn Bänden’* (10 vols, Frankfurt, 1985-2000) vol 1. p.407. (English translation from Jürgen Trabant, ‘Herder and Language’, p.120.)

⁴¹³ Wulf Koepke, ‘Kulturation and its Authorization through Herder’ in Wulf Koepke (ed.) *‘Johann Gottfried Herder: Academic Disciplines and the Pursuit of Knowledge’*, (Columbia, 1996), p.177.

⁴¹⁴ Robert Clarke, *Herder: His Life and Thought*, (London, 1969), p.125

⁴¹⁵ Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*, (London, 1994), p.227.

from a derogatory term for the lower classes to ‘Volk’ meaning the entire German population across state boundaries⁴¹⁶. This new definition was inclusive and crucially changed the outlook of the German people, a people now united by ‘descent, language and character.’⁴¹⁷

There are more similarities between Herder’s construction of a unified people and that advocated by liberalism which Hunter shows as predating the current state of culture war in the US and elsewhere, than there are between Herderian nationalism and nationalism today. As a counterpoint though, Herder’s formation was vast and the range of movement to have drawn inspiration from his work are many. The word ‘Volk’ when translated to people provides a direct historical link to the populist rallying cries also directed at ‘the People’ heard in the past decade. And this is not the only legacy of the German nationalists on contemporary national-populism. Building an inclusive culture remained essential in certain states’ anti-imperial nationalist movements, particularly in those which hadn’t formerly existed as nations prior to foreign rule. In India there were two purposes for a cultural unification project. The states that had made up the subcontinent before the Raj were immensely diverse with differences in ethnic make-up, language and religion. Forming a national culture was required to keep those states unified in one nation-state when the British left. The second purpose then was to ensure that the British did actually leave. Whilst German cultural unification was rooted around a shared language, a concept Benedict Anderson also found important to state-building, in a landmass of India’s size there wasn’t enough similarity between the extremes to make this feasible. The linguist William O’Beeman contested Anderson’s

⁴¹⁶ Christian Jansen, ‘The Formation of German Nationalism 1740-1850’, p.242.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

example of language as a criterion for shared culture by listing off other manufactured languages in emerging nations that failed to become mother tongues.⁴¹⁸ It is of note that as of 2011 Hindi was only spoken as a first language by 44% of the Indian population.⁴¹⁹ Instead then, in India, religion was used as one part of the cultural unification - there were more Hindus than Hindi speakers. The Hindu religion was equipped with a huge array of myths and stories, some of which were referenced in Vinayak Savarkar's 'Hindutva' and around these stories some cultural cohesiveness could be built. This echoes the second transmitted legacy of the German nationalists through the work of the Brothers Grimm in pre-unification Germany who sought to gather folk tales as part of a popular culture-base, 'von Volksmund.'⁴²⁰ The Indian construction was similarly successful in its initial outcome of Independence, but the foundation of cultural unification based in religion was to have problematic repercussions when reinterpreted in later Indian nationalisms.

The Indian cultural construction was strong enough that it sustained a lengthy challenge to the British imperial power and remained united as a nation-state when they eventually withdrew. In 1937 the poem 'Vande Mataram' written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and published in 1882 was decided upon as the National song of India, a decision which forecasted issues for the genuine integration of the whole Indian people.⁴²¹ 'Vande Mataram' is a poem dedicated to the motherland, portrayed as a

⁴¹⁸ William O'Beeman, 'Benedict Anderson's Imagined Communities' in Jan-Ola Östman and Jef Verschueren (eds.) *Handbook of Pragmatics*, (Amsterdam, 2018), p.88.

⁴¹⁹ Office of the Registrar General, 'Paper 1 2018 – Language: India, States and Union Territories' *Census of India 2011*, (2018), p.15.

⁴²⁰ Timothy Baycroft and David Hopkins (eds.), *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe during the Long Nineteenth Century*, (Leiden, 2012), p.409.

⁴²¹ Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, 'Vande Mataram' in *Anandamath*, (1882).

goddess with Chatterjee writing that ‘all the children of the Motherland shall call her Mother in sincerity.’⁴²² As a secular state this deification of the land may seem innocuous, however for Indian Muslims, the song contradicts their monotheism. It was indicative of a subtle religious supremacy built into India’s unified culture, one which was to rear its head repeatedly. In 2016, a Muslim political leader in the country Asaduddin Owaisi refused the leader of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh’s proclamation that all Indians should chant ‘Bharat Mata Ki Jai’ – meaning victory to Mother India. Owaisi was the subject of huge political outcry with the members of one Hindu nationalist party claiming he should ‘go to Pakistan.’⁴²³ Hunter’s conception of the culture war stemmed first from a relatively successful integration of various religious groups in the US. When that integration never occurred in any meaningful way, as with Muslims in India – again a supposedly secular state, the cultural war can have even wider ranging political effects when mobilised by nationalism.

The next period of anti-imperialism then national-reconstruction, brought culture back to the fore as a means of proving difference. Many of the states freed from Soviet ideological imperialism in the early 90s pre-existed the Communist bloc. If they had rebelled during the Soviet period it was to reaffirm their difference within the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, as though princely states rejecting being yoked together, rather than welcoming it as they had in Germany and India. With governments nominally independent but all under pressure from the centre, political opposition was rare. Even after the collapse of the Union there was no guarantee of full independence

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Times of India Staff, ‘Asaduddin Owaisi won’t say “Bharat Mata Ki Jai”, Shiv Sena tells him “Go to Pakistan”’, *Times of India*, (March 15th 2016), accessed at <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Asaduddin-Owaisi-wont-say-Bharat-Mata-ki-Jai-Shiv-Sena-tells-him-Go-to-Pakistan/articleshow/51403423.cms>

from Moscow. The early 21st century witnessed a number of cultural revolutions, termed the “Colour Revolutions”, in states who had adopted a hybridised political system still under Russian sway. One of the aims of these revolutions was a shift towards the liberal democratic system advocated for most strongly by the US. Hungary however, completed the switch to the new system effectively and without the need for another attempt at revolution. Their first revolution had been disastrous. The attempted revolt of 1956 resulted in a show of Soviet strength and the eventual massacre of the rebels. With that painful history, as well as the resultant retreat into a Hungarian cultural identity as the only means of differentiating themselves from the broader Soviet bloc prior to independence, Hungary was perfectly posed to reject any legacy of Soviet influence.

Hungary’s rejection of Moscow and preference for liberal democracy as the antithesis to the Soviet system came without them having achieved any great overthrowal of the system of ideological imperialism. After the 1956 rebellion the Hungarian people had to wait until the dismantling of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the elections in the following year to assert politically the independent national culture that had been fostered throughout their dominion. Hungary has a long history of nationalism intimately linked to their cultural identity. Gábor Almási and Lav Šubarić’s edited volume details the entire history of the Kingdom of Hungary’s linguistic nationalism prior to Soviet control but the experience of being a colonial state (even if only ideologically) sharpened other nationalist constructions.⁴²⁴ For a state that had achieved genuine power as part of the Austro-Hungarian empire until 1918, their subsuming into

⁴²⁴ Gábor Almási and Lav Šubarić (eds.), *Latin at the Crossroads of Identity: The Evolution of Linguistic Nationalism in the Kingdom of Hungary*, (Leiden, 2015).

the Soviet bloc was agonising. Though an ideological system of imperialism, the embedding of Communism in Hungary was accompanied by a military invasion that meant their ‘civil population suffered huge losses – deportations, mass executions, rapes.’⁴²⁵ In the face of such abuses it is unsurprising that there was opposition amongst the general population. Comparing the work of the historian Stefano Bottoni with the contemporary commentator Ferenc A. Váli it is possible to see how this opposition found an outlet in cultural nationalism and how this cultural nationalism grew as Soviet domination continued.⁴²⁶ Bottoni, writing of the year 1944 when the Soviets were still introducing Communism to Hungary, found that it was difficult to embed precisely because of a ‘persistent lack of a “national” culture’ which could be subverted to the cause.⁴²⁷ Váli, publishing his thoughts on the Hungarian opposition, in 1961 just 17 years after the year Bottoni was historically observing, recognised that ‘the most powerful motivation leading to a rift within the Communist Party of Hungary was a conscious or unconscious national sentiment.’⁴²⁸ A conscious national sentiment is no doubt the cause of Orbán’s continued success today.

Prior to Váli’s publication and referenced in passing above, the Hungarian people did participate in an attempt to forcibly remove their Communist government and by extension the tendrils of Soviet control. This revolution on the 23rd October channelled a developing concept of the nation against empire and those who belonged to it against those viewed as the instruments of foreign imperialism. The revolution

⁴²⁵ Steffano Bottoni, ‘Sovietization and Nationalism in Hungary’ *The Historical Journal*, Vol.52, No.3 (2009), p.793.

⁴²⁶ Ibid and Váli, ‘Nationalism Versus Communism’.

⁴²⁷ Bottoni, ‘Sovietization and Nationalism in Hungary’, p.794.

⁴²⁸ Váli, ‘Nationalism Versus Communism’, p.493.

though was ultimately unsuccessful and resulted in many casualties. Shortly before this defeat István Bibó, Minister of State in the revolutionary government appealed on 4th November to the United Nations writing ‘the Hungarian people have already sacrificed enough of their blood to show the world their devotion to freedom and truth.... I appeal to the major powers and the United Nations to make a wise and courageous decision to protect the freedom of our subjugated Nation.’⁴²⁹ Bibó articulates movingly the concept of a Hungarian nation and Hungarian people and his words have fittingly been remembered. In 2015, parts were repeated by Katalin Bogyay the Hungarian ambassador to the UN in remembrance of the revolution and her speech ended by championing the ‘cultural diversity of the United Nations not as a burden but as a source of inspiration.’⁴³⁰ Six years on Hungary’s national culture may be secure enough to champion diversity in the UN, but it remains unwilling to do so at home. That culture was focused by the lesson learned by the revolutionaries - not to challenge the Soviet system head-on, not politically, not militarily, but instead to keep writing and talking about what it meant to be Hungarian. Returning to Váli and a quote we referenced as crucial in the Hungarian creation of the Other, writing of the time after the revolution he commented that ‘antagonism against the theory and practice of Communist principles was fostered by a resentment of adopting “foreign” ideas imposed by an alien power.’⁴³¹ In so doing, the ideological debate became a nationalist one. It is significant then that the 23rd October national holiday in Hungary in remembrance of the revolution serves a

⁴²⁹ István Bibó quoted in Ambassador Katalin Bogyay’s speech ‘On the Occasion of the Commemoration of the 23rd October, 1956 Revolution’, *Permanent Mission of Hungary: United Nations New York*, (20th October 2015), accessed at <https://un-newyork.mfa.gov.hu/news/speech-by-he-ambassador-katalin-bogyay-on-the-occasion-of-the-commemoration-of-the-23-october-1956-revolution>

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Váli, ‘Nationalism Versus Communism’, p.494.

nationalist purpose today not in memorialising the revolution's success in repelling the invaders but as a cultural symbol around which to rally to drum up nationalist fervour.

The free elections of 1990 were preceded by another significant event. Buoyed by the weakening of Soviet power, Hungary witnessed the reburial of one of the lead revolutionaries from 1956, Imre Nagy. Karl Benziger's analysis of this occasion saw it as having 'dramatically symbolised how Hungarian memory culture reasserted its demand for sovereignty' and in so doing swept aside 'the thin veneer of legitimacy of the Soviet-backed regime.'⁴³² As expected then, the burgeoning national culture and assertion of difference resulted in a huge victory for the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), a centre-right party with a nationalist vision, and resulted in the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) finishing a distant fourth-place, narrowly ahead of Fidesz led by a young Orbán. The next election did not go quite as much to plan. In 1994 MSZP won a majority after the welcoming of a liberal democratic system and the opening of Hungary to the West initially resulted in economic stagnation. It was then that Orbán's Fidesz shifted from a left-of-centre party to one firmly within the conservative bloc. Since that threat of regression back into a socialist yet democratic state, Fidesz have ingrained anti-socialism into their politics as though they too are rebelling against the old Soviet empire. This has been achieved predominantly by reiterating their nationalist positions. Bottonoi showed that under Soviet rule there was no support from Moscow or drive from Budapest for 'Hungarian territorial claims against Romania in Northern Transylvania.'⁴³³ It is unsurprising then that Orbán has resuscitated those claims and in

⁴³² Karl P. Benziger, 'The Funeral of Imre Nagy: Contested History and the Power of Memory Culture' *History and Memory*, Vol.12, No.2. (Fall/Winter 2000), p.142.

⁴³³ Bottoni, 'Sovietization and Nationalism in Hungary', p.795.

doing so distanced his rule from that auspicious period of foreign domination symbolically, whilst in practice advocating a chief nationalist tenet of land reclamation.

Perhaps a clearer example of Fidesz's anti-communism pertains to the dead revolutionary, Nagy. Though Nagy was a figurehead of opposition to Soviet rule, he was himself a communist. He shared their ideological outlook believing only that it needed to be implemented 'through the institutions authentic to Hungarian society.'⁴³⁴ As with the case of Miklos Horthy discussed previously, this historical figure's politics poses a problem for Orbán's nationalist government. On the one hand, Nagy is a revered hero of the anti-imperial struggle, but on the other hand he shares the ideological perspective that empire espoused and that Fidesz now distance themselves from. Shaun Walker's article of 2019 elaborates on this challenging duality the party face.⁴³⁵ Walker recounted of the commemoration of Nagy in 2019, that Orbán chose not to attend but did privately visit Nagy's grave. It is also noted, with more weight, that in 2018 a statue of Nagy was removed from its place near parliament to a quieter location half a mile away. Much can be made of this gesture. Orbán has physically moved communism away from government, without destroying the image of a nationalist icon.

Fidesz are determined to repeatedly show themselves as non-communist because being nationalist in Hungary has most recently and most impactfully meant being anti-communist. The logic is sound but there is a flaw in this process. The decline of Communism as a political ideology did not just take place in Hungary. Globally only very few states can claim to embody a Communistic conception of the state, so

⁴³⁴ Benziger, 'The Funeral of Imre Nagy: Contested History and the Power of Memory Culture', p.147.

⁴³⁵ Shaun Walker, 'Hungarians remember Imre Nagy, hero of '56, as Orban tightens grip' *The Guardian*, (16th June 2019), accessed at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/16/hungarians-remember-imre-nagy-hero-of-56-as-orban-tightens-grip>

nowadays to be anti-communist does not mean anything much at all. Taking the negative position does not flesh out the content of your politics as it did during the Cold War. Hungary under Orbán has fused a meaningless negation of Communism with the negation of Others and raising of Self we know to be one of the strategies of nationalism. Váli, who had a favourable opinion of Hungarian opposition to the Soviets in 1961 wrote that ‘the significant role of nationalism as an antitoxin against Communism in the Soviet satellite area is beyond all dispute,’ but he did not imagine that nationalism would decades later be the guiding political perspective.⁴³⁶ In fact, he warned against it. His study closes with the lines ‘this writer does not suggest that a national ideology could serve as a panacea against all international problems of our age. Far from this, nationalism, in its crudest forms, has frequently revealed itself as a source of international evils.’⁴³⁷ One of Váli’s contemporaries, Zbigniew K Brezinski furthered this argument, claiming that nationalism was ‘the most basic, even the most primitive, modern ideology,’ an accusation never levelled at Communism by any of its enemies.⁴³⁸ Having considered the cultural roots of Indian and Hungarian nationalism during their anti-imperial struggles and comparing those to the nationalist politics that exist in both states today we might agree with Váli that nationalism is no panacea, but go further than Brezinski and question whether nationalism in its new guise has adapted so far as to scarcely be classified as an ideology at all.

⁴³⁶ Váli, ‘Nationalism Versus Communism’, p.499.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Zbigniew K. Brezinski, *The Soviet Bloc*, (Cambridge Massachusetts, 1960), pp.384-386.

B. Cultural Capital for an Empty Politics

If the claim is to be sustained that nationalism has no real ideological content, in that it has no clear position of logic when faced with varying political issues, the question remains - how has it embedded as a successful electoral politics across vastly different states? In this, nationalism's history has its own part to play. It is undeniable that the national solidarity Hungarians managed to maintain whilst under a foreign system enabled them to build a stable state in the aftermath of that foreign power's withdrawal. Ideologically they did not compete with Communism as enforced by Soviet tanks, when they did it led to disaster as in 1956. Instead they retreated into their own identity and shared culture and when the USSR collapsed Hungary was immediately able to adapt that culture smoothly to an entirely different political system, one with free elections, as there was nothing in their identity that opposed this means of structuring the political. It is worth restating however that they did not overturn the Soviet system with a politics of their own. Srdja Popovic's history of, and blueprint for, revolution records another example of opposition to Communist hegemony though this time in Poland.⁴³⁹ Popovic makes pains to note that when residents of the small Polish town of Świdnik wanted to show their disapproval of Moscow they did so by engaging in a cultural and symbolic ploy. In February 1982, every evening at 7:30 when the government-approved news came on, activists left their houses and 'took their television sets for a walk.'⁴⁴⁰ This form of non-political resistance was subtle enough to avoid repercussions, whilst making a clear enough statement of their unwillingness to submit. Whilst under foreign dominion this form of socio-cultural civil disobedience is

⁴³⁹ Srdja Popovic with Matthew Miller, 'Blueprint for Revolution', (New York, 2015).

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid, p.80.

entirely justifiable. Once you guarantee your independence from ideological imperialism, it is insufficient. It ignores the crucial work to be done establishing what exactly your politics is.

When Peter Pomerantsev wrote about the downfall of the USSR as a turning point in information warfare, he also pointed out the quandary faced by many of the ex-Soviet states that ‘being anti-communist turned out to be not much of a political identity in itself.’⁴⁴¹ Hungary may well at first have been what Nicole Lugosi termed a ‘forerunner of democratic performance,’ but hosting free elections does not guarantee productive government.⁴⁴² Lugosi though, who is critical of Orbán’s government today, explained away the early tendency for ‘populism and nationalism... in Hungary’s post-communist government,’ reasoning that they were consequences of ‘late regime change compared to countries that transitioned earlier in the democratisation wave.’⁴⁴³ To some extent, she is right. We referred earlier to the 1994 election which resulted in a swing back towards the MSVP caused by the stilted shift to a capitalist and liberal outlook a context removed from many states transition to independence. However, crucially, Hungary has not moved away from the early populist and nationalist tendencies drawn out by Lugosi. Whilst parties on different sides of the left-right divide won power in the first 20 years of Hungarian free elections, since 2010 Orbán has halted those oscillations. The ‘national resentment’ that originally emerged under foreign rule, is now used to fuel Fidesz’s consolidation of power through a national-populist mode.

⁴⁴¹ Pomerantsev, *This is Not Propaganda*, p.253.

⁴⁴² Lugosi, ‘Radical right framing of social policy in Hungary: between nationalism and populism’, p.211.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid*, p.216.

In India it is also possible to identify a consistently seething nationalism, linked to the first successful expressions of anti-imperial sentiment, which has now enabled the Bharatiya Janata Party to construct a solid Hindu nationalist base. After Independence Mahatma Gandhi distanced himself from power, a member of the unregistered castes, B.R Ambedkar, was chosen to write the constitution and the state enshrined secular democracy at the heart of its political formation. There were communal incidents, but after Partition these were not overly regular. Liberalism and the language of democracy and inclusion, one with roots in the German conceptions of the nation-state as well as the work of other Enlightenment theorists, consistently advocated the importance of a unified people held together by an inclusive culture. It wasn't without its challenges, the period of Emergency under Indira Gandhi and the state apparatus being deployed against the Indian Sikh population was catastrophic, but for the most part India steered clear of internal nationalist expression of the type now common under the BJP. Setting themselves against their international Other, Pakistan, no doubt contributed to this relative stability and is one of the few examples of Othering contributing positively to statecraft. VD Savarkar Hindutva's theorist was almost forgotten. That is no longer the case. Perhaps the prolonged and unresolved Kashmir issue meant conflict with India's Muslims was assured and the construction of an internal Other simply required the confidence of an upstart party. Either way, Kashmir has spearheaded the BJP's rampant Islamophobic rhetoric and more concerningly that rhetoric has emboldened those who would bring new life to communal violence in all of India's states. Orbán's Hungary and Modi's India play host to cultural wars exacerbated by the state, rather than by rebellious populations seeking independence. This is the innovation of modern nationalism. This is political conflict in the civilizational style of Huntington, but with

the internal focus of Hunter. Though it will result in very few manifest achievements or improvements in the lives of the countries' subjects, it repeatedly proves convincing at the polls.

C. The Global Roots of Nationalism

Original nationalism was a predominantly European trend with roots in the European Enlightenment period. New nationalism, on the other hand, may not have re-emerged with such force were it not for the broader global trends brought about by the decline of Communism and the ubiquitous outreach of capitalism allied politically with liberalism. In Hungary, liberalism and capitalism filled the vacuum left by communism. Even democratic socialism was on the decline, with the 1994 election victory alone not proving any meaningful reverse of that trend. Whilst Hungary welcomed the new economic freedoms offered by independence they remained cautious of immediate integration into Europe. Beneath the surface it is not hard to imagine this wariness was intimately linked to their most recent experience with foreign ideologies and economic systems. Whilst working through the electoral structure then there remained an intensive focus on Hungary prior to conquest, which itself entrenched a racialised idea of the nation-state, one where identity was far more important than whatever political fad had been settled on by process of elimination. Viewed today the democratic political system and capitalist economic system look to have grown deep-roots in the state infrastructure of Hungary and others of the former Soviet bloc. Globally they are present in an overwhelming majority of nation-states. Just viewing the interlinked systems of democracy and capitalism still fails to provide a comprehensive account of the content of those systems however or of quirks it is possible for each nation to impart

on their system. This was one of the oversights of the end of the Cold War. Establishing replica systems across the world pays little heed to the turns those democracies might go on to take. It could be argued that this oversight was deliberate. As long as capitalism is maintained and there is at least the illusion of free and fair elections, most external observers will not trouble themselves with the consequences.

There were those who warned of what the worst excesses possible within a democratic system could look like though. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, himself part of the American political establishment, wrote in 1993 of the dangers that might arise when ‘large formal structures broke up and ideology lost its hold.’⁴⁴⁴ As he put it ‘people would revert to more primal identities.’⁴⁴⁵ The democratic system as a structure does not have the hold that Communism did. Liberalism as a replacement politics, by its nature, is unable to demand adherence in the same way. As globalisation occurred and states came into closer and more consistent contact, as new markets opened up and the crossing of borders became second-nature, these devices which were crucial to the Western exportation of the capitalist-democratic model also began to increase tensions within states. For those countries previously colonies, whose political realisation had in the first place come via a staunch and widely shared nationalism, even we can imagine for Herder who praised each tongue’s difference but thought of German as his, it became increasingly difficult to stomach being one nation of many. Defending that identity of yours had very little firm footing though when there was such an incentive to join the world economic system.

⁴⁴⁴ Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Pandaemonium: Ethnicity in international Politics*, (Oxford, 1993), p.v.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

Capitalism is even further entrenched than liberal democracy. Rather than a politico-cultural norm to be followed or subverted, it has achieved hegemonic status in large part because of its effect. There are very few realistic alternatives. The expansion of capitalism, shown by Immanuel Wallerstein in his analysis of the decline of the Ottoman Empire, was almost irresistible, particularly as it was led by what were then the strongest imperial powers.⁴⁴⁶ Capitalism did not expand naturally however, it was carried from state to state by active agents, merchants, bankers – inextricably tangled with a process that is now referred to as globalisation. The OECD analysis of globalisation in 2010 found amongst its key characteristics to be ‘international trade and foreign direct investment’ which it is argued are ‘still the two key channels of economic integration across borders.’⁴⁴⁷ Yet this report continues and claims that this process is accelerating as the channels’ ‘scale and complexity has substantially increased over the past decades.’⁴⁴⁸ The debate about the ethics of capitalism is one without resolution but it is a fairly non-controversial claim to suggest that for the majority of people in the majority of states, their circumstances improved once it took hold. That made it hard to resist. In addition, unlike communism, capitalism is an economic system alone. It does not mandate a political structure. Whilst many took to liberal democracy on the coattails of capitalism, there are plenty of nation-states today who participate in global trade and operate a capitalist economy at home but do not hold free elections. In the states where liberal democracy did take hold its pairing with capitalism had two crucial political effects. The first was the decline of class-based movements, those which would pose a

⁴⁴⁶ Immanuel Wallerstein, ‘The Ottoman Empire and the Capitalist World-Economy: Some Questions for Research’ *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, Vol. 2, No. 3, (Winter, 1979), pp.389-398.

⁴⁴⁷ OECD, *Measuring Globalisation: OECD Economic Globalisation Indicators 2010*, (2010), p.8.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

threat to capitalist economics by the content of their politics. The second, was that observed by Chantal Mouffe the populist theorist - the construction of a 'politics of consensus' which sought to ensure stability at the cost of removing any radical expressions.⁴⁴⁹ Both of these trends, side-notes to capitalist expansion for the most part, have a crucial relevance to the subsequent success of national-populism.

At times the development of national-populism from within liberal democracy has been obvious. The journalist Sam Rajappa said of Subramanian Swamy, a famous BJP leader, that whilst trying to advance his political goals through a liberal ideology 'Swamy found no takers, even well into the 1990s. Then he found that if you took the Hindu cause, any number of people will rally behind you.'⁴⁵⁰ In this instance then the mutation was catalysed by choice, but this hasn't always been the case. For most states and most parties, the degradation of liberal norms has been part of a drawn-out process with many peaks and troughs. That degradation has been closely linked to events occurring across the world and is itself a response to a perceived modern imperialism – that of American outreach in the post-Cold War period. There was always to be an unwritten dynamic in the fact that capitalism and liberalism were the chosen modes of ex-empires as well as ex-democracies. On the success of the export of the nation-state formula Wimmer and Feinstein remind us that by 2000 of all independent states 'over 95 percent were nation-states.' In the same period, 'less than 50 percent of independent states were democracies.' Objectively, as of 2017, that figure had increased to around

⁴⁴⁹ Mouffe and Errejón, (Owen Jones ed.) *Iñigo Errejón in conversation with Chantal Mouffe: Podemos in the Name of the People*, p.64.

⁴⁵⁰ Sam Rajappa quoted in Samanth Subramaniam, 'The Outlier: The Inscrutable Politics of Subramaniam Swamy' *The Caravan*, (1st May 2012), accessed at <https://caravanmagazine.in/reportage/outlier>

57 percent of states.⁴⁵¹ Just as the nation-state system spread in part through imperialism and in part through mimicry, capitalism spread by the expansion of global trade. Liberal democracy spread in its slipstream following closely behind and being managed in part by the creation of international bodies such as the United Nations which adopted moral positions on governance in foreign states. For a politics based notionally around freedom there was a remarkable amount of pressure applied.

Bassam Tibi wrote of the liberal democratic drive to subsume all ideologies in his article on the incompatibility of Islam with liberal democratic principles. Tibi does not actually deem the two models mutually exclusive but rather argues that the attempts of ‘Western scholars and officials... to take an inclusionary approach toward it...’ have been ‘fraught with unfortunate circumstances.’⁴⁵² Tibi’s own conclusion is that with marginal adjustments to religious expression Islam and democracy could flourish, yet his criticism made him controversial in the academic community. Daring to suggest that Islam might not be conducive to political freedom was read by some as Islamophobic, but below the surface there was a subtler concern that this might imply that liberal democracy was not the omnibenevolent solution it had long been considered to be. As Huntington had predicted then there had become a form of civilizational conflict with liberal democracy on one side as a structure of a new imperialism. There were undeniably other causes for the much-maligned American involvement across the Middle East but part of the justification for intervention used the language of liberalism

⁴⁵¹ Drew Desilver, ‘Despite Global Concerns About Democracy More than Half of Countries Are Democratic’ *Pew Research Center*, (14th May 2019) accessed at <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/05/14/more-than-half-of-countries-are-democratic/>

⁴⁵² Bassam Tibi, ‘Islamist Parties and Democracy: Why They Can’t be Democratic’ *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 19, No. 3, (July 2008), p.43.

and civilizational war. On the invasion of Iraq George Bush's address to the Iraqis was that US troops 'will help you build a new Iraq that is prosperous and free.'⁴⁵³ That is to say, more capitalist and more democratic. Observers of Trump's last stand have recognised the ways a toolkit that combined lethal force with the language of liberalism honed in Iraq and other foreign missions for the agents of democracy, has returned to be used against the American people. A more universal issue is that the meaning of terms such as democracy is now unfixed. Laura Guazzone and Daniela Pioppi's joint edited volume 'The Arab State and Neo-Liberal Globalisation' includes case studies of four different Arab states and proves the double-edged nature of Western "support."⁴⁵⁴ In each of the four cases, capitalist profit or gestures in the direction of liberalism, or some combination of the two, have led to a securing of increased authority and wealth for an elite class at the cost of their people. What freedom is that? In the US the war they embarked on against radical Islamists has been carried back within their borders to re-emerge as Islamophobia a consistent element in contemporary political rhetoric. As even the liberal ideology has become too complicated, the Islamic identity it raised in its shadow has infiltrated the American democratic mind as one of many Others to mobilise against. That identity politics of us against them returns to mobilise again.

Traditionally, liberalism as a broadly centrist ideology was always to be under threat from the Right and the Left. That however was what sustained it. Liberalism represented moderation. Now liberalism is being challenged by a politics that is nominally Right-wing, that can turn against entire groups of people for what they

⁴⁵³ George Bush speech on Iraq March 17th 2003, recorded in full by *The New York Times*, (March 18th 2003), accessed at <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/18/politics/text-bushs-speech-on-iraq.html>

⁴⁵⁴ Laura Guazzone and Daniela Pioppi (eds.), *The Arab State and Neo-Liberal Globalization: The Restructuring of State Power in the Middle East*, (Reading, 2009).

believe or who they are, but which operates in an entirely different style. It can adopt the economic positions of the centre, mirror the language of the centre and be articulated by quickly-becoming established politicians in positions of power. Karl Sharro, reporting on the Middle East argued that in the aftermath of prolonged conflict and mismanaged foreign intervention ‘political ideas like liberalism and socialism are in crisis.’⁴⁵⁵ He also pointed out that this crisis reaches beyond the limits of a distant region on which the West once projected their values and in enforcing them stripped out their meaning. It has followed the soldiers and the bankers home. Once liberalism and socialism are both dug out, the ground is fertile for identity politics which channels the most unshakeable idea – that of the self - through elections. Nationalism has risen to the apex of identity politics because it is an identity of the majority and when it is combined with populism the victories won have proven a damaging counter to liberal democracy.

D. Backlash

National-populism as an electoral trend emerged as a response to the context that preceded it. Within the disparate German states of the 18th century, nationalism was theorised as a nation-state building logic. In Hungary and India, as elsewhere nowadays, national-populism is part of a backlash against the established liberal order. The example of Bassam Tibi has demonstrated that the more universal a system seeks to be, the more internal contradictions are built into it and the more those can be exploited by destructive movements. There grow to be so many exceptions to the rules that the rules themselves are bent beyond recognition.

⁴⁵⁵ Karl Sharro, ‘The Retreat from Universalism in the Middle East and the World: Intellectual Shifts and the Demise of Inclusive Identities’ *The Century Foundation*, (April 10th 2019), p.2.

Liberalism as it had emerged in the states that pioneered the ideology always appeared to be stable, more stable actually than some of the states it had been exported to. A home-grown ideology is likely to be under less stress in the conditions it developed in than when it is stretched to fit a vastly differing context, often against the will of the people there. Since the end of the Second World War there was a relative vacuum of successful left-or-right wing movements within Western democracies to challenge liberalism. Francis Fukuyama termed this period the ‘end of history.’⁴⁵⁶ Though a much-misunderstood phrase, Fukuyama’s provided explanation was that with liberalism we may have reached the ‘end point of mankind’s ideological evolution.’ The internal pressures of multiple culture wars in multiple states however seems to be threatening the stability of liberalism without necessarily threatening it as an ideology, the tensions are occurring within the mode rather than against it. Thus far national-populism does not provide any radically different way of considering the political. Rather its adherents attempt to shrink the remit of established democracy by restricting those who are qualified to participate in a nation’s politics to a given identity. This is unlikely to be the end-point of the national-populist surge however. Prior nationalisms have worked to achieve a goal. The Hungarian case, we showed, demonstrates that electoral national-populism can pre-empt a degradation of the structures in which liberalism has flourished. All this can be achieved whilst leaving the ideology notionally intact.

Without liberalism’s contradictions being exposed in global missteps such as the war in Iraq, stability in the democratic systems may well have been maintained. Ultimately however, war in the name of freedom on the behalf of those who haven’t

⁴⁵⁶ Francis Fukuyama, ‘The End of History’, *The National Interest*, No.16, (Summer 1989), pp.3-18.

specifically invited your forces made it clear that liberal political culture had been hollowed out to hold whichever meaning the establishment decided it would have, and little more than that. The ingrained arrogance of liberal thinkers and parties of the centre rendered them unable to correct this reverse: established orders are often resistant to change or even to identifying the need to adapt. Benjamin Moffitt's study of 'liberal illiberalism' makes clear the ease with which groups inspired in part by those external contradictions could threaten the establishment.⁴⁵⁷ They were able to 'openly borrow, ape and utilise the language if not the policies of liberalism,' and there was further fuel for this assault in liberalism's obsession with the importance of sensitive wording.⁴⁵⁸ All whilst their actual mantras were devoid of any meaningful content. The cliched status of oft-repeated adages such as "political correctness" became jokes that contributed to a cultural, and often generational, divide. The decline in the value of words that had once been vital identifiers during the Cold War had academic roots in the predominantly left-wing scholarly work of students of semiotics and linguistics. Liberalism was experiencing the brunt of postmodernism become real, espoused by upstart politicians rather than academics and in so doing, the national-populism of that new breed had subverted the importance language had held for German nationalism. Now language's crucial role was in its ambiguity.

E. From Righteous Triumph to New Nationalism

This liberal weakness was open to exploitation from either side of the centre. Its exposure was based on left-wing observations at least as much as those from the right.

⁴⁵⁷ Benjamin Moffitt, 'Liberal Illiberalism? The Reshaping of the Contemporary Populist Radical Right in Northern Europe' *Politics and Governance*, Vol. 5, No. 4, (2017), pp.112-122.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p.118.

Despite this equivalence the only real source of coherent opposition has come from a coalition of right-wing parties and national-populists. This is proven by our case studies. Orbán and Modi's governments are built on fairly-won majorities in their respective parliaments. Put most simply, they secured more votes than their opponents. The bases they have built to compete electorally are strong, partially due to the success of their own mobilisations and partially due to the failings of the left. There are only a finite number of voters within any state and the left no longer draw enough of them in the states where national-populists have secured power. In part, it can be argued that the leftist platform has been undermined by its proximity to some of the central tenets of liberalism. Ernesto Laclau's earlier work on populism refers anecdotally to the loss of support those parties who become a part of the established system, when previously their defining feature has been their radicalism, can be struck by. Laclau's example refers to the French Communist Party who he describes as having been 'the voice of those who were excluded from the system.'⁴⁵⁹ After the decisive collapse of Communism he argues that the new Socialist party were 'not very different from the Gaullists,' in the centre.⁴⁶⁰ All of a sudden, those voters who had chosen the Communists for their position outside the system, no longer found them attractive and many made the seemingly incomprehensible political leap to support the National Front. Ideologically this was as far removed from the French Communist perspective as is imaginable, but it demonstrates that it wasn't the ideology alone that had attracted them but the radicalism.

⁴⁵⁹ Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, p.88.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

This has been a longer-term process for the left throughout Europe. For these parties which do have some presence in most states parliaments their decline has been reinforced by the co-opting of some of their positions by the centre. Pertinently, throughout the left's storied history there has been a focus on aiding minority groups in their quest for political equality. This was a necessary role for the left to take and has been one of the legacies of their involvement in politics, but as we have shown in the preceding discussion, inclusion is now considered a facet of liberalism rather than a left-wing position. Whilst the left cannot expect many plaudits for this important intervention, on the reverse side they have received criticism evidenced by a loss of connection with their traditional voting base. The quest for the inclusion of minority populations was unpopular with certain groups of working-class voters as they were deprioritised and at times even rebuked for a perceived ignorance or unwillingness to accept integration. Retrospectively, it is clear that this leftist crusade was a privileged one. You require a certain level of stability and security to set about improving the lot of other marginalised groups, and that safety and security was not held by working-class voters in the same way it was by the academic cadres of left-wing politics. This distance between the two elements of the left has proved costly. Ultimately it was reflective of a brewing counter-identity politics. One which sought its own outlet.

In the argument made about the effectiveness of the Self and Other paradigm for winning support we drew attention to the value of an elite and working-class alliance. This is a case where an analysis of the result, the construction of this cross-class alliance, obscures the means of achieving that result. It is a leftist paradigm to view the political sphere through a lens of capital-based class. By their own means of analysis the left must recognise that in the past decade they have continuously polled poorly in

the exact areas they would expect to succeed. In a politics that has become increasingly about identity, class appears to be an unattractive identity to rally support behind. Instead, the right and the national-populists have secured supporters from the working classes without their platform specifically addressing that characteristic. Politically this is a masterstroke. The national-populists, for example, have recognised that the national identity does not discriminate by class or societal status. This means it has a state-wide appeal and is attractive for individuals to identify with as it ensures each supporter feels part of a wider and more inclusive whole. The left didn't lose out because there are other more appealing ideologies. Instead their current defeated position is one brought about by an overreliance on ideology alone. The left is no longer considered radical, it doesn't represent outsider perspectives, nor has it proved able to mobilise those traditionally considered its core supporters.

The right, on the other hand, benefitted from grassroots movements that primed voters for this new style of politics. They were quicker to realise that liberalism would be required to allow any opposition that obeys the democratic precedent and quicker to realise that they could frame their positions in a way that it would be hypocritical for centrists to reject. Given these constraints, national-populism flourished as the most successful of these upstart movements, bringing together as it did a centuries old ideology with the innovations of modern political thought, but in doing so took on a new position that was post-ideological and post-right-wing. Its roots remain within that side of the political spectrum, but it has evolved and those roots no longer define it. As a comparison, the civil rights movements of the 20th century were not left-wing per se, they were more closely aligned to the left than the right, but they operated in a different sphere and were arguable fighting for something more fundamental – the question of

who is included in politics? National-populism fights the same fight from the opposite side. It is a fresh and image-conscious politics but it began, fittingly, with the wave of conservative identity movements – the earliest of which Hunter observed in his study, namely the anti-abortion movement. From this origin grew the alt-right, then from that comes national-populism as a state doctrine of a leader like Orbán or Modi. It is a long path but one proceeded along quickly, all taking place in the last few decades.

The emergence of Conservative civil society movements seems paradoxical and taken in isolation, would be so. In actuality these movements emerged as a reaction to the employ of identity politics in progressive causes and knowingly or unknowingly channelled that same identity impulse towards conservative causes. In the edited volume entitled ‘The Mobilisation of Conservative Civil Society’ case studies are drawn together with the inclusion of at least one from each inhabited continent showing the universality of this development.⁴⁶¹ Richard Youngs’ introduction acknowledges that initially the civil society sector within democracies was ‘naturally animated by organisations mobilising for progressive causes.’⁴⁶² With the volume being published in 2018 however, Youngs argues that over the preceding decade ‘conservative forms of civic activism have been multiplying and gaining traction.’⁴⁶³ There is a clear difference when conservative groups operate in this model. Conservative positions are by their nature less radical and more widely supported than the progressive causes which require a shifting in the attitudes of the majority. Operationalising an identity position that already has widespread support is a direct inversion of the norm and often poses a threat

⁴⁶¹ Richard Youngs (ed.), *The Mobilization of Conservative Civil Society*, (Washington DC, 2018).

⁴⁶² *Ibid*, p.7.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid*.

to minority identity groups. It is unsurprising then that amongst the characteristics Youngs recognises for conservative civil society groups are the espousing of ‘strong national identities’ or ‘exclusionary ethnic identities.’⁴⁶⁴ Furthermore, the threat of these groups is only exacerbated by what Youngs identifies as the willingness of conservative civil society to be ‘closely associated with illiberal political actors’ and work in unison as ‘part of the well-chronicled pushback against Western liberal democratic norms.’⁴⁶⁵

Conservative civil society mobilisation in Youngs’ phrasing sounds as though it operates exclusively within Western democracies. In fact, wherever there is inclusive democratic structures conservative civil society movements of various scales should be expected to emerge. This is liberalism’s shadow. In India we have already provided a rough overview of the RSS, the social wing of the Hindu nationalist BJP. The high percentage of religious believers in India renders that state particularly conducive to civil society mobilisation as there is often an overlap between conservative ideals and religious positions. This is the benefit of a national culture that is closely linked to a pre-existing religious ethos. The overlap, for example, between positions now deemed discriminatory by sex and the roles of men and women according to religious authorities is advocated for in Małgorzata Mikołajczak and Janina Pietrzak article ‘Ambivalent Sexism and Religion: Connected through Values.’⁴⁶⁶ The authors argue that the association between religion and patriarchal attitudes ‘might be direct – religious authorities might explicitly teach stereotypical views of the genders’ but can

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid, p.8.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid, p.7.

⁴⁶⁶ Małgorzata Mikołajczak and Janina Pietrzak, ‘Ambivalent Sexism and Religion: Connected through Values’, *Sex Roles* Vol.70, Nos. 9–10, (2014), pp.387-399.

also run through a ‘more indirect connection, the result of broader values incorporated into religious teachings.’⁴⁶⁷ It is possible in India and other states with a high religiosity, to hold retrograde views on the role of women in society and to find justification for that in religious texts. Of the BJP, Vijayan writes that they have a ‘male chauvinistic patriarchal mindset’ which aligns with a ‘contempt for progressive values and... contempt for political opposition and dissenting voices.’⁴⁶⁸ In practice this sort of cultural mobilisation attracts followers by the positions it holds and supports, but this can be further tailored to improve outreach. Vijayan shows that the BJP were also able to build a base of adherents by their community work on disaster-management and relief projects. In this way their roots spread further through the Indian state and they operate in a way that ‘blur the line between civil and political society.’⁴⁶⁹ Viewed cynically, the entire purpose of this style of civil mobilisation is that it channels the goodwill it builds straight into electoral support for the party. This is testament to the effectiveness of right-wing utilisations of this style of base-building. Whilst blurring the shift from civil to political mobilisation these movements were also able to blur a shift in what constituted appropriate behaviour in politics. As the BJP’s ‘provocative public campaigns’ resulted in ‘attacks against minorities and rationalists, attacks against women resisting cast and religious hegemony... and other acts of violence and intimidation,’ they began to achieve supra-political effects.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid, p.387.

⁴⁶⁸ Vijayan MJ, ‘The Ascent of Conservative Civil Society in India’ Richard Youngs (ed.), *The Mobilization of Conservative Civil Society*, (Washington DC, 2018), p.20.

⁴⁶⁹ Youngs, *The Mobilization of Conservative Civil Society*, p.10.

⁴⁷⁰ Vijayan MJ, ‘The Ascent of Conservative Civil Society in India’, p.20.

In India, the BJP were able to translate religious conservatism into a political platform that could oppose liberalising politics. They drew supporters with conscious efforts to provide aid to communities allied with the RSS' glorification of the Hindu identity of the majority. In Europe and the US religious conservatism rarely had the same mobilising effect. However, with the decline of the centre-left and the constantly developing tapestry of identity movements, the right were able to create their own bespoke formation which channelled the earlier social capital of conservative civil society movements into political movements. Known as the "Alt-Right," from alternative-right, on the face of things they have little in common with the BJP-RSS combination in India. Their movement is more closely linked to the subversion of liberal norms however, as they grew by using the language of equality and identity preservation dictated from semi-legitimate platforms to first push back and then to actually reverse the trend of progressivism. The alt-right has not achieved the status of the current wave of national-populists but they no doubt influenced the way national-populists conceive of political outreach. If the BJP have achieved supra-political effects from their methods of recruitment, the alt-right have adopted supra-political means of recruitment.

When these groups first emerged many surface-level observations were made about their movement. Elke Gaugele actually wrote an article on the 'cultural war on fashion' being waged by the alt-right.⁴⁷¹ Despite sounding as though it's a simplistic aesthetic commentary, Gaugele's article is crucial in recognising two developments. The first is the importance afforded to cultural war as a mode of framing by the alt-

⁴⁷¹ Elke Gaugele, 'The New Obscurity in Style. Alt-right Faction, Populist Normalization, and the Cultural War on Fashion from the Far Right', *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 23, No. 6, (2019), pp.711-731.

right, a paradigm which guarantees that those who support the movement will take intractable positions. The second, is adherents of the movement's non-trivial focus on their appearance. As a means of drawing in supporters, identity politics is aided by that identity appearing attractive.

The perspective of Gaugele's article is corroborated by journalistic accounts of the alt-right. A 2018 BBC article on Martin Sellner leads with him described as dressed 'in his T-shirt, skinny jeans and sharply styled haircut.'⁴⁷² Sellner, we are informed, 'is the European far right's new poster boy.' It is only later in the article that the author lets us know Sellner 'can normally be found staring into the lens of a mobile phone – but... it's typically to deliver a monologue about the evils of multiculturalism and how Muslims want to take over Europe.'⁴⁷³ Elsewhere the media's representation of the style and normalcy of these figures can be even more jarring. In a Sunday Times article from 2019, by which point the scale of the alt-right's successful mobilisations were already clear to the mainstream press, Lucy Brown is described as '28, with blond hair that she occasionally streaks neon', 'witty and articulate' and living 'in a charming period house in a village outside Cambridge.'⁴⁷⁴ All of which, we are told, 'makes her swastika-embazoned necklaces and bracelet all the more incongruous.'⁴⁷⁵ Really the incongruity in this article comes from the soft media picture of an educated adult wearing symbols associated with Nazi Germany and it is undeniable that there is some media

⁴⁷² Simon Cox and Anna Meisel, 'Martin Sellner: The new face of the far right in Europe' *BBC News*, (20 September 2018), accessed at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/stories-45572411>

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Lara Whyte, 'The women flying the flag for Generation Identity and far-right politics' *The Times*, (28th September 2019), accessed at <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-women-flying-the-flag-for-generation-identity-and-far-right-politics-7dbp6c9kv>

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

responsibility for the growth of the alt-right. Sellner, Brown and others were aided in becoming fashionable. Besides the unfortunate reality of media complicity however, it is significant that this was ever a viable path for the movement. It wouldn't appear to have any immediate political results, yet when combined with an analysis of the substance of their politics the link is clearer. Phillip Gray's overview of the alt-right posits that their European incarnations broadly champion what the Russian right-wing philosopher Aleksander Dugin called 'ethnos', as their basis for identity.⁴⁷⁶ 'Ethnos' is defined by Gray as a combination chiefly made up of 'history, experience, culture.'⁴⁷⁷ History and its manipulation we have already established is a vital cog in the national-populist construction, cultural unity provides much of the political logic. With the championing of an effectively framed cultural and identity appeal, the alt-right are able to make their followers believe that they belong. In the microcosm, with their own personal styling, their leaders are able to make followers out of people who desire to belong.

This is certainly a contemporary innovation for right-wing politics which has formerly paid very little due to the perceived attractiveness of their positions. Old ideological politics would suggest that it is only the content that is important. There was traditionally little interest in converting leftists into rightists or vice versa. Both groups may have tried to mobilise from the centre, but rarely ever before was such a concerted push made to mimic popular haircuts and styles of jeans in order to make one's politics more accessible. The alt-right's personal styling would be irrelevant though, were it not

⁴⁷⁶ Phillip Gray, 'The Alt-Right: An Introduction (Part I)', *Oxford Research Group*, (19th December 2018), accessed at https://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/blog/the-alt-right-an-introduction-part-i?fbclid=IwAR3a5Zwy_PtjtSZz4AaX-bgNgm4bDGqVjR-jPyuGzhuBQnVQcjhExqwyjNU

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

for their deliberate ambiguity of language and flexibility on positions. In this they anticipated national-populism even more closely. It is the pay-off of strong media literacy and an acknowledgement that certain tenets that might be held dear by party hardliners aren't digestible to most audiences. They may be diluting their messages, but if doing so secures massive support it is an important step towards winning, then consolidating, any actual power. This flexibility in part sustains our argument that politics previously scattered across the spectrum is emptying out and that fixed ideological positions appear to be an outdated way of competing in a congested electoral sphere.

Whilst the alt-right's rise has been well-recorded, they are not the face of national-populism today. Many of their iterations have been subsumed by larger more powerful movement, to which they have provided an important impetus and innovative outlook. A typical strategy of centrist parties is to draw on the arguments of more extreme parties in order to void them of support by co-optation. The existence of the alt-right enable the centre-right to integrate some of the arguments made by more radical groups, integrating this style of discourse as well as their more noticeably successful method of outreach. For a nationalist party, the absorption of the alt-right is simple. The nation serves as an 'empty signifier', in the words of Laclau, under which conservative civil society movements', alt-right groups' opposition to liberalism and any existing xenophobia in the state population can be aligned. In Hungary, Orbán anticipated the alt-right and so rather than actually subsuming those groups, he adopted their style without having to make any concessions. Lugosi confirms this practice, and we have already shown its importance for media spin, contending that Fidesz use a 'rightist

discourse’ but that it is ‘articulated through frames of equality and rights.’⁴⁷⁸ This is successful in achieving what could be imagined to be one of Orbán’s goals, ‘that the roots and very real barriers of racism remain unaddressed.’⁴⁷⁹ To analyse that politics from the outside, Orbán is undermining the left and centre by borrowing their language when addressing a problem they have identified, but is aligning the outcome with the aim of parties on the right of the spectrum. Nominally, by the stretching from either side, this might suggest Fidesz are a centrist party - but this is incorrect. They are nowhere on the spectrum, they are purely national-populist. Fidesz put up posters in Hungarian cities targeted at migrants proclaiming ‘if you come to Hungary, you have to respect our culture!’⁴⁸⁰ The language of respect and culture again is notionally of the left, the message though, clear to those on the right, is one of anti-immigration.

The content of this analysis displays the inversion of the old form of cultural unification advocated by the German nation-builders. Orbán’s Fidesz have harnessed an existing source of pride in a Hungarian cultural identity to their political mission and operationalise it as an internal cultural war. Modi’s BJP have shackled the Hindu religious identity to their party and prove equally willing to render any political conflict, a cultural conflict. From these fundamental positions they prove willing to flex and bend when needs be, to avoid coherent and sustained challenge. For conservative identities and “traditionalist” identities which had previously fought cultural wars below politics, there is now a political voice in national-populism. It is a politics of such simplicity much more closely aligned to *who* it is rather than *what* it is. It is a politics

⁴⁷⁸ Lugosi, ‘Radical right framing of social policy in Hungary: between nationalism and populism’, p.210.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ Amnesty International, *Fenced Out: Hungary’s Violations of the Rights of Refugees and Migrants*, (London, 2015), p.6.

that does better the more dramatic and divisive the issue being debated is, rather than a politics build around a coherent political plan for the future. Therein lies its electoral strength but actual danger.

F. New Nationalism's Paradoxical Globalism

Nationalism has managed to reproduce itself as electoral national-populism and the national-populism has managed to reproduce itself seamlessly in multiple different states, beyond Hungary and India. The two sides of a cultural war paradigm can be tailored to any context as there are always progressive elements to reject and in an interconnected state-system there are sufficient global effects to drive voters into accepting the war described to them by their national-populists. The Hungarian case is representative of a wider European anti-immigrant trend which has fuelled other nationalist movements. It is darkly ironic that the same “liberalising” wars in the Middle East that exposed the contradictions in established Western politics, have also contributed to humanitarian crises and refugee exoduses against which national-populists can buttress their politics of fear. The Amnesty report of 2015 into Hungary's violations of the rights of refugees and migrants entitled ‘Fenced Out’ actually opens with one quote from Orbán and one quote from Hiba Almashhadani an Iraqi refugee, proving the interconnectedness of two realities, the failure of liberalism abroad and the rejection of liberalism's principles when applied to people entering Europe and fleeing those failings.⁴⁸¹ Despite, or in fact because anti-immigration proves one of the most successful messages of national-populism, the existence of refugees, migrants and Others are key to the consolidation of national-populist power. A politics empty of

⁴⁸¹ Ibid, p.4.

ideology and based heavily on identity as a trigger for emotive response requires a crisis of this kind to continue to be able to mobilise. Selling the crisis suffered by others as a crisis for the masses in your state is one of the cruellest but most effective nuances of national-populism then. Immigration is a particularly evocative example, but other global crises have also contributed to the simultaneous decline of liberalism and rise of nationalism. In some cases, economic decline has been the primary motivation as in Greece where the Golden Dawn party of radical nationalists rose to success in the aftermath of the Euro crisis. The conclusion then is that whenever and wherever the established order is failing to provide the level of support required by their people, national-populism can rapidly model itself as a solution. In part, this is reflective of the demonstrable fact that the majority population of a state are the first to feel the effects of a downturn and the swiftest to seek a political change that can insulate them against those effects.

Externally to Europe, nationalism has been viewed as one of ‘the machinations of western Imperialism’ in the words of Efraim and Inari Karsh.⁴⁸² Their article on Arab nationalism noted the paranoia of Arab nationalist theorists who believed the West deliberately grew local nationalisms to prevent the unity of the Arab world. There is some strength to this argument historically, but nationalism has changed considerably since the death of the Arab nationalist movement in the late 1960s. With creeping globalisation and the demonstrated willingness of nationalists the world over to replicate proven strategies and effective modes of framing, nationalists from the non-West are just as likely to influence those from the West as vice-versa. For evidence of this we only need refer back to Benjamin Netanyahu and Viktor Orbán’s close

⁴⁸² Efraim and Inari Karsh, ‘Reflections on Arab Nationalism’ in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 32, No.4, (October, 1996), p.367.

relationship. Where once nationalism would have rendered states sceptical of all other states it is now possible to witness an alignment of those states whose governments have risen to power domestically on a nationalist platform. They know that their nationalism will not lead to conflicts over territory or international arms races, it only provides them with the political capital required to take whatever positions they need to maintain power at home. India and Hungary were chosen as apposite case studies initially because of their prior colonial/pseudo-colonial statuses, which arguably render their current nationalist formations even more surprising. Partha Chatterjee wrote once that ‘even our imaginations must remain forever colonised,’ as he critiqued Western theorists for their conflation of great independence movements in Asia and Africa with the minor political nationalism movements in the West, but with an eye on the BJP today reintroducing an exclusivist definition of belonging, then using the old imperial strategy of divide-and-rule to consolidate power and endanger India’s Muslim population her words have come true in a way he could never have predicted.⁴⁸³ Opposing foreign intervention or reversing imperial rule should be judged as vastly different to the opposition against minority populations that Orbán and Modi now espouse. They are different, and of course it is unfair to solely critique ex-colonies who “should know better.” The rise of national-populism has in many ways been a great global leveller, it does not discriminate by prior status.

Florian Bieber’s study of nationalism drawn from evidence gathered up until 2015 was inconclusive about its rise in popularity.⁴⁸⁴ Bieber was content from his

⁴⁸³ Partha Chatterjee, ‘Whose Imagined Community’ *Economic Policy*, Vol. 6, Nos. 12-13, (1991), p.521.

⁴⁸⁴ Florian Bieber, ‘Is Nationalism on the Rise? Assessing Global Trends’, *Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 17, No. 5, (2018), pp.519-540.

research to write that ‘there has been a rise of nationalist parties and candidates in Europe, as well as some comparable trends in the United States and individual countries elsewhere, such as Japan and India.’⁴⁸⁵ On Europe Bieber is correct. A BBC analysis of nationalism in Europe in May 2019 showed nationalists polling at over 10% in 14 European states with the acknowledgement that these same parties often rank much higher in European Parliament elections.⁴⁸⁶ The BBC study also excludes mainstream parties, such as the Conservatives in the UK, who have taken a decisive shift towards national-populism under Boris Johnson. It only records parties whose entire platform is nationalist. With a glance at the bigger picture, Bieber’s inclusion of the United States, Japan and India mean the examples are disparate enough to show nationalism’s rise isn’t a European phenomenon alone. From my own research, and with the restriction of only including one manifestation per continent without any stretch in the definition, could be added Brazil under Jair Bolsonaro, Egypt under Abdel-Fateh Sisi, Russia under Vladimir Putin and the Philippines under Rodrigo Duterte. Global nationalism sounds paradoxical, but it is the result of global challenges to established liberal orders. In each of those states, and others beside them, parties have identified or manufactured crises then posed their identity-based simplistic model as the solution.

G. A Rising Tide

Liberalism having lost its allure is no great tragedy. In the states where it has been overturned voters are not to be blamed for becoming disenchanted with the established order. In most of those polities both the centre-left and the centre-right have

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid, p.529.

⁴⁸⁶ BBC, ‘Europe and right-wing nationalism: A country-by-country guide’, *BBC New*, (13th November 2019), accessed at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-36130006>

been considered failures by the exact people they are designed to serve. When the centre dismissed in favour of national-populists it is acceptable to mourn for the population without lionising the old order. National-populism represents a different ‘end’ to man’s ideological innovation, it represents the scrap-heaping of politics as it was ever intended to problem-solve and construct. Even the nationalism of states seeking independence had a clear aim and persistently pursued it, national-populism harbours no territorial aspirations and aims for nothing more than is already held. It champions identity masquerading as ideology. If allowed to continue unchecked this will prove a retardant for integration, for peace within states and potentially for democratic institutions – the last vestige of the liberal era.

National-populism is also an illustrative example of the worst possible combination of a caustic politics with rabidly loyal supporters who will ensure that destruction is wreaked rapidly and decisively. As John A. Hall and G. John Ikenberry wrote, this loyalty ‘shown to a state, and more particularly a nation state, tends to be much more powerful than that shown towards more obscure transnational ideologies such as Marxism and liberalism.’⁴⁸⁷ The power of that loyalty ensures that reversal will occur much more quickly than establishing did. Particularly as nationalism is by its definition an identity of the majority, politicised. There will always be a raft of supporters for this mode for as long as there are majorities of one people within one state, or until nationalism is proved an ineffectual mode of governance. With this latter point there is hope, but it is muted as nationalism’s shifting positions and trump-card in the invocation of the name of the state renders it adverse to debate or compromise. For this, the framing of the nationalist culture-war as above politics is key. The

⁴⁸⁷ John A. Hall and Gilford John Ikenberry, ‘Introduction: The State and Social Theory’ *The State*, (Milton Keynes, 1989), pp.9-10.

battlegrounds it takes are rarely budgetary, or housing policy, grounded political subjects are avoided as on those their leaders can be proved wrong. Instead they hone in on issues where there is no clear right or wrong, no solid research base, but which are perfectly suited to the taking and holding of a dramatized stance.

A fine example of this shift in the playing of politics is the Brexit debate in the UK. From the start, the structure of the decision taking place as a referendum removed the sway of traditional party politics. There were Labour politicians for Brexit and those against it, there were Conservatives against Brexit and those who supported it. Ultimately, the decisive involvement was that of Nigel Farage whose anti-immigrant rhetoric and proven lies about European membership managed to sway the vote in favour of European exit. The economic implications, educatory effects, trading issues etcetera were all left out of the conversation. It was a decision based on a single issue, immigration. After the vote the House of Commons recorded the turnout to have been 72.2%, the highest since the 1950 election and comparable only with the turnout for the Scottish Independence referendum in 2014.⁴⁸⁸ This new style of depoliticised politics clearly mobilised huge numbers. A more applicable but linked example within Europe is burgeoning Euro-scepticism as a part of domestic politics. It is through an analysis of anti-European rhetoric that the careful posing of new nationalism as a panacea becomes most clear. It is almost a representative case in the benefits of espousing national-populism as a democratic party.

The European Union serves as a pre-built establishment Other to rally against once nationalist parties win domestic power yet can also be linked with ease to immigrants posed as an internal Other via the Union's one-size-fits-all immigration

⁴⁸⁸ Elise Uberoi, 'European Union Referendum', *House of Commons Library*, (29th June 2016), p.3.

policy. In this way opposition to the EU as a power impinging on state sovereignty and opposition to migrants as those who don't belong, unifies a high and low construction of the Self. There is a second duality to Euroscepticism in that it is often 'janus-faced' to borrow from Theda Skocpol.⁴⁸⁹ Skocpol's 'janus-faced' categorisation refers to the way in which states are able to respond externally and internally in two different and even contradictory modes. For Euro-sceptic parties they are often much louder in their critiques of the EU when they campaign domestically and are assured of the popularity of their positions, then meeker if and when they attend the European parliament.

Richard Heinisch, Duncan McDonnell and Annika Werner, term this position 'equivocal euroscepticism' and argue that it enables Populist Radical Right (PRR) parties to 'have their cake and eat it.'⁴⁹⁰

Across Europe from around 2014 most PRR parties, broadly synonymous with national-populists, 'increased the strength and salience of their criticisms of European integration and supranational elites.'⁴⁹¹ This polled well at home but was unsustainable when they started to win power and so they shifted to a 'strategic use of combining positions and rhetoric in order to create overall impressions of ambivalence' with the result that they could allow 'voters as well as possible allies to pick and choose the message they want to hear.'⁴⁹² The authors admit that this requires more research but the 'perceived gaps between rhetoric and position' are both typical for equivocal

⁴⁸⁹ Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*, (Cambridge, 1979).

⁴⁹⁰ Reinhard Heinisch, Duncan McDonnell and Annika Werner, 'Equivocal Euroscepticism: How Populist Radical Right Parties Can Have Their EU Cake and Eat It' *Journal of Common Market Studies*, (2020), pp.1-17.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid*, p.1.

⁴⁹² *Ibid*, p.14.

eurosceptics and a fine summary of the thin line trodden by many national-populists in other policy areas too.⁴⁹³ The marked difference between the bold way these parties present when speaking to their supporters and how they communicate with external bodies is indicative of new nationalism's shrinking of focus to prioritise their internal reputation over their external. It is also indicative of their confidence that they will not be held accountable for their ever-changing positions. For as long as they can rally simultaneously against powerful external bodies and weak internal minorities, all under the same nationalist umbrella, these parties are assured of fairly consistent success electorally. Moreover, the boldness of their rhetoric often shields them from critiques around their actual policy.

H. Distraction and Deception

National-populists are shielded further by the supporting of these non-positions with “non-evidence.” We have written already about the falsification of history and how that has fed into a logic which enables the dismissing of inconvenient reporting as fake news, but national-populists have also proven willing to engage willingly with fringe conspiracy theories. On the one hand this helps to co-opt radical elements and maintain the support of those questioning the establishment, even whilst they are in power. Furthermore, it also ensures there is always an enemy against whom can be mobilised but an enemy that is hard to pin down and therefore justifies reactionary politics rather than grand sweeping plans. Peter Plenta's 2020 article shows the deployment of one active conspiracy theory, against George Soros, as a ‘political instrument’ in Slovakia

⁴⁹³ Ibid, p.3.

as well as Hungary.⁴⁹⁴ Soros has been made a representative of an ambiguous global conspiracy and though the accusations against him in both central European states are wild and unfounded, they succeed in narrowing the minds of voters and sowing seeds of suspicion. In James Scott's earlier article from 2018 which considers Hungarian politics as an 'anti-politics of the European Union' he shows the deployment of stories about Soros in direct relation to Euro-scepticism as a means of strengthening Orbán's messages against immigration by the inclusion of melodramatic conspiracies.⁴⁹⁵ Here conspiracy has a direct aim, to guarantee support for Orbán's anti-EU position, but there is a secondary more insidious result. Just as the prevalence of the Fake News tag increased attacks on journalists and decreased trust in reportage, conspiracy theories increase paranoia and make a population increasingly reliant on whoever is sharing the "truth" with them. Peter Pomerantsev showed that after too long spent in internet chatrooms that peddle these sorts of stories 'the idea that one lives in a world full of conspiracies becomes the world view itself.'⁴⁹⁶ Conspiracy may not have been an effective support for ideological-based politics then, though it had halcyon days during the Cold War, but it has proven very effective in supporting a politics based on identity. Whatever doubt may arise about the forces acting on the state, out of the control of the party in power, there is safety in the solidarity of those who hold a shared national culture and are willing to fight for it.

⁴⁹⁴ Peter Plenta, 'Conspiracy theories as a political instrument: utilization of anti-Soros narratives in Central Europe' *Contemporary Politics*, Vol. 26, No. 5, (2020), p.513.

⁴⁹⁵ James W. Scott, 'Hungarian Border Politics as an Anti-Politics of the European Union' *Geopolitics*, Vol. 25, No. 3, pp.658-677.

⁴⁹⁶ Pomerantsev, *This is Not Propaganda*, p.68.

The fomenting of conspiracy theories has been effective for national-populists as it undermines other means of conceiving of state politics. The willingness to engage with such ridiculous conjectures for the sake of political capital can also be diagnosed as indicative of the insecurity of these parties. If there was a belief in the ability of the national-populist platform to resolve issues faced by the state, they would rely on the record of their successes to secure re-election, rather than concocted fears of external involvement. The fact is that identity politics is remarkably successful at rallying support but completely unsuited to the rigours of state governance. Coronavirus is a stand-out example of this, even though the global ability to deal with the pandemic has itself been poor rendering the failures of national-populists easily dismissed by their supporters in that context. In India there is a second less easily-dismissed example however with the governmental response to the persistence of the farmers' protests providing a body of evidence pertaining to their inability to deal with any political conflict that doesn't fit the religious divide established through their prism of cultural war. Even so, that doesn't mean there haven't been attempts to recast the farmers as the Other. A, since deleted, India Today headline from January 2021 noted that for one of the farmers' leaders Rakesh Tikait, 'more than 10 youths from Amritsar Punjab (near to Pakistan border) reached Ghazipur border to stand in support.'⁴⁹⁷ The inclusion of 'near to Pakistan' has a clear intention. Though the majority of the farmers in the region are Sikh, the reference to India's neighbouring state is an attempt to mobilise anti-Pakistan,

⁴⁹⁷ Headline referenced in Janata Ka Reporter Staff, "'Shame on this Journalism': India Today faces condemnation after it sensationalises headline by describing farmers from Amritsar village as being from Pakistan border" *Janata Ka Reporter*, (January 30th 2021), accessed at <https://www.jantakareporter.com/entertainment/shame-on-this-journalism-india-today-faces-condemnation-after-it-sensationalises-headline-by-describing-farmers-from-amritsar-village-as-people-from-pakistan-border/330107/>

and by extension pro-Hindu, sentiment against the farmers despite the fact Sikhism has often been considered by the BJP an Indian religion, as opposed to Islam.

The ploy was largely unsuccessful as governmental missteps around the protests have received enough coverage that this lens is insufficient an explanation, but it is indicative of the single-mode approach of the government and their supporters. Without the deafening calls to identity they have no real solutions. It is vital to distract from this to consolidate power and the distracting nature of identity politics in India is becoming increasingly obvious. The primary goal is to maintain the illusion that everything is better under the Hindu nationalists. The auxiliary to this is to keep the culture war bubbling so that the divide between the two sides, Self and Other, remains unbridgeable. When Donald Trump visited India as President of the US, a wall was built in the city of Ahmedabad, officials stated to assuage ‘security concerns.’⁴⁹⁸ The reality was that the slums hidden behind the wall were deemed unseemly. This is the identity politics solution, but again it’s no solution at all. What goes on behind the wall continues to go on whether or not it is seen. Structural problems of this scale cannot be pinned on minorities. There is a second strand to this strategy too and if the first works in part to divert external attention, the second is focused on the domestic population.

Aside from distracting from existing issues India has also witnessed the creation of new issues to draw the eye. There have been frequent campaigns to shut down cinemas and picket actresses who star in films deemed unfavourable to Hindus, for example. This sort of “activism” keeps the crowd righteous and angry, more righteous and more angry than they would be when facing up to real change, it reaffirms the need

⁴⁹⁸ Associated Press, ‘Wall hastily built ahead of Trump visit in India criticized as “hiding poor people”’, *The Guardian*, (18th February 2020), accessed at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/18/trump-india-visit-wall-criticism-hiding-poor-people>

for the BJP. Immigration, the primary nationalist rallying point is another perfect distractor. It remains a complicated issue for all states, there are economic arguments as well as social, but for nationalist parties it is easy to take a stand on. In a global IPSOS study of 2017 based on the responses of 17,903 adults in 24 different countries when asked whether immigration has had a positive or negative effect on their state only 21% of respondents believed immigrants had a ‘very positive/fairly positive’ impact.⁴⁹⁹ National-populists may be devoid of solution-based approaches to the minutiae of politics but if they can keep contesting these sort of headline issues, reinforced by constant cultural flare-ups, they can be relatively assured of their ability to secure voting bases. They recognise that electoral support is the one fundamental required to win power and hold it.

In 2019, speaking to the European Chamber and for once making his position very clear Orbán said in response to criticisms over Hungary’s treatment of migrants that ‘Hungary’s decisions are made by voters at parliamentary elections’ and he rebuked the EU for believing ‘nothing less than that Hungary is not reliable enough to decide what is in its interests.’⁵⁰⁰ Orbán is deliberately fuelling a narrative, but at the core his point is fair. In 2019 Fidesz polled at 49% and they were followed by Jobbik, who are even more vocally nationalist, on 19%. In the liberal democratic system that these parties currently still operate within it might be unpleasant when those termed racists and xenophobes win, but if they secure a majority they have to be allowed to govern. Rather than mock incredulity, effective ways of conquering national-populism at the

⁴⁹⁹ IPSOS, *Global Views on Immigration and the Refugee Crisis*, (September 2017), p.4.

⁵⁰⁰ Elizabeth Zerofsky, ‘Viktor Orbán’s Far-Right Vision for Europe’, *The New Yorker*, (14th January 2019), accessed at <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/01/14/viktor-orbans-far-right-vision-for-europe>

polls need to be worked up. Currently the visceral and emotive politics they espouse is attractive to many, it distracts from most issues but draws glaring attention to others, it helps people understand politics and feel a part of it. All this rising off the back of a relatively sterile liberal culture which stifled expression. Culture wars are dangerous for the losers, but for victors they can prove reinvigorating.

I. National-populism Today

For national-populism to rise, a perfect storm is required of electoral candidates advocating national-populist positions, those to be deemed acceptable by the incumbent political order, then those candidates to receive the required number of votes to achieve real power within a state. The strategies national-populists have employed and the wide range of successful case studies it is now possible for them to draw on guarantees there will be those who utilise the platform. In Greek mythology there was reference to the Symplegades, two moving rocks that could crush ships that attempted to pass between them and on along the Bosphorus. National-populists face a similar political challenge. Their ambiguity of language and flexibility of position enables them to navigate the first threat of disbaring by the established order, yet simultaneously conventional wisdom would suggest that a politics that is so hard to pin down should struggle to win adherents which might lead to it being crushed by the second rock – in this metaphor that is a lack of support. Frequently the ship of nationalism has emerged triumphant from both of these contradictory but dependant challenges. Behind the rocks of liberal democracy lies a different spectre though, that of capitalism. Ultimately, the success of this ideologically empty politics in sweeping to electoral victories in different states on

different continents is crucially connected to the nature of national-populism's relationship with the economic order. It is this which has kept the ship safe.

There are inconclusive studies into whether increasing nationalist attitudes are directly correlated with increasing rates of inequality within a state. According to these arguments, national-populist success is often considered to be a result of protest voting from those failing to benefit from the system. Whilst an effective journalistic cliché, the protest vote template is a simplistic analysis of what is already a predominantly simplistic politics. It is undeniable that rising inequality does have a part to play but the dynamic is more complicated than first suggested. An Oxfam report into the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic termed Coronavirus the 'inequality virus,' putting forward the claim that the way the virus was handled would bring into focus the lived reality of inequality.⁵⁰¹ They noted that within nine months the fortunes of the top 1,000 billionaires returned to pre-pandemic highs whilst for the world's poorest that same recovery would take more than a decade.⁵⁰² On a national scale, 87% of the economists surveyed believed coronavirus would lead to an 'increase or a major increase on income inequality in their country.'⁵⁰³ Again, the gap between rich and poor has been rising for decades prior to the virus but rarely has it been so recognisable. Given that in some states national-populists were in power before this inequality continued to rise is it likely that they will now become the victims of protest votes? We would imagine not. For former President Trump, under whose rule the distance separating America's

⁵⁰¹ Esmé Berkhout, Nick Galasso, Max Lawson, Pablo Andrés Rivero Morales, et al. *The Inequality Virus: Oxfam Briefing Paper*, (Oxford, 2021).

⁵⁰² *Ibid*, pp.11-12.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid*, p.14.

highest and lowest income brackets increased by nearly 9 per cent, it wasn't on the basis of his lack of performance against income inequality that he lost the election.⁵⁰⁴ Voters will be influenced in their decisions by their personal circumstances, including their economic situation, but it is misguided to think that the average participant in an election is poring over these sorts of statistics.

If socio-economic pressures alone dictated voting patterns, parties that offered radically different economic policy platforms would be expected to secure significantly greater support. That is rarely the case. Had Bernie Sanders won the Democratic nomination with his considerably further left-of-centre outlook there is a good chance Trump would have beaten him. In India over 20 parties stood for seats in the 2019 election and included amongst them were two Communist parties – why didn't their wealth equality position triumph over the BJP? The answer Cas Mudde provided for the success of populist parties can be reapplied here. Voters want 'more leadership and less participation.'⁵⁰⁵ Rather than having to evaluate the specificities of each party's economic program most will side with whoever's messaging appeals the most – and for it to appeal it must be easy to understand. With that being said, national-populism then also presents the safest alternative to the established order. The relationship between nationalism and capitalism in India, which has lessons that are applicable more broadly, is made clear in Ravinder Kaur's book which considers the fusion of 'capitalist dreams' with 'nationalist designs' in India.⁵⁰⁶ The nation-state system itself supports capitalist

⁵⁰⁴ Income Inequality Data Tables, *United States Census Bureau*, accessed at <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/income-inequality/data/data-tables.html>

⁵⁰⁵ Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', p.558.

⁵⁰⁶ Ravinder Kaur, *Brand New Nation: Capitalist Dreams and Nationalist Designs in Twenty-First-Century India*, (Stanford, 2020).

world markets and the distinction between what is preached by national-populists at home and their relative tranquillity in global democracy ensures few shake-ups of markets' stability. In most states then the capitalist economy is sacrosanct and to put it on the table for negotiation approaches blasphemy. This rules out most of the radical left as an option. Their positions are scarcely engaged with if they do manage to achieve a place on the ballot. However, the far-left does win its supporters where they speak out about the injustices of the system. National-populists also have to address these injustices but are limited as they cannot threaten the capitalist order. Here the primary tenets of the politics come into play again. Not ideology, but identity.

There is a historicity to the claim of identity that wraps the national-populist framing of issues in a guise that is immediately appealing. It feels comforting without being complicated. The identity framework allows notional reference to injustices suffered by voting populations but instead of offering solutions, offers scapegoats. Of former colonies, Vivek Chibber referenced the tendency of capitalism to act more insidiously, writing that the categories of the West were unsuitable for any analysis of post-colonial states because Western capital 'leaves untouched older forms of power.'⁵⁰⁷ The implication is that systems with integrated inequalities, if they mesh well with capitalist economics, will be preserved. In ex-colonies then Chibber thought that 'politics will be waged in religious language and around religious issue' with the 'dominant axis' typically 'community/ethnicity, not individual or class interests.'⁵⁰⁸ Chibber has been proven correct in his conclusion, though his remit can be broadened

⁵⁰⁷ Vivek Chibber, 'Postcolonial Theory and Subaltern Studies' in *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital*, (London, 2013), p.15.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid*, pp.15-16.

beyond ex-colonies alone. The dominant axis worldwide is turning, and has turned, to be identity issues. Now though, the reasoning is now different. Rather than capital leaving untouched the old forms of power, those old forms of power espoused through identity politics proactively leave capital untouched. In doing so identity politics achieves the sweet spot of setting itself aside from the system without threatening it. To return to the phrasing of Cas Mudde, the politicians who champion this style ‘speak in the name of the “oppressed people”’ they claim that ‘they want to emancipate them by making them aware of their oppression.’⁵⁰⁹ However, crucially, these claims are nominal. ‘They do not want to change their values or their “way of life.”’⁵¹⁰ Instead they offer their voters strawmen on which to direct their anger and doomed-to-failure policies on which to focus their energy.

As Mudde suggests, nothing really changes for the majority once they elect national-populists. There are no changes to economic status, in truth none were promised. The same historical nature of the identity they have politicised means that any vast changes to their “way of life” would be anachronistic. They are protected from having to provide a vision for the future by the traditionalist and conservative framework they operate in. When considering most political debates voting for these parties might well be thought of as an empty political act. It is crucial to remember though that Mudde’s quote refers to populists and populism there is an aim - the diversion of expression so it is directed against an elite. The development of national-populism is that it broadens the definition of elite to include already oppressed minorities and the significance of the election of its adherents is that the lives of those

⁵⁰⁹ Mudde, ‘The Populist Zeitgeist’, p.546.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

minorities are inevitably negatively affected. National-populism does not threaten the political system, nor the economic system, it doesn't threaten especially the political elite or even the economic elite, but it diverts the often-righteous anger of those who have suffered at the hand of structures and systems against those who have even less and have suffered even more. Is this a flaw in the nation-state structure expertly exploited by one political mode? Well, national-populism has already passed the test of morality required to enter into democracy and now it has the power to attempt to actually restructure participation.

J. Consolidating a Coup

If the accepted definition of politics is that its role is to serve all of its citizens (from the Greek 'polites'), the national-populist obsession with belonging seems to fall at that first hurdle. An important element of Hunter's defence to critics of his culture-war theory was that the increasing importance of the divisive paradigm 'has everything to do with the institutions and elites that provide leadership to these factions.'⁵¹¹

Nationalism and populism both serve elites, new elites maybe but elites nonetheless, in directing popular discontent away from themselves and against minorities and out-of-favour symbols of old power – as we showed in the chapter on leadership. At the surface-level, this neuters violent expression. In India the BJP have directed ire in part against the Muslim population but have also challenged the old bastion of political power, the Indian National Congress. The INC was a flawed party with inbuilt nepotistic tendencies meaning that the current party president, Sonia Gandhi, is the wife

⁵¹¹ Hunter, 'The Enduring Culture War, p.27.

of a former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, succeeds her own son Rahul Gandhi as party leader, and is related by marriage to two further Prime Ministers of the state. This familial trend could have provided the party with an almost monarchist right-to-rule aura, for a long time it did, but it also enables non-political critiques. When Modi stated that ‘dynastic politics is such a challenge before the country and it has to be rooted out,’ those non-political critiques pivoted to become a devastating put-down of the BJP’s single considerable opposition party, tied up for good measure with a reference to the nation.⁵¹² The Gandhis are no longer seen as untouchable. Resultantly, Dibyendu Mondal’s 2020 article noted that ‘more than two dozen senior Congress leaders have deserted the Congress in the last seven years and have joined the BJP.’⁵¹³ The national-populist base is quickly becoming monolithic internally and in terms of its voting support. It is dominating the field of plausible electoral candidates meaning there are less legitimate questions around whether the party actually serves your interests, or just the interests of a majority. In Hungary the outcome has been the same. Toomey summarised that Orbán’s creation ‘serves to create an image of the Hungarian nation that is exclusionary of both people on the left and political groupings on the right of the political spectrum.’⁵¹⁴ Rather than this narrowing their base the targeted inclusivity of their identity claim and the originality of their platform ensures that even though Jobbik

⁵¹² Narendra Modi in speech to National Youth Parliament Festival quoted in “‘Dynastic Politics is the Biggest Enemy of Democracy: PM Modi’, *NDTV*, (12th January 2021), accessed at <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/prime-minister-narendra-modi-dynastic-politics-is-the-biggest-enemy-of-democracy-2351214>

⁵¹³ Dibyendu Mondal, ‘In seven years, 30 key Congress leaders deserted party, *The Sunday Guardian*, (July 18th 2020), accessed at <https://www.sundayguardianlive.com/news/seven-years-30-key-congress-leaders-deserted-party>

⁵¹⁴ Toomey, ‘History, Nationalism, and Democracy: Myth and Narrative in Viktor Orbán’s “Illiberal Hungary”’, p.102.

now compete on the same nationalist platform Toomey could simultaneously conclude that ‘the “true” Hungarians find their sole representation in Fidesz and Orbán.’⁵¹⁵

As these parties become monolithic through political manoeuvrings and their identity constructions they become increasingly resilient in elections and are better able to consolidate power. This is extremely dangerous for it is as difficult a trend to invert as the initial prevailing liberal order proved to be until this point. Once populations associate political leadership with vocal support of the nation-state above all else, the innumerate other machinations become a side-note and identity becomes irreversibly politicised. Culture and politics become intrinsically linked with no respite or means of competition for any party that does not match the mode. As other parties attempt to match the mode, that initially shocking new style becomes the norm.

To return briefly and anachronistically to German nationalism and to temper Johann Gottfried Herder’s idealistic conviction of an inclusive nation formed by a cultural unification project, the work of his contemporary Friedrich Karl von Moser may parallel more closely contemporary nationalism in its national-populist guise. Moser, Helmut Walser Smith shows, believed that the German nation should be constructed around its pre-existing ‘imperial’ identity.⁵¹⁶ This was an ancestral claim rather than any fresh imagining. To strengthen that existing identity Moser argued that nationalism should be framed as an ‘ersatz’ religion, primarily because of his recognition of the magnetism of the power of belonging that, at that time, only religion was able to provide. In Moser’s own words ‘no love and no hate is stronger than that

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ Helmut Walser Smith, ‘Nation and Nationalism’ in Jonathan Sperber (ed.), *Germany, 1800-1870*, (Oxford, 2004), p.232.

which is grounded in religion.’⁵¹⁷ As part of this pseudo-religious creation Dieter Düding notes that Moser insisted on nationalist festivals incorporating elements of high Christianity and pagan traditions.⁵¹⁸ This helped resolve the spiritual homelessness’ of the German people, mending their divisions, but also co-opted some of the positive aspects of religious expression subsuming them into the developing German national identity.⁵¹⁹ Nationalism, Moser believed, had to become culturally all-consuming. Under Moser and Herder’s joint but separate appeals nationalism did indeed become so, but in the process it hijacked one of the most powerful existing identities. New nationalism has again become culturally all-consuming and again is subsuming other forms of self-identification.

The link between Moser’s conception and that of the Hindu nationalists is obvious. Rather than Hinduism having to bow to national identity however, the BJP have fused together the nation and the religion of the majority. This is similarly all-consuming and was achieved by what Aparna Devare called the ‘objectification’ of religion, converting it into a potent ‘political identity.’⁵²⁰ For the Germans the achieving of a cultural hegemony had a direct aim, the creation of a nation-state. A goal that was both ambitious and justifiable. What is the motivation for the Hindu nationalists? Their state already exists, the Hindu identity is already predominant within that state and the Indians have, throughout the modern history of their nation, been a patriotic and proud

⁵¹⁷ Friedrich Karl von Moser quoted by George S. Williamson, ‘Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, 1760-1871: Enlightenment, Emancipation, New Forms of Piety’, Helmut Walser Smith (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Germany*, (Oxford, 2011), p.211.

⁵¹⁸ Dieter Düding, *Organisierter gesellschaftlicher Nationalismus in Deutschland, 1808-1847*, (Munich, 1983), p.107.

⁵¹⁹ Gerhard Kaiser, *Pietismus und Patriotismus im literarischen Deutschland: Ein Beitrag zum Problem der Säkularisation*, (Frankfurt, 1973).

⁵²⁰ Devare, *History and the Making of a Modern Hindu Self*, p.9.

people. To broaden the question, what is the objective of Orbán and Fidesz? Their predecessors strove to maintain their difference within the Communist Bloc, to preserve their separate identity. Do Hungarians today truly believe that the EU wants homogeneity and that the Hungarian way of life is under threat? There is something both emotional and tribal evidenced by the success of national-populism. The strategies set out in previous chapters and employed effectively by Fidesz, the BJP and others have certainly contributed to their rise to power but they aren't the work of political masterminds. None of them have created new identities from scratch, they are harnessing parts of their populations' psyches that already exist. There is a definite emotional power of this relatively new style which has overwhelmed the calmer, arguably more boring, politics that has preceded it. The bold slogans and simplifying of discourse all feed into what Laclau observed as the 'predominance of the "emotive" over the "rational", the sense of omnipotence, the suggestibility and the identification with the leaders' which as he remarked were 'all too real features of collective behaviour.'⁵²¹ When collective behaviour in the style of the mob operates as a potent force in politics its repercussions can only be guessed at. Fukuyama said that at one time national identities were intended to give a 'common set of narratives and values that support your democratic political institutions,' but that it is now important that we acknowledge the 'power of identity to overpower rationality, but also commitment to institutions and democratic principles.'⁵²² The cultural war paradigm which emerged as

⁵²¹ Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, p.39.

⁵²² Francis Fukuyama in Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Francis Fukuyama, 'The Different Faces of Identity and Politics Today' (conversation), *Lennart Meri Conference*, (October 14th 2020), accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBo-ww4IUJ8>

a reaction to the inability of liberal democracy to fully provide for every tendency and outlook has finally made itself felt on the institutions that created it.

Put simply then the retreat into a politics that is more emotive than rational, that is based on identity not ideology, a national-populist politics for short, is a result of an increasingly complex outside world that has failed to provide for all. There is a stark irony that a backlash against empty calls for inclusivity will manifest itself in powerful and occasionally violent insinuations of exclusivity. A second irony that nationalism, objectively about your state against others, is now such an insular and internally focused expression. This is the true innovation of new nationalism and the dark side of this politics is that it won't lead to any solutions. The minorities made the target of the majority's ire have the least impact on the socio-economic factors that created this distrust in the established order, the capitalist elite remain entirely untouched. New nationalism is projected through the populist megaphone, hinged on a separation of Self and Other, buttressed with a falsification of history, yoked together by theory-less figureheads, encouraged by distracted media watchdogs, and critically embedded in the very fibre of the state. New nationalism, national-populism as it is represented most clearly in Hungary and India, appears a panacea but is more of a virus.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

*'A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, it sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias.'*⁵²³

Though there has been some continuity in the central tenets of nationalism, namely the use of a Self and Other divide, the buttress for the politics provided by mythologised historical narratives and the leader's role in diffusing nationalism throughout a population, the way those elements have been deployed is fundamentally different as part of nationalism's re-emergence with a new, electoral face. Whilst the goals of the German unification project, used as a model historical case, required the construction of a genuine inclusive German identity, the return of nationalism in Hungary and India has heralded a focus on vote-winning strategies such as the adoption of the populist mode and the ability to work effectively within new media. New nationalism is a product of some continuity and some change but the most cataclysmic shift, and problem, is that nationalism has been recast as an extra-political identity appeal and has lost its ideological basis. Nationalism today does not free states or create them, it divides populations seemingly irredeemably for gains at the ballot-box.

Were this a policy paper it would be required to end with a series of suggestions, looking forward, for how best to remedy the problem of new nationalism set out in

⁵²³ Oscar Wilde, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', 1891, accessed at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/wilde-oscar/soul-man/>

exhaustive detail in the preceding pages. As an academic work, and in particular one that targets a supra-political phenomenon, such suggestions are limited and audacious given the scale of the issue at hand. Instead this conclusion will summarise the importance of the components set out in the prior chapters and their role in creating a new imagining of an old formation resulting in a potent electoral politics then provide a loose outline for a possible antidote to the blight of new nationalism.

A. Where Do We Find Ourselves?

It is worth noting again that new nationalism is not a ubiquitous phenomenon. In the same period of an increasing politicisation of national identity in the modern case studies referred to, Germany, home of our historic nationalists and one amongst many, has made more inclusive amendments to their citizenship laws in 2000, 2004, 2007, 2009 and 2019.⁵²⁴ This is clear progress from the 1913 law that first formalised a common German identity for ‘nationals of the various states constituting the “German Reich” since 1870.’⁵²⁵ New nationalism still has the potential to spread, it is infectious, but again during the course of writing this paper, there have been a few counter-attacks against national-populism which have gone some way to weakening the united front. As already set out in the previous chapter, Donald Trump’s failure to secure a second term in the United States should be considered a great positive – though there is nothing in the success of Joe Biden’s campaign to outline an effective way of overturning national-populists once they are in power. Trump lost the election, with his poor handling of coronavirus and increasingly erratic behaviour, more than Biden won it. In Brazil, Jair

⁵²⁴ Anuscheh Farahat, ‘Recent Changes in German citizenship law’ *European University Institute Global Citizenship Observatory*, (July 2019).

⁵²⁵ Kay Hailbronner, ‘Country Report: Germany’ *EUDO Citizenship Observatory*, (April 2010), p.1.

Bolsonaro, another national-populist is witnessing his popularity falter, though at a much faster rate.⁵²⁶ A recent article in the *Financial Times* described Bolsonaro as ‘more isolated than ever,’ and included amongst his new detractors; the armed forces, ‘hundreds of prominent business leaders,’ whilst noting in Congress ‘the first murmurings of a potential effort to impeach the president.’⁵²⁷ What of our two chosen case studies though, Hungary and India? Though there has been an overlap in national-populist strategy, that after all is the contention of the paper, one national-populist’s defeat is not indicative of defeat for all others – nationalism, as an idea, has always refused to die. The case studies chosen, differing by continent, population size, cultural background and former colonial past, were chosen to be more representative than the USA or Brazil. Here the results are less positive. There is opposition to Viktor Orbán and Narendra Modi, but for the most part it is restricted to opposition parties valiantly struggling to compete or diasporic voices speaking with relative safety from outside the state.

In early April, 2021, the author Salman Rushdie reviewed his own novel ‘*Midnight’s Children*’, which was structured as a storied history of India from Independence to the time of writing, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the publication of the work.⁵²⁸ Rushdie’s review provides background on the texts that influenced his own writing, but true to the form of literary criticism also provides a contextual overview of what prompted him to write the story. Of the central character

⁵²⁶ BBC Staff, ‘Brazil: Political crisis and Covid surge rock Bolsonaro’ *BBC News*, (31st March), accessed at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-56581131>

⁵²⁷ Michael Stott, Michael Pooler and Bryan Harris, ‘Brazil’s coronavirus nightmare: “Bolsonaro is more isolated than ever”’ *Financial Times*, (3rd April 2021), <https://www.ft.com/content/55713895-2423-4259-a222-f778f9587490>

⁵²⁸ Salman Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*, (London, 1995).

Saleem, Rushdie writes that he ‘could associate big-nosed Saleem with the elephant-trunked god Ganesh... and that felt perfectly easy and natural even though Saleem was not a Hindu,’ for in the early 1980s Rushdie felt that ‘all of India belonged to all of us.’⁵²⁹ There is no truer nationalist expression than this. Yet writing in 2021, Rushdie revises and rallies against ‘the horrifying escalation of assaults on women, the increasingly authoritarian character of the state, the unjustifiable arrests of people who dare to stand against that authoritarianism, the religious fanaticism, the rewriting of history to fit the narrative of those who want to transform India into a Hindu-nationalist, majoritarian state,’ with his final blow saved for ‘the popularity of the regime in spite of it all, or, worse, perhaps because of it all.’⁵³⁰ As a progression of the nation and its expression of nationalism now carried by the Bharatiya Janata Party, Rushdie outlines the same transition tracked throughout this thesis but with the fundamental difference being that Rushdie, unlike this author, still has hope. He hopes that there will continue to exist the ‘determination of India’s women and college students to resist that sectarianism, to reclaim the old, secular India and dismiss the darkness.’⁵³¹ The next Indian Election is likely to be in 2024 so there is time for that opposition to expand its base, for a majority of Indian citizens to share the views of diasporic voices, like Rushdie, who now lives in New York. In January 2021, however, a ‘Mood of the Nation’ poll found that 43% of those surveyed would still vote for the BJP and that 74% of those surveyed would rate Modi’s performance as Prime Minister either Good or

⁵²⁹ Salman Rushdie, ‘Salman Rushdie on *Midnight’s Children* at 40: “India is no longer the country of this novel”’ *The Guardian*, (3rd April 2021), accessed at <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/apr/03/salman-rushdie-on-midnights-children-at-40-india-is-no-longer-the-country-of-this-novel>

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

⁵³¹ Ibid.

Outstanding.⁵³² Rushdie's prediction of continued opposition might be accurate, but the chance of real change seems optimistic.

In Hungary there is arguably less opposition to Viktor Orbán and Fidesz than there exists against Modi and the BJP in India. There are also fewer diasporic voices willing to loudly rally against the incumbent leader and party. Eszter Herner-Kovács' article provides some explanation for this in her analysis of Hungary's attempts to build a diasporic 'kin-state.'⁵³³ First, the 'Hungarian Register' was created as a 'virtual database for Hungarians worldwide,' which provides 'weekly newsletters on Hungarian politics in Hungarian and English,' and whose primary aim was to 're-channel those who have lost contact with the homeland.'⁵³⁴ As an advance on this media outreach Hungary now also has its own Birthright program called 'ReConnect Hungary,' targeted specifically at young diasporic Hungarians.⁵³⁵ Partnering this, Hungarian citizenship has been made available for 'non-resident Hungarians,' allowing them to vote in elections amongst other benefits.⁵³⁶ By 2018, France24 reported on the awarding of citizenship to the one millionth 'new citizen.'⁵³⁷ This forms a particularly stark contrast with the difficulties faced by migrants and refugees trying to settle in Hungary and be recognised by the state. It is significant firstly that citizenship is being defined rigidly by Hungarian

⁵³² India Today, 'Mood of the Nation Survey', (January 2021), accessed at <https://www.indiatoday.in/mood-of-the-nation-survey-2021>

⁵³³ Eszter Herner-Kovács, 'Nation Building Extended: Hungarian Diaspora Politics', *Minority Studies*, Vol. 14, (2014), p.63.

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

⁵³⁵ Ibid, p.65.

⁵³⁶ Ibid, p.66.

⁵³⁷ Dunajska Streda, 'Hungary's Orban courts Diaspora for election boost' *France24*, (28th March 2018), accessed at <https://www.france24.com/en/20180328-hungarys-orban-courts-diaspora-election-boost>

belonging, even if those who belong were born outside the state but have some ethnic Hungarian identity. Secondly, there is a clear push in state policy to operationalise majoritarianism. Securing the votes of non-resident Hungarians who if they seek citizenship, it is assumed, will strongly identify with their “Hungarianness” and willingly politicise that identity and vote for Fidesz.

George Soros, the subject of a number of Orbán’s rhetorical tirades, was actually interviewed by a Hungarian outlet in August of 2020 but perhaps recognising his audience he toned down his opposition to Orbán.⁵³⁸ His critique of Hungarian opposition to the European Union focused on the fact that Hungary, alongside Poland, was occupied by ‘forces’ of anti-EU sentiment though both nations were ‘amongst those benefitting the most from the EU’s funds.’⁵³⁹ Three months later Soros published an article of his own with less self-censoring. In it he expressed his perspective that the EU should ‘stand up’ to Hungary and Poland after they vetoed the new Union budget because it included a ‘rule-of-law conditionality.’⁵⁴⁰ Soros believed this veto was indicative not of opposition to ‘an abstract concept,’ but what the employing of rule-of-law might mean in terms of a ‘practical limit on personal and political corruption.’⁵⁴¹ Objectively Soros’s argument has validity. Opposition to the EU may be rational in many cases but opposing it for its attempts to ensure a following of the rules and the

⁵³⁸ George Soros quoted in Robert Panyi, ‘George Soros Turns 90’ Interview Reveals His Thoughts on the Pandemic, Orbán, and the EU’ *Hungary Today*, (13th August 2020), accessed at <https://hungarytoday.hu/george-soros-turns-90-interview-reveals-his-thoughts-on-the-pandemic-orban-and-the-eu/>

⁵³⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁰ George Soros, ‘Europe Must Stand Up to Hungary and Poland’, *Project Syndicate*, (November 18th 2020), accessed at <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/europe-must-stand-up-to-hungary-and-poland-veto-by-george-soros-2020-11?barrier=accesspaylog>

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

stamping out of corruption requires a firm counter-response. However, Soros' article continues that as an alternative to 'standing up' against the position of Poland and Hungary, instead there is a more subtle 'way around the veto.'⁵⁴² Following this strategy, last year's budget would be extended for another year if a new budget fails to be agreed and in this circumstance Poland and Hungary would be restricted from receiving any money from the budget extension because of their unwillingness to accept the rule-of-law conditionality. To support this radical position of exclusion Soros then delves deep into examples of Orbán's corruption in Hungary and outlines the extent to which he is skimming off a top-layer of public funding. The level of detail provided around Orbán's wrongdoing distracts from the contradiction of Soros' conclusion though in which he sets out that whatever response the EU takes will 'determine whether it survives as an open society true to the values upon which it was founded.'⁵⁴³ If those values are bullied through and based around exclusion via the restriction of funding what does this really achieve? What for the Hungarian people who will inevitably be more affected than Orbán?

The central question this example raises for opponents of new nationalism everywhere is to what extent it is right to fight fire with fire. Should a lack of moral standing be contested from a position in which moral standing is also sacrificed? The nihilist philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche warned forebodingly that 'whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster.'⁵⁴⁴ To borrow from an ideologue more rooted in this context, the quotation apocryphally

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche (trans. Helen Zimmern), 'Beyond Good and Evil' in *The Essential Nietzsche*, (New York, 2017), p.78

attributed to Mahatma Gandhi, ‘an eye for an eye leaves the world blind,’ also feels appropriate. The overview of Indian and Hungarian responses to national-populism as it has taken root in those two states, or the lack of response more fittingly, speaks to the success of this politics and these leaders either in crushing dissent or removing space for opposing voices to mobilise any considerable number of supporters (in Hungary’s case even those outside the state). Sacrificing the integrity of the opposing position could mitigate these increasing threats and breathe new life into counter-movements, yet it could also provoke similarly problematic reactive responses which only send both sides into destructive spirals.

Despite the general lack of coherent nation-populist opposition, the rise of the mode is aligned with certain incidental violent rejections of national identity as a means of unity, an obstacle never faced by early nationalist ideologues. Unfortunately, these flashpoints only increase support for exclusionary definitions of community by increasing fear of the Other. In an age when identity politics has become the norm there have been numerous instances of radicalisation under various alternate identities. For instance, the United States and Canada have witnessed incidences of in the service of the Involuntary Celibate movement (known as Incels). The most notorious radicalisations on a global scale though came with Islamic extremism such as that propagated by Daesh. Western narratives have made sure to situate this form of religious fundamentalism as occurring prior to, and perhaps even provoking, white nationalist terror attacks for obvious political gain, yet without this manipulation there is something concerning in the idea of young men and women taking on and converting to a new (religious) identity and then carrying out violence in its name. That requires a visceral and deliberate denunciation of the existing identities you are supposedly more

innately aligned with and the complete subversion of the nation-state framing that is a norm for many growing up. When considering Islamic extremism and white nationalist terror, it is evident that there are connections between the political foundations for these two oppositional movements. Fukuyama draws a close parallel between the rise of political Islam and the rise of nationalism as a state doctrine, finding that both ‘appeared on the world stage at moments of social transition from traditional isolated agrarian societies to modern ones connected to a more diverse world.’⁵⁴⁵ Both are responses to a religious or local identity being challenged by contact with multitudinous other identities through the process of globalisation, and both have proved influential politically, but also extremely dangerous when irrational elements are introduced.

Of Daesh Karl Sharro remarked that their emergence made clear ‘the failures of the region’s twentieth-century political projects,’ and that in the Middle East in particular ‘universalism is being replaced by identity-based movements.’⁵⁴⁶ The willingness of Daesh and their predecessor movements to strike in other territories should be reason enough to consider how best to combat their recruitment rather than just waging casualty-laden wars on their supposed hubs of operation. This thesis has already made the link between the effect of framing seemingly threatening Others in driving societies to become more insular and inward focused. Terrorists on both sides of the transnational Islamic fundamentalist/extremist racial purist split are part-responsible for the radicalisation of greater numbers towards their opposition, even whilst posing themselves as the victim group. There is a scale of irrationality in this kind of random and destructive violence that renders the motivations for both elements difficult to

⁵⁴⁵ Fukuyama, *Identity*, p.73.

⁵⁴⁶ Sharro, ‘The Retreat from Universalism in the Middle East and the World’, p.1.

reconcile. More pertinent though is the failure of states to decrease the numbers of their youth who willingly participate in the rhetoric that fuels these groups, let alone the actual crimes they perpetrate. The repercussions will be vast as Sharro showed with his analysis of the longer-term implications of the violence of Daesh in the Middle East, which he claimed dealt ‘a severe blow – possibly a fatal one – to the idea of pluralism in the region.’⁵⁴⁷ Pluralism is under threat everywhere, from religious fundamentalists yes, but also from state-led national-populist campaigns. Coexistence, says Sharro, ‘will be hard to recover, whether between ethnicities, religions, or other identities.’⁵⁴⁸

So, nationalism in this new guise has proved successful at limiting opposition, but not at actually providing everyone with a feeling of belonging, as demonstrated by the most extreme rejections. National-populism is totally ill-equipped to lead any real inclusion within states and though it is an inward-facing politics its own radicals might directly encourage radicals elsewhere to mobilise behind competing identities, leading to wars fought between peoples not armies. The other major group continually excluded by this new politics are those who most require support – namely refugees and forced migrants. National-populism’s wilful misconstruing of any crises which result in the mass displacement of peoples, all for electoral gain is the greatest evidence of its moral bankruptcy. Moreover, it also exposes a complete inability to prioritise constructive responses to genuine issues. Scapegoating has no benefit beyond the deferral of responsibility. There can reach a point however, where responsibility can no longer be deferred and national-populism’s emptiness becomes plain to see.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

B. Smoke and Mirrors

That national-populism is able to conceal its lack of depth is testified to by its success in a number of states, Hungary and India included, as a vote-winning politics. Were voters to take an objective stance on how the national-populists' professed priorities lined up with their requirements as citizens of a nation-state it is my view that they would prefer politicians of other parties. This sort of counter-factual argument is irrelevant however, and ill-suited to a scientific analysis. Instead this thesis has tried to explain the ease with which national-populism has been able to mobilise, attributing this in part to the astonishing efficacy of the combination of strategies it has employed across different electoral campaigns. The first crucial element is the utilisation of the populist mode, which requires the separation of a population into a People and a Non-people. When paired up with a nationalist frame of Self and Other, the populist division which in its purest form is intended to rally against elites instead excludes non-nationals. Nationalism always requires this specific sectioning off of constituent factions, but national-populism targets internal groups which is politically more dangerous as it turns a majority against a minority, rather than two states against each other or a majority against an elite class.

The Self and Other divide of national-populism is rarely fixed, it relies on certain linguistic ambiguities and enough flexibility to avoid "de-platforming" for violating social norms by offending groups for their different identity. This flexibility can prove confusing to supporters of the movement, particularly if the mass of supporters are made up of groups with varying stringencies in their views allied under the same umbrella. To remedy this, national-populism requires a strong leader figure who can grow to embody the politics and in doing so render the inconsistencies in detail

moot. As the national identity is politicised through national-populism and then embodied by the figurehead, it mutates away from the pre-existing ideal in that state to address contemporary concerns. In these instances, the use of a falsified history projects the new identity backwards and ties it inextricably with turning points in the nation-state's past, just as media manipulation ensures that new events do not disturb the identity once it has been entrenched. It is through these two latter strategies and more visibly, through the rhetoric of national leaders, that a level of dishonesty can be recognised in national-populist campaigns. The strategies viewed as a whole are not entirely manipulative, nor are they entirely transparent – they are constantly evolving and have been designed to gel well with the characteristics of the majority whilst converting the effects of the pre-existing liberal and modern lived context into a potent transformative force. Chantal Mouffe believed the appeal of these parties always 'diminishes once they become a part of the government and that they seem to able to thrive only when in opposition,' but both Orbán and Modi have consolidated their initial rises and settled themselves as the new establishment by perfecting these strategies.⁵⁴⁹

National-populism's greatest strength has been its ability to constantly appear transformative and radical without really doing anything beyond shifting what is considered acceptable in political conversation. Maintaining the illusion of radical change once actually in power, without enacting real change, relies heavily on the emotional investment of the voters these parties have won and the blindness that emotional investment can result in. Voters must believe they are now active participants in politics and that they are fighting a battle for their identity that only these parties can fight alongside them. This is part of the cultural turn in politics, imbuing it with visceral

⁵⁴⁹ Chantal Mouffe, 'The "end of politics" and the challenge of right-wing populism' in Francisco Panizza (ed.), *Populism and the mirror of democracy*, (London, 2005), p.50.

value, extreme expression and a constant rejection of all alternatives and has, Kenan Malik claims, ‘transformed political conflicts’ into irresolvable deadlocks as they are all recast ‘as issues of culture or ethnicity or faith.’⁵⁵⁰ It is that legacy that assures the blind support of national-populist adherents and which will prove the greatest obstacle to any attempts to reverse this trend. The combination of national-populist strategies employed to win elections have completely changed the way voters see their politics. They believe they are fighting for their survival not merely electoral victories.

Once national-populism has been introduced to a nation-state’s political scene it is difficult to challenge through conventional policy politics. This effect is only increased as other parties start pandering to the newly delineated voting group of “patriots,” as in the United Kingdom where in the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic a new policy was announced that required the Union flag to be flown on all UK government buildings every day.⁵⁵¹ The sort of media coverage a pointless symbolic gesture like this received was indicative both of traditionalist parties, here the Conservatives, eagerly trying to capture some of the popular sentiment or “the voice on the street”, as well as the willingness of mainstream media outlets to keep these culture wars at the forefront of the nation’s collective mind. To a certain extent though, politically, this calculation makes sense. In the UK, Brexit proved the ineffectiveness of attempting to compete on factually-supported policy platforms based around coherent economic and social programs. In India the Congress party’s unwillingness to engage directly with the Hindu identity championed by the BJP has kept them entirely distant

⁵⁵⁰ Kenan Malik speech on ‘interculturalism’ recorded in full at *Pandaemonium: against the cultural turn*, (September 22nd 2016), accessed at <https://kenanmalik.com/2016/09/22/against-the-cultural-turn/>

⁵⁵¹ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport – government press release, ‘Union flag to be flown on UK Government buildings every day’, (24th March 2021), accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/union-flag-to-be-flown-on-uk-government-buildings-every-day>

from power, considered out of touch, despite the BJP's consistent mill of scandals. In Hungary, we have already shown, the party second to Fidesz in the most recent election is the even more nationalist Jobbik led by Péter Jakab. National-populism is a reactive style of politics that is custom-built to challenge the establishment. Responding to that challenge by retreating into what used to work shows a remarkable conviction that many might previously have felt their political class were lacking. More concerning though, it shows a lack of willingness or ability to adapt to a new playing field.

What is the alternative to being bowled over by the momentum these new groups are gathering? What is the alternative to meekly reproducing some of the tamer parts of their rhetoric in an attempt to co-opt their leaders? There needs to be a frank coming-to-terms with as to why these parties shot to success. The shift to identity-based politics is almost unfailingly a response to feeling unrepresented by the existing options. When nationalists, whose voice is by definition that of the majority, are successful electorally, when nationalism re-emerges, it follows that however unlikely it might seem – the majority no longer felt represented by the parties that had dominated for years beforehand. This is also evidenced by the increase in turn-out common in elections in which national-populist parties are standing. The people, and it's a national-populist people, at last feel as though they have a voice to rally behind. The failure of last year's budget to put money in people's pockets, the lack of take-up on newly offered social programs and even spontaneous additional factors such as recessions or pandemics, all contribute to a general malaise but more often than not this rot takes years to set in. The rot is now causing a reaction and the liberal inclusive project must be considered a failure because it has led to a majority voicing their lack of inclusion –

creating an enemy, perhaps fairly, of the traditional elites alongside, more concerningly, many of the minority voices Liberalism set out to include.

Nationalism's re-emergence as national-populism is a symptom and one of the final symptoms, of a sick democracy. The reactionary attitude of new political elites, the Orbáns and Modis, are easily stomached by their populations because those who felt excluded are willing to exclude again, repeating the cycle. It is a fallacy to believe these new movements, wherever they spring up, will better the lives of their supporters. For most very little will change. Yet when little was already changing there is an exuberance in at least being able to express your frustration and direct it in particular and specified directions. It is built into the nation-state logic that there exists difference, be that ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic or otherwise. It is built into the structure then that shared identity is as important as institutions but the inherent flaw of a system which has attempted to restrain that reality through democratic bodies, is seeing itself inverted as the bodies which failed to serve their voters instead become the mouthpieces for righteous rage expressed in the language of identity. This at its simplest is righteous rage misdirected. This misdirection can be pointed out time and time again by academics and distant diasporic voices, those who were partially blinded to the failures of the system that existed before and who will remain mostly unscathed by this new development, but until it is recognised by the majority that the fundamentals are still not improving, the national-populist wave will continue.

C. Dying Breaths

National-populism viewed most positively might be seen as the dying breaths of a tired system. It will accelerate the decline of the structures and systems that enable it

whilst being rejected by states that have already experienced the collapse of their traditional power bases. This, admittedly, is of little consolation. Yes, national-populism has been recognised as unhelpful the instant the problems facing a state are clearly crystallised but wherever there is ambiguity and a population can be turned against one another it still has a chance of success. Does this mean then that Hungary and India must simply endure consecutive Fidesz and BJP governments until the state degrades around them and the dying breaths peter out? Is it only then that new nationalism will lose its allure? Though the politics is proof of desperation the wider decline will not be immediate and major negative restructurings could be left in its wake, alongside widespread suffering as the final acts play out. As a more immediate knock-on effect national-populism can be contagious – leaving it untreated could well result in further mutations and other states succumbing to the style.

On the occasion of Bangladesh's celebration of 50 years of Independence from Pakistan, there were widespread protests in the country resulting in at least 12 deaths. The protests were in response to the invitation of Modi to Dhaka to participate in the celebrations on the 26th March. There was opposition to Modi's presence in Bangladesh because of his affiliation with anti-Muslim Hindu nationalism in India and though the protests were led by prominent Islamist groups they expanded to include many unaffiliated Bangladeshis. The concern flagged by Anbarasan Ethirajan going forward was that 'if the sensitivities of its neighbour (Bangladesh) are not addressed, India may end up being friends only with the government in Dhaka and not with the people of Bangladesh.'⁵⁵² How long then until those sensitivities find a viable political outlet

⁵⁵² Anbarasan Ethirajan, 'Why Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh led to 12 deaths', *BBC*, (31st March 2021), accessed at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-56586210>

through a political party that promise to strike back against what India stands for internally and externally? It was not lost on reporters at the protests that Bangladesh's Hindu population bore the brunt of the frustration, not Modi or India. Ostensibly the Bangladesh protests were a rejection of Indian national-populism, but one that will do little to affect the politics of their neighbour. A more likely conclusion is that a Bangladeshi Muslim identity finds something to rally against, perhaps framed as in support of their Indian Muslim counterparts who have no voice.

Pakistan and India's long rivalry is well-documented, it is fundamental to Hindu nationalism, but to see a reaction to that identity in a different state is proof that this insular politics is being observed elsewhere and is enraging others. Just as the formation of the Indian state and its rejection of the British sparked other nation-state constructions, their national-populism may spark reactive movements threatening the harmony of other states' diverse populations. Hungary's Euroscepticism alone is part of a wider anti-Union movement that research from 2019 suggests has seen Eurosceptic parties share of votes across Europe double in the last two decades.⁵⁵³ As with popular protest in Bangladesh these political trends are people-led and to some extent bottom-up, though it would be convenient for the left and even the centre-right to deny that this is the case. In 1951 Charles Wright Mills wrote slightly patronisingly of 'the new, Little man' who:

*Seems to have no firm roots, no sure loyalties to sustain his life and give it a center. He is not aware of having any history, his past being brief as it is unheroic; he has lived through no golden age he can recall in time of trouble. Perhaps because he does not know where he is going, he is in a frantic hurry, perhaps because he does not know what frightens him, he is paralysed with fear.*⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵³ Matthijs Rooduijn, Stijn Van Kessel, Caterina Froio, Andrea Pirro, *The PopuList: An Overview of Populist, Far Right, Far Left and Eurosceptic Parties in Europe*, (2019), accessed at www.popu-list.org.

⁵⁵⁴ Charles Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes*, (New York, 1951), p.xvi.

Mills believed that this fear was ‘especially a feature of his political life, where the paralysis results in the most profound apathy of modern times.’⁵⁵⁵ The Little men defined by Mills have similarities with those who support national-populism today, but the difference is that they are active, their fear motivates them and they are unrestrained by paralysis or apathy. This provides the required energy for dying breath after dying breath, and their existence everywhere enables national-populism to jump from state to state. Michael Weiss said of Donald Trump that he was a conduit for the apathy of the Little man, converting it into ‘ressentiment married to an overcooked sense of destiny.’⁵⁵⁶ Yet however unlikely it might seem, that apathy could be directed in another direction. Rather than finding an outlet in national-populism the left could capture the intent of those same Little men, recognising the effect of the strategies employed by national-populism and reading between the lines to identify what it is that their politics would need to respond to if it wants to breathe new energy into the principles and positions they stand for.

Fukuyama wrote in 2019 that ‘the global weakness of the left is in many ways a surprising outcome, given the rise of global inequality over the past three decades.’⁵⁵⁷ All of the required components were there but through some mismanagement, some poor luck and some unwillingness to adapt it has failed to come together into a new progressive movement. 36 years earlier Gellner summarised the same issue in ‘Nations and Nationalism’ quipping that ‘Marxists basically like to think that the spirit of history

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁶ Michael Weiss, ‘Little Man, What Now?’ *Newlines*, (January 20th 2021), accessed at <https://newlinesmag.com/argument/little-man-what-now/>

⁵⁵⁷ Fukuyama, *Identity*, pp.76-77.

or human consciousness made a terrible boob. The awakening message was intended for classes, but by some terrible postal error was delivered to *nations*.⁵⁵⁸ The crux of the matter is that identity in politics has become an accepted norm and class identity, which makes more sense as an ideological bond than as a true shared identity of solidarity, is less effective at mobilising than national identity. The commitment to inclusion for those who feel excluded is the most effective electoral promise. Emotional politics will trump vast and complicated logics of emancipation. Nationalism in some form will always be an opiate for the masses, for as long as the nation-state structure predominates.

D. Utopia

To do away with nationalism once and for all would require almost incomprehensible change. The most effective, though also most radical, counter to new nationalism on a global scale, looking beyond Hungary and India and as a mode of prevention where national-populism has not yet set down roots, would be the breaking down of the nation-state. Wimmer and Feinstein, who analysed how the nation-state became adopted universally concluded their work with the catch-all claim that ‘generations to come will certainly imagine other communities than the nation and reshape the world’s political landscape according to tectonic principles that we cannot possibly imagine today.’⁵⁵⁹ First among those principles would seem to be inclusion but more specifically, inclusion for all. The nation is no longer an effective political category when it has been revealed to hold the capacity for such brutal divisiveness.

⁵⁵⁸ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.124.

⁵⁵⁹ Wimmer and Feinstein, ‘The Rise of the Nation-State across the World, 1816 to 2001, p.786.

There needs to be a reconciliation with the fact that the traditional nation-state, bound to capitalism, is unable to empower all people simultaneously - an admittedly lofty goal. Even the most modern liberal democracies, as noted by Fukuyama, have hosted a 'retreat on both sides into ever narrower identities,' which at its worst will lead to 'state breakdown and failure.'⁵⁶⁰ From an idealistic perspective, diverting popular frustration against the institutions and systems that have provoked their exclusion would render state breakdown no failure at all and in the process might rescue minorities being considered perpetrators of forces over which they have no control. This would be utopian. It is audacious to suggest reconstruction via deconstruction, but Iñigo Errejón, himself a member of a Spanish left-wing populist party Podemos, made clear that 'audacity is crucial... if the democratic and progressive forces do not adopt a bold stance, we can be sure that the extreme right will do so.'⁵⁶¹

Utopia was a term first by Thomas More in 1516 to describe an ideal state.⁵⁶² The etymology of the word is contested. It is assumed to stem from the portmanteau of 'eu' and 'topos' meaning good place, but More deliberately played on a second combination of words 'ou' and 'topos' meaning no place/nowhere. The Utopian degraded state we are angling for also exists nowhere. It has not been trialled as a political category and has no direct historical predecessor. That is not to say it is without its real inspirations though. Lebanon, a counter-case study for national-populism, has faced difficulties as a nation-state because of its composition from multiple different pre-existing communities. Those communities have temporarily come together in

⁵⁶⁰ Fukuyama, *Identity*, p.165.

⁵⁶¹ Mouffe and Errejón, (Owen Jones ed.), *Iñigo Errejón in conversation with Chantal Mouffe*, p.67

⁵⁶² Thomas More, *Utopia*, 1516.

opposition to their own sectarian leaders, hence the protest chant ‘kulne yahni kulne’ – all of them means all of them, as a response to (and an accelerator for) the coming apart of the nation-state. Lebanon, with its mountains as geographically divisive features and its combination of different religious and cultural groups was arguably doomed to failure but in an attempt to make the impossible, possible Lebanon was also uniquely suited to the trialling of a new style of democracy termed consociationalism. Under this system each sectarian community was allocated a certain number of positions in government at a broadly representative scale. Sharro argued that Lebanon should no longer be the exception in that mode, that instead it ‘serves as a test case for the institutionalisation of identity-based politics.’⁵⁶³

Sharro also admitted though that Lebanon’s confessional system was a ‘problem’ before it was a ‘solution.’⁵⁶⁴ I am not suggesting that each sectarian group worldwide should have their own place in politics, that creates more issues than it resolves and makes any harmonious identity impossible as it did for many years in Lebanon. Salibi reinforced this finding that the Michel Chiha formula for government was ‘eminently workable,’ but as the confessional system still required the reintegration of the system under the nation-state umbrella the image of Lebanese identity that followed was ‘less so.’⁵⁶⁵ To draw inspiration from Lebanon requires additional innovation. It is, to use the words of Andrew Arslan, a ‘country in fragments,’ but this fragmentation embraced in Lebanon and elsewhere could prove a strength.⁵⁶⁶ Unified, nation-wide identities now

⁵⁶³ Sharro, ‘The Retreat from Universalism in the Middle East and the World: Intellectual Shifts and the Demise of Inclusive Identities’, p.5.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁵ Salibi, ‘The Lebanese Identity’, p.83.

⁵⁶⁶ Andrew Arslan, *Lebanon: A Country in Fragments*, (London, 2018).

seem tarnished by the fact they have been politicised and they fail at what should be the fundamental goal of genuine inclusion. Acknowledging that these vast identities are unhelpful and there might be more positive futures in the devolution of voting structures to represent diverse communities more minutely does not seem outrageous. As of yet though, there lacks the bravery or the required energy to plan for political life beyond monolithic nation-state structures. As a case in point, an article written by the influential journalist Shekhar Gupta advocated controversially for the division of India's largest state, Uttar Pradesh, into four or five smaller states, calling it impossible to govern and India's 'broken heartland.'⁵⁶⁷ Gupta here is tiptoeing close to a radical and likely more controversial argument, that India itself is too massive for one party to accurately represent by holding the highest office. There are regional governments but even those are elected by communities of millions, and their federal power is limited by whatever the ruling BJP deem writ.

There exists a political tradition, to match the literary tradition of More and the institutional tradition of Lebanon in its advocacy for the degradation of state structures with the aim of better serving all. Agrarian populism has remained a widely unpopular strand of leftist thought since its emergence in pre-revolution Russia, but the pertinence of the points it has to make has never been so clear. As one such agrarian populist, the work of Saturnino M. Borrás is radical precisely because of the scale of change it advocates for but the aims to increase social equality and better representation for all are

⁵⁶⁷ Shekhar Gupta, 'Uttar Pradesh is India's broken heartland, break it into 4 or 5 states' *The Print*, (11th July 2020), accessed at <https://theprint.in/national-interest/uttar-pradesh-is-indias-broken-heartland-break-it-into-4-or-5-states/458552/>

honest.⁵⁶⁸ Borras, who admits inspiration from the success of right-wing populists, champions “asking big and acting insurgent” so committed is he to a future with more effective structures. The words of Erik Olin Wright bring pragmatism to this idealism as he Wright insists that ‘the appropriate orientation towards strategies of social transformation, therefore, is to do things now which put us in the best position to do more later by working to create those institutions and structures that increase, rather than decrease, the prospects of taking advantage of whatever historical opportunities emerge.’⁵⁶⁹

The existence of national-populists whose effects on existing democratic structures has often been corrosive justifies the extremity of the positions here suggested. To make some actual, though tentative, “policy proposals” looking forward, this deliberate deconstruction is a possible solution that would at once drain national-populism of its supporting base, as well as remedying the issues that provoked its growth in the first place. The populist element of national-populism would be neutered by actual representation and inclusiveness, much of the protest against established structures will naturally cease to exist with the evaporation of those systems. The nationalist element of national-populism will be consigned to the past if small, diverse communities made up of groups holding multiple different pre-existing identities, those that already exist the world over but are currently subject entirely to the states that they exist under, are allowed self-rule over the majority of required governmental functions. It is my belief that inclusivity of a much wider-range of difference, racial, religious,

⁵⁶⁸ Saturnino M. Borras, ‘Agrarian Social Movements: The absurdly difficult but not impossible agenda of defeating right-wing populism and exploring a socialist future’ in *Wiley Journal of Agrarian Change*, (2020), pp.3-36.

⁵⁶⁹ Erik Olin Wright in Robin Hahnel, & Erik Olin Wright (Eds.), *Alternatives to capitalism: Proposals for a democratic economy*, (New York, 2016), p.102.

cultural even, would be fostered in these smaller communities where the numbers of each group aren't constantly set against each other and where ignorance of the Other is tempered by actual interaction. Humans are, at their core, social animals. There is a will to come together. Nation-states and the nationalism they have engendered have, returning to Omar Dahbour, 'undermine(d) exactly those aspects of communities that make them ethical – commonalities of interests and the shared assumptions that follow from them.'⁵⁷⁰

If these smaller sub-national communities were structured in a way that empowers them, that grants them the majority of functions required to govern but doesn't remove from them the security that the global nation-state system has proved able to provide sui generis and crucially, doesn't ingrain new hierarchies or protect those that already exist – national-populism would pass. It is a radical solution but one that might achieve three distinct aims without any performative posturing. First, majoritarianism and exclusionary politics would be lacking entirely in popular base. Minorities would be minorities in areas so small that policies designed to target them could not be framed as achieving any higher purpose. Voters would have to choose to be wilfully discriminatory. Second, a global structure made up of many more small communities would lack the reasons of pride, the will to get ahead, or the unwillingness to make sacrifices, that the nation-state structure has repeatedly thrown up as obstacles to international efforts to remedy universal issues. Those include; looming ecological crises, the domino effect of economic downturn, and the tragic failure to capably manage what became a world-wide pandemic. Finally, in the language of many

⁵⁷⁰ Omar Dahbour, *Self-Determination without Nationalism*, p.104

charitable Non-Governmental Organisations, “outcomes would be improved” for people in communities around the world.

The biologist-turned-historian Peter Turchin uses huge datasets to track the trends that pre-empt socio-political crises. In 2010, he wrote a letter warning that in approximately 2020 the US and Europe should expect upheaval in response to ‘declining real wages, a growing gap between rich and poor, overproduction of young graduates, and exploding debt.’⁵⁷¹ Turchin diagnoses, rather than treats, but I would suggest that part of this upheaval – beyond just the West, is recognisable in the national-populist wave. Turchin hoped 11 years ago that we would ‘find ways to ameliorate the negative effects of globalisation on people’s well-being.’⁵⁷² We didn’t. National-populism does not ameliorate any effects, it exaggerates them and directs them against others like us in the communities we live in. When Johann Gottfried Herder conceived of politicising German identity to create a new unified German nation-state it was to afford Germany the status of its competitors in Europe. Now, there exist so many global bonds that every region is integrated through the connections between nations. Nationalism has no purpose left. Proactively changing the nation-state structure is the best cure for this creeping virus. Maybe then nationalism will finally be consigned to history. Kahlil Gibran wrote that you should ‘pity the nation divided into fragments, each fragment deeming itself a nation.’⁵⁷³ Champion the nation that is divided into fragments, free at last of nationalism enabling each fragment to be its own community.

⁵⁷¹ Peter Turchin, ‘Political instability may be a contributor in the coming decade’ *Nature*, Vol. 463 No. 3, (4th February 2010), p.608.

⁵⁷² Ibid.

⁵⁷³ Kahlil Gibran, *The Garden of the Prophet*, (1933).

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