Hungarian Strong Men: A Dictator, A Cardinal, and Nationalism Today

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The Syrian Refugee crisis, which began in 2010, has brought Hungary and its Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to the forefront of global political news. It has revealed Hungarian political discourse is engulfed in a cyclical pattern of far-right nationalism fixated on the characteristics of ethnicity, religion, and political ideology. The emergence of these characteristics as defining traits on Hungarian nationalism indicates a failure to cope with past national trauma. This paper will delve into those traumas and analyze how past political leadership used those traumas. The paper will make a genealogy of the use of ethnicity, religion, and political ideology in figuring out how these topics are being used to persecute the Syrian Refugees.
Introduction

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán sat surrounded by members of the 5th meeting of the Hungarian Diaspora Council in Budapest. He spoke of the historic achievement related to how Hungarians and Magyarság (people of Hungarian ancestry) maintained Hungarian identity despite the Cold War. Then Orban’s tone abruptly shifted, as he declared, “Hungary is under attack… This challenge is modern day mass migration.” He concluded, “It is nothing other than an invasion of Europe.”1 This speech occurred on December 2, 2015 and less than two months prior, Hungary had completed construction of a two hundred and sixteen mile razor wire fence that stretched across the borders of Serbia and Croatia. Its purpose was to prevent Syrian refugees from seeking asylum through Hungary.

Prior to this speech, German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced to the world on August 24, 2015 that Germany would be opening its borders to take in Syrian-asylum seekers.2 The Syrian Civil War had erupted in early 2011, after Syrian police beat protestors in opposition to the al-Assad regime to death.3 The Syrian Civil War is estimated to have displaced over half of the 22 million people living in that country.4 Merkel stated that this refugee crisis was the worst in Europe since the aftermath of

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World War II and that it was Europe’s responsibility to assist in solving it.\(^5\) Orbán is her most steadfast opponent on this issue.

The most interesting point brought up in both of the speeches was the inclusion of immigration struggles post-World War II. Both Hungary and Germany were members of the Axis powers and empowered Hitler to facilitate the Holocaust, in addition to numerous other human rights violations. Both nations also suffered from imperialism by both the United States and the United Soviet Socialist Republic during the Cold War. What is clear from these speeches is that Germany has reckoned with its past, while Hungary has trapped itself within a vicious cycle of national conservatism. This paper argues that Orbán’s view of Hungary as a victim is the result of a country still reconciling with its past exclusions and human rights violations made by its political leadership.

The emergence of national conservatism in modern politics references back to the Nazi ideology of one state, one nation, and one people. As national conservatism is currently gaining fervor across Europe, historians are attempting to redefine \textit{nationalism} in this new context and identify the historic causes for its rise. An example of a national conservative gathering is the neo-Nazi fueled gathering of ethnonationalist extremists in Charlottesville, Virginia on August 11, 2017, led by anti-Semite and conspiracy theorist Richard Spencer under the slogan “Unite the Right.”\(^6\) Similar gatherings are also simultaneously occurring in Hungary, with members of Hungary’s right-wing citizenry dressing up in regalia mimicking military attire of World War II.\(^7\) They profess a belief in

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\(^5\) Eddy, “German Leaders,” 6.


the innocence of Hungary and its then-leader, Dictator Miklos Horthy, for the misdeeds of World War II. These sycophants are supported in the speeches of the Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.

The national conservative leaders espouse the rhetoric Orbán expressed in his speech at the 5th meeting of the Hungarian Diaspora Council in Budapest. It’s a nightmarish paradox that a country which suffered occupation under the Nazi regime would call back to their mission statement. It is therefore clear that Orbán’s Hungary has an issue in perspective related to the reality of Hungary’s history. These views are made to cover up the failures of Hungary’s former political figureheads.

Orbán’s view is that Hungarian history is filled with the traumas of war crimes and traumas of imperialism against the nation. In his speech, Orbán named several. The first notable trauma is The Treaty of Trianon, which was the peace treaty signed to end World War I. Orbán’s view is that it was an act of imperialism against Hungary. Trianon gave away two thirds of Hungary’s territory following the war. Political violence among various factions followed. For that, Orbán blamed the political “left” of the time and their “well poisoning” for the violence. The second trauma he mentioned was the entirety of World War II. Orbán compared Germany’s and the European Union’s efforts to help refugees to Germany’s political domination of Hungary and later takeover of Hungary during the war. This inferred that Germany was puppeteering and outsourcing unethical work for Hungary to suffer through. The final trauma mentioned was the tragedy of 1956, when the Soviet Union destroyed the counter-revolution in Budapest. Orbán compared the Soviet Union to the European Union, enforcing its imperialistic will on Hungary.

Ultimately, these are all perversions of facts. It is head scratching how a nation that had
suffered through two world wars and the cold war could not empathize with the Syrian Refugees fleeing their home, like so many Hungarians had in the prior century. This paper will attempt to make sense of the irony of this predicament.

This paper will analyze political events and culture throughout the aftermath of World War I, World War II, and 1956 counter-revolution. From that analysis, we see clear indication of the flourishing of national conservatism in Hungary due to its failure to heal from the Treaty of Trianon and subsequent tragedies. This paper will go on to argue that this trauma shouldn’t be looked at in the lens of victimhood, but rather as a cover-up for the shame of Hungary’s previous regimes, in contrast to Orbán’s view of Hungary as a victim of history. While some of the blame should be attributed to outside actors that Orbán names, by shifting the lens of trauma from victimhood to self-reflection, the view of Hungarian history is by all intents and purposes accurate. The scapegoating and persecution of Syrian refugees is a part of a cyclical pattern in Hungarian nationalism.

Hungarian political discourse is engulfed in a cyclical pattern of far-right nationalism fixated on the characteristics of ethnicity, religion, and political ideology. The emergence of these characteristics as defining traits on Hungarian nationalism during transitional points in Hungarian history indicates a failure to cope with the trauma of the Treaty of Trianon signed after World War I. By comparing and contrasting the political arguments and implementations of the three characteristics in Hungarian national identity during the interwar period, World War II, and the 1956 counter-revolution, it can be ascertained how the circumstances/traumas of Trianon paint a different picture of Hungary that conflicts with Orbán’s view. The evidence clearly points to the failure to
cope with the trauma of Trianon which put Hungary on its current political course towards extreme right-wing conservative nationalism.

There is a wide spectrum of sources used in this paper. As stated previously, historians are attempting to redefine nationalism in the wake of National Conservatism. There has been plenty written about the myths used in the nation building of the early 20th century. Hungary and the trauma of Trianon certainly fit under that categorization.⁸ Other secondary sources used relate to the anti-Semitism used to build Hungary as a nation.⁹ What makes this paper unique is the access to personal primary sources from the Hungarian American Association and Alexander Library in New Brunswick. These included memoirs, films and personal correspondences on these topics of ethnicity, religion, and political ideology. Memoirs such as those belonging to Regent Miklos Horthy were valuable in ascertaining his beliefs and motives during his reign. Cardinal Mindszenty’s memoirs were also published for the general public, giving his perspective on the events that unfolded. Films such as Magnate Mickey and A Tanu give the context of the general populace’s opinion on the various regimes in power. This allows for a cultural approach to historiography rather than the traditional theoretical analysis based on first hand experiences.

The Hungarian historiography is muddled across the board. Hungary has always been a multi-ethnic, diverse, religious, and politically complicated country, and this has led to a wide spectrum of interpretations on any topic in regards to history. It was already a diverse ethnic state before it was incorporated into the Austrian Empire, not to mention

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⁹ Hanebrink, Specter Haunting Europe, 4-10.
the parts of Hungary that belonged to the Ottoman Empire for over 200 years. Consensus is difficult to reach and the friction between academic circles in Hungary contributes to that difficulty. The past century with Trianon, the Holocaust, and the 1956 Counter-Revolution influence personal feelings towards the topic. Hungarian historians and the Hungarian government have further complicated the already complex issue. The moving of the Crown of Saint Stephen is the most notable public historiographical example of this complexity.

The moving of the Crown of Saint Stephen to the Hungarian Parliament from the National History Museum is the most public example of Hungary's complex history. On January 1st of 2001 the Crown was moved from Hungary’s National Museum to the Parliament building on orders of Prime Minister Orbán. This was the first time the Crown of St. Stephen was moved since the United States, under President Jimmy Carter, returned it to Hungary in 1978. The Crown is emblematic of the Christian State. St. Stephen was crowned as the 1st King of Hungary and the leader who converted to Christianity. Its move to the parliament was the turning point to the neo-historicism and nationalism that guides Hungary today. That Hungary would turn to the supposed past Christian roots and that those roots had been the catalyst for success in the past. This itself is a delusion of Orban’s interpretation of the fact that St. Stephen and the Hungarians of Medieval times did not view Hungary in the nation state context society views it as today. Its vagueness is meant to draw upon the trauma and anxiety of the more

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10 Kovács, “Overcoming History through Trauma,” 527.
recent past to support his regime. That vagueness and trauma is propped up by the feelings of resentment post Trianon.

The vagueness of trauma used to prop up Orban’s view of Hungarian ethnicity, religion and political affiliation is a battleground for historians to snuff out. The inspiration for this paper was a journal titled “Overcoming History Through Trauma: Hungarian Historikerstreit” by Eva Kovacs. She identified that the vagueness of the Trianon was deliberate in its utility for Orbán and others before him to hide behind self-victimization and call upon the fears of a nation not having experienced the event.12 Kovacs’s journal focuses on the analytical issues made by Hungarian Historians and their involvement in the political climate of Hungary. This muddles the historiography in an anti-Semitic slant in regards to the Holocaust. Kovacs then dissects the Romsics-Gero debate to reveal the Hungarian tendency towards neo-historicism influencing the historiography.

The debate occurred when social historian Andras Gero accused one of the 13 historians of the Academy of Sciences Ignac Romsics of “academic anti-Semitism”. Conversation revolved around Romasics’ exclusion of anti-Semitic legislation between the two world wars in his academic work. The debate then opened up to other historians to discuss the cultural and social implications of the Treaty of Trianon and the relationship it played in stoking anti-Semitism in Hungary. After two months of debates, Romsics altered his viewpoint to acknowledge Jews who assimilated into Hungary and their contributions to the modernization of Hungary. Romsics also proclaimed that “Trianon and the Holocaust were tightly connected components of the tragic failure of

12 Kovács, “Overcoming History through Trauma,” 531.
Hungarian national-liberal state and nation building, and that he puts his faith in a ‘new liberal integrative model of nation building,”13 What Kovacs concluded is that the national trauma of Hungarian victimhood rhetoric was influencing authoritative academics in assessing the historiography. In this case, the plight of Hungarian Jews had been overlooked.

Instead of recognizing Jewish suffering at the hands of Hungary, the plight of the Jewish community was now being used as a comparison to help cement Hungarian national victimhood. Kovacs notes that while Hungary scapegoated Jews for the repercussions in participating in World War I, these anti-Semitic national trends did gain fervor with Hungarian minorities living outside the borders of Hungary. These minorities suffered persecution alongside the Jewish communities before World War II. The incorrect assessment made by Orbán is that Hungarian minorities suffered alongside Jews. However, anti-Semitism was reintroduced to these minorities when their border was reincorporated in 1938. It is therefore the role of historians to dispel the Hungarian victimhood narrative and properly assess the history by taking into account that the historiography has been diluted by the nationalism surrounding the Trauma of Trianon.

Due to a wave of national conservatism currently gaining fervor across Europe, historians are attempting to redefine nationalism in this new context and identify the historic causes for its rise. Historian Paul Hanebrink writes about the neo-Nazi’s hate-fueled gathering of ethnonationality extremists in Charlottesville, Virginia on August 11th of 2017 before transitioning to Hungary’s far-right issues.14 Hanebrink decodes the anti-Semitism from current far right speech and traces it to its roots of the myth of Judeo-

13 Kovács, “Overcoming History through Trauma,” 525.
14 Hanebrink, Specter Haunting Europe, 4-10.
Bolshevism. Writing which traces the hate speech of the right works in conjunction to understand the return of ethnic conflicts post-Cold War such as the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

Nationalism is also attempting to redefine the conceptions of nationalism in the wake of a renewed ethnic conflict. Historians have looked toward past ethnic conflicts in nation-states to help understand the causes for the conflicts. Sociologist Roger Brubaker categorizes nationalism into three distinct and mutually antagonistic categories of the newly independent states nationalizing nationalism in which a core state tries to define itself, the transborder nationals which defines nationhood as a responsibility for success not only for the homeland but also for success with abroad relationships, and finally ethnic minorities who stand for political recognition in a state these minorities are not a core member of. In Brubaker’s introduction of *Nationalism Reframed* he uses Hungary during its time in the pre-World War Habsburg Empire as his example of defining the three categories.

Brubaker’s categories fit Hungary concisely. First the Habsburgs’ Austria was the Transborder state which had political and economic interests in their neighboring states. Second, Hungary was the newly independent state where it had great autonomy in the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary. Third, Serbia, the minority of Hungary who was resisting the Hungarian policy of enforcing its culture on ethnic minorities. The importance of these distinctions is that national conservatism is nostalgic for the ethnic ideology of the World War II. This ideology lends itself to Orbán and his FIDESZ party

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who were born from the collapse of the USSR, thus fueling their dissatisfaction with the
soviet system. The most disturbing nostalgia is the romanticism and attempt to reclaim
the image of Miklos Horthy, Hungary’s leader during World War II.

Orban’s veneration of Horthy frequently refers to the interwar period of
Hungarian History as a positive indication of Horthy’s leadership. As recently as
February 16th, 2020 Orbán called Horthy an “Exceptional Statesman,” referring to the
adversity he helped Hungary overcome in the wake of the Treaty of Trianon.\textsuperscript{17} Orban’s
Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Relations, Zoltan Kovacs claimed in an
interview that “anti-Semitism go back to the interwar period, when Hungary couldn't pick
a different side”.\textsuperscript{18} This view paints Horthy as a tragic hero who joined the Axis powers
out of desperation to keep Hungary autonomous. The nationalism and trauma that has
influenced the public make Horthy a controversial figure.\textsuperscript{19} The aforementioned view
that Horthy was a tragic actor is contested by academics and the media.

Scholarship and the media share the consensus viewpoint that Horthy was a
supporter of fascism. Paul Lendvai a journalist who transitioned into scholarship outlines
Horthy’s journey from Regent of Hungary to staunch ally of Mussolini and Hitler.\textsuperscript{20}
Horthy is often depicted as a political opportunist and eager to support Hitler’s vision for
central Europe. In regards to treatment of Jews, historians point to the “white terror”
carried out during and after World War I, as well as the deportation of over 440,000 Jews

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} Eva S. Balogh, “In Orbán's Opinion Miklós Horthy Was an Exceptional Statesman,” \textit{Hungarian Spectrum}, June 21, 2017.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Emily Tamkin, “How Viktor Orbán Turned the Treaty of Trianon into a Dangerous Political Weapon,” \textit{The New Statesman}, June 4, 2020.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Paul Lendvai, \textit{The Hungarians: A Thousands Years of Victory in Defeat} (London: Hurst and Company, 2003), 433.
\end{itemize}
during World War II.\textsuperscript{21} This is a depiction of Horthy as leader overmatched by his peers and sympathy to Nazi Germany. This view is further discussed in the paper and is a core part of the thesis’s argument. Later political leaders of Hungary are less controversial to discuss. Cardinal József Mindszenty, one of the faces of the 1956 Revolution against the Soviet Union, is a more popular and less controversial figure to the Hungarian populace. Mindszenty is a less controversial figure to Hungarians because he refused to collaborate with the fascist authorities and was even imprisoned by them. Thus his reputation was untarnished unlike other members of the Catholic Clergy in Hungary.

Cardinal József Mindszenty is a beloved figure by the Orbán regime and has been traditionally viewed in a positive light by historians. Mindszenty, to Orbán and many Hungarians, is viewed as the figurehead of resistance against Communism in Hungary. Mindszenty was the most prominent member of the catholic clergy targeted for political persecution by Communist Hungary and the Soviet Union. His trial by the authorities claiming inciting the 1956 Counter-Revolution is considered a show trial and abuse of political power by the Communist factions.\textsuperscript{22} A Cardinal who had defied the Nazis was the voice of Hungary on the global stage during the brutal retaliation to the 1956 Counter-Revolution. This narrative fits Orban’s vision for a victimized Hungary, a Hungary that stands proud and tall in its “traditions”. As such, recent scholarship has taken a skeptical view of Cardinal Mindszenty.

Academic scholarship is more skeptical of Cardinal Mindszenty's actions and motives. His resistance to communism in Hungary is viewed through the lens of

\textsuperscript{22}Lendvai, \textit{The Hungarians}, 433.
maintaining his political power rather than that of a national hero. This idea stems from the Catholic Church’s position of power in Hungary. The Hungarian Catholic Church was the most defiant in the sovietization of Hungary. Mindszenty was the leader the church’s anti-communist movement and the most vocal critic of the Hungarian communist party. The sovietization would’ve curtailed the church’s authority. Attempts made to coexist by the Hungarian communist party were rebuffed publicly by Mindszenty. This failure to compromise and the reactions of Mindszenty to openly engage in politics have painted him as a reactionary attempting to maintain the prominence of pre-Trianon Hungary.\textsuperscript{23} This skepticism towards Mindszenty undermines the narrative that Hungary was resisting sovietization for national self-preservation. Instead, it paints the idea that political elites are continually pushing a narrative of national victimization and self-preservation in order to serve their political goals. Orbán is the most recent of these political elites.

Orbán stylizes his political achievements as a continuation of the national spirit and self-determination of Hungary. Orban’s personal biographer Paul Lendvai wrote “the survival of the Hungarian nation state is a miracle of European History”.\textsuperscript{24} Growing up at the end of the Cold War, Orbán knew the history and that the Trauma of Trianon and years of communism have exacerbated the Hungarian populace's sense of national abandonment.\textsuperscript{25} To this end Orbán played up the strengths of the figures who stood up for Hungary during these times and attempts to emulate them. Orban’s party FIDESZ used this sense of nationalism to reclaim political power in the 2010 election. Party success

\textsuperscript{23} Peter Kenez, “The Hungarian Communist Party and the Catholic Church, 1945–1948” \textit{The Journal of Modern History} 75, no. 4 (December 1, 2003): 864–89.
\textsuperscript{24} Lendvai, The Hungarians, 7.
was also helped by political scandal in the opposition and the 2008 financial crash that led to more disillusionment. His emulation of Horthy and Mindszenty to enforce his political will without having to cooperate with the opposition gives some Hungarians pride in their prime minister. However, other groups have a more antagonistic relationship with Orbán due to his demeanor and policies.

Academics and the media have an antagonistic relationship with Viktor Orbán. Orbán has a withstanding feud with Hungarian media mogul George Soros. The feud between the two caused Central European University to move its campus from Budapest to Vienna. This has made it easy for academics to denounce not just Orban’s historical views, but his personal attacks on the institutions of academia. The media also has been under attack from Orbán. This has led to his own biographer Paul Lendvai to openly criticize Orbán. Lendvai’s tell all book paints Orbán as a chauvinist demagogue willing to maintain his own personal power at the expense of Hungary’s social progress. To that end academia and the press have made the easy comparison of Viktor Orbán to Miklos Horthy. While the misdeeds of Orbán have not cost millions of lives like Horthy’s. The illiberal, inhumane and authoritarian regime’s actions such as the treatment of the Syrian refugees draws comparisons to the fascist Horthy.

*Ethnicity*

Ethnicity is the first pillar of disillusionment Orbán constructed in his new vision of Hungary. Orbán and national conservatives prioritize ethnic purity. There are citizens

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who belong within the community of the nation and then there is the other or outsider. Nationalism has made this distinction one that individuals are willing to die for or let others die from nationalistic apathy.\textsuperscript{28} For example, Orbán claims that the mass migration of Syrian Refugees undermines the ethnic harmony of Hungary. In Orban’s viewpoint the refugees are a danger due to their inability to assimilate into Hungarian society and their desire to “bend” Hungary to a different way of life.\textsuperscript{29} The argument that ethnic minorities are undermining Hungary’s national identity is not unique to Orbán. Ethnicity and maintaining the status of ethnic purity has been a key argument in fear mongering.

Miklos Horthy used the same tropes as Viktor Orbán in spreading fear of the “other” in the aftermath of Trianon.

Early in Horthy’s tenure as leader he targeted the Jewish population of Hungary. On March 20\textsuperscript{th}, 1919 an event known as the “Red Terror” occurred, led by the Hungarian Communist Party’s leader Bela Kun who staged a coup d’état. The Communists were primarily former soldiers, Jews, and younger intellectuals.\textsuperscript{30} In response, Romania, with the support of France, invaded. Alongside the invasion, former prominent Hungarian military officials formed a counter-revolutionary force in Szeged. Horthy ecstatically offered his services to the counter-revolutionary forces and subsequently became a member of the counter-revolutionary forces. The instability of Hungary would climax with extreme showings of brutality before some semblance of stability occurred. As Romanian forces crossed the Tisza River, Horthy launched what is now dubbed the

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\textsuperscript{28} Anderson, Benedict R. OG. \textit{Imagined Communities} (London: Verso, 1982), 8.
\textsuperscript{29} Orbán, “Speech of the 5th Meeting.”
\end{flushleft}
“White Terror”. Squadrons of counter-revolutionary troops terrorized those who Horthy
dubbed “unpatriotic and anti-militaristic”.31 In practice this was a purge of the local
Hungarian Jewish communities. Hungary’s national identity had been damaged after
World War I. Horthy chose to scapegoat its Jewish community and make an ethnic
distinction between Jew and Hungarian. In a time of crisis that Hungary was facing
following the coup d’état the public was desperate for stability. The solution for Horthy
was to proclaim that the Jews had undermined Hungary. In Horthy’s view it was the Jews
that supported the Revolution and following that logic meant it was the true Hungarians
who supported Horthy. This distinction was a formative piece in developing Horthy’s
vision for Hungary.

Horthy’s operation of White Terror to combat the Hungarian Soviet Republic was
in fact just a pogrom against the Jewish community and media of Hungary. Within
Horthy’s personal letters this is explicitly stated. Lajos Windischgraetz, a member of the
Austro-Hungarian nobility, offered his services and political connections to Horthy. In a
letter he recommended making contact with a fellow politician Vilmos Vazsonyi.
Vazsonyi is described by Windischgraetz as “a merciless and unrelenting foe against the
October Revolution… he is the Most pronounced antagonist in Hungary of the
Revolutionary Jewish journalism, which during recent years has had a great role, and he
fights his time only until he can break those who, also in his opinion, have ruined this
country”.32 Ironically the end of the letter mentions the fact that Vazsonyi himself was a
Jew, but that he could still be trusted. The language used in the letter was abrasively

31 Miklós Horthy, Miklos Szinai, and Laszlo Szuks. The Confidential Papers of Admiral Horthy (Budapest:
32 Horthy, The Confidential Papers, 7.
directed to the fact that Horthy believed Jews and Communists were targets and needed to be removed from the vision Horthy had for Hungarian prosperity.

It was this fear mongering and slaughter of the Jewish community that would help place Horthy in power. By August 4th, 1919 the Romanians had captured Budapest with Bela Kun escaping to Austria. A new monarchical government was formed under István Friedrich with Archduke Joseph the cousin of Charles the 1st chosen as regent until Charles could claim the crown. This was an unpopular decision both in Hungary and abroad, causing Archduke Joseph to resign on August 23rd. Romanian troops withdrew on November 13th, 1919 and Counter-Revolutionary forces under Horthy entered the city on the 16th. Horthy was elected as the new Regent of the Kingdom of Hungary on March 1st, 1920. The Hungarian military elite had chosen Horthy over their former King Charles. This was a bizarre decision since the military elite had started the counter-revolution to install Charles as king. Horthy maintained his power just as he ascended to power by targeting outlier groups such as non-Christians, ethnic minorities, and political adversaries.

Roughly three months later Hungary would be handed the Treaty of Trianon which led Horthy to further scapegoat the Jewish community. Trianon which imposed harsh sanctions and ceded about two thirds of its territory for Hungary’s participation in World War 1. Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia, and most odd of all Austria received a portion of the ceded territory. These sanctions caused great trauma for Hungarians. Horthy would use this trauma to advance his power. The White Terror was a major political smear on Hungarian political reputation internationally in the wake of World War 1. Many innocent Jews were massacred and the League of Nations pressured
Hungary to end the violence. While foreign pressure would end the White Terror, the persecution would not. The language would evolve from declarations on Jewish identity to legislation restricting the rights of Jews.

Horthy’s anti-Semitism was rampant early on throughout his administration. Within 7 months of establishment, the administration had pushed anti-Semitic legislature. The earliest law was introduced September 22nd, 1920. Known as the *numerus clausus* law it limited the amount of Jewish students allowed to a university class to be a total of 6% of the class. The reasoning behind the passing of the law was “racial self-defense”.

Bishop Ottokár Prohászka convinced enough members of the national assembly that the Jews had not assimilated properly into Hungary, and were oppressive to the nation. Prohászka was a rabid anti-Semite who was once shunned by the national assembly for his far right wing views. The *numerus clausus* law was the first anti-Semitic law implemented after World War I. Jews were scapegoated and officially punished even before their counterpart communities in Germany. The relationship between fascist nations would only further anti-Semitism in Hungary.

Horthy and the political situation in Europe would exacerbate anti-Semitism in Hungary. He turned to Nazi-Germany and fascist Italy as allies in order to push territorial claims on the neighboring states of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania. Hungary’s right wing parties were in constant communication. Upon his return from visiting Hitler, Prime Minister Gyula Gombos wrote to Horthy about the benefits of

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33 Horthy, *The Confidential Papers*, 78.
adopting German racial policy to Hungary.\textsuperscript{35} Hungary would go on to implement laws almost identical to Hitler's Nuremberg Laws. Known as Law XV/1938, the law limited Jews to make up twenty percent of a profession, and restricted the right to own property.\textsuperscript{36} As influence of the extreme right grew, political struggles began within Hungary. The monarchists thought that the laws were fair enough, but the fascists elements grew more fervent in punishing Jews. Horthy used this infighting for his political gain.

The clash of racial ideology within Hungarian politics was a hurdle Horthy had to overcome to push anti-Semitic legislation. Horthy was caught between political struggles between the Monarchists who wished to eventually restore the Habsburgs and the various fascist parties. One such fascist party was the Unity Party which produced all of the Prime Ministers who served under Horthy. The various monarchists and fascist groups were constantly fighting each over policy of race. The majority of monarchists attempted to block anti-Semitic legislation out of the belief that Law XV/1938 was enough to encourage assimilation of the Jewish populace. In addition they believed further punishment of the Jewish population was against their Christian morals.\textsuperscript{37} The fighting over racial policy by the monarchists was an attempt to limit Horthy’s authority and the influence of German racial ideology in Hungary. Failure to further anti-Semitism would fall out of favor with Horthy. Such is the case of Prime Minister Béla Imrédy.

\textsuperscript{35} Horthy, \textit{The Confidential Papers}, 66-68.
\textsuperscript{36} Hanebrink, \textit{In Defense of Christian Hungary}, 161.
\textsuperscript{37} Hanebrink, \textit{In Defense of Christian Hungary}, 162.
Horthy used the infighting between parties to further develop anti-Semitism. Béla Imrédy continuously tabled a second round of anti-Semitic legislation. Imrédy was a member of the fascist Unity party, but made compromises to stall further Jewish legislation. To spite Imrédy for tabling the legislation members of the fascist Unity Party resigned from their positions in the government. In addition, Horthy spoke and made it well known in his letters to other officials Imrédy held sympathy for the Jews because his grandfather was Jewish. Faced with embarrassment, Imrédy resigned, but Horthy seized the opportunity to fire him instead.\textsuperscript{38} This was an example of sabotaging political careers of any official who did not support Horthy and his anti-Semitism. Horthy would go on and appoint Pál Teleki as prime minister. The 2nd round of anti-Jewish laws furthered the strain on middle and working class Jewish Hungarians. The political embarrassment surprisingly pushed Imrédy further into the right wing. Imrédy would exit the Unity Party and start the Renewal Party. The Renewal party was a close ally of the Arrow Cross party.

The Arrow Cross party was the most far right and racially intolerant party within Hungary, officially founded by Ferenc Szálasi in 1939. Previous offshoots of the party had been banned by the government in previous years. However, an agreement was reached with Horthy’s regime allowing them to participate in government. The party served as little more than a Nazi Germany puppet.\textsuperscript{39} They advocated for Hungary to support Nazi Germany’s war efforts against the Soviet Union and push a final solution to the “Jewish Problem”. While they were successful in advocating for a third wave of anti-

\textsuperscript{38} Horthy, \textit{The Confidential Papers}, 112-120.
Semitic legislation, their core racial beliefs were yet to be realized into law. Their racial belief was that Jews should be designated an ethnic group that was racially inferior and should not be protected by the law.\textsuperscript{40} When the Soviet Union reclaimed territory conquered by the Axis the Arrow Cross was given their opportunity to implement their belief. The conclusion to oppressive racial policy was genocide.

Both Horthy and the Arrow Cross party assisted Hitler in committing genocide against the Jewish population of Europe. Early in 1944, Hitler demanded that Hungary deport Jews under the guise that they would be interned in working camps to assist in the war effort. Protests from Sweden in England forced Horthy to stall the process of deporting Jews to Auschwitz.\textsuperscript{41} Instead Jews were forced into ghettos outside of Budapest. An estimated 440,000 Jews had been deported to Auschwitz by Horthy.\textsuperscript{42} Behind the scenes rumors were afoot that Horthy was negotiating a surrender to the allies. Hungary offered a valuable tactical position to Germany’s Easter border. On October 15th, 1944 a squadron of Nazi commandos kidnapped Horthy and installed Ferenc Szálasi as the new leader of Hungary. German troops would enter Hungary turning the former ally into another occupied nation. Under Szálasi the remnants of Hungary’s military forces massacred the population of Jews living in ghettos. The Jews confined in these ghettos were men enlisted or conscripted into labor battalions for the belief they were helping Hungary’s war effort. In the aftermath of World II the suffering

\textsuperscript{40} Sugar, \textit{A History of Hungary}, 346.
\textsuperscript{41} Sugar, \textit{A History of Hungary}, 353.
\textsuperscript{42} Hanebrink, \textit{In Defense of Christian Hungary}, 162.
of the Jewish population would be mixed with the suffering of the Hungarian populace during the Nazi occupation.

After World War II the ethnic disdain for the Jews subsided. The revelation of the suffering the Jewish community experienced under fascist regimes was appropriated by Hungarian nationalism for they too had “suffered” under the Nazi regime. With the occupation of Soviet forces many of the former aristocratic leaders had fled or executed for war crimes. This led the Roman Catholic Church as community leaders. Much of the anti-Semitic faction of the church such as Bishop Prohászka had passed away. The remaining clergy were closely aligned to the monarchist faction within the Hungarian government during World War II. Thus when the Arrow Cross party seized power it imprisoned clergy members. The most famous persecution of a Catholic official was the bishop of Veszprém, József Mindszenty.\textsuperscript{43} It was thus that the persecution of Hungarian Jews and the persecution of Catholic Hungarian clergy became intertwined as joint suffering of the Hungarian nation. No longer was Jewishness viewed as a separate ethnic group, but as an extension of Hungarian nationality. The persecution of the Jews was now diluted with the suffering of Hungary during the occupation of Hungary by Nazi Germany at the end of World War II. This appropriation of Jewish suffering made a sudden shift in perception of Jewishness. Jews were now accepted as a Hungarian identity. With this, Horthy’s role in persecuting the Jews in Hungary was diminished.

With the occupation by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union obscuring Horthy’s persecution of the Hungarian Jewish population, the blame shifted to Nazi Germany and

the Arrow Cross party. The suffering Hungary and Jewish Hungarians specifically endured was viewed as an extension of Trianon. This changing of the national narrative perpetrated the disillusionment that Horthy was a “great statesman” and attempted his best to throw off the unfair constraints Trianon had placed on the nation state of Hungary. The twisted posture was that Hungary was coerced and lied to by Hitler. It was by no fault of their own that they were on the losing side of World War II and occupied by Nazi Germany. Gross exaggerations even popped up that Horthy was trying to save Jews during the deportations. These were all coping mechanisms to deal with yet another national embarrassment. Where Trianon blamed communism and Jews, the disgust with the Holocaust removed the disdain for Jews and appropriated their suffering for the larger national narrative of Hungarian suffering. Now with the Soviet Union occupying Hungary, a new scapegoat needed to be found.

The Arrow Cross party shifted the perception Orientalism. The deranged beliefs of the Arrow Cross party were under the ideology radical branch Turanism. At the time, Hungary was engaged academically with Turanism and in growing academic relationships with Turkey. In fact Hungary offered academic scholarships to Turkic students to study in Hungary. The Arrow Cross believed the racial superiority of the Hungarians descended from the Central Asian steppes along with the Turks and Mongols. With the Arrow Cross party taking the fall for Hungary’s failure in World War II Islam and Turanism became tainted by association to the Arrow Cross party.

44 Kovács, “Overcoming History through Trauma,” 525.
45 Sugar, A History of Hungary, 353.
Ideology shifted toward Christian nationalism. With ideological conflicts between the Catholic Church and the Soviet Union the Church branded the Soviet Union as the next threat to Hungarian Identity.

Islam was paired with communism as the new oppressors of Hungary replacing Judaism. By 1948 Hungary was relegated as a Soviet satellite state. The Catholic Church led the political resistance against Communists. József Mindszenty, now an archbishop delivered a sermon during a public festival celebrating the year of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1948. He declared that the Red Army was the new Ottoman Empire invoking Hungary’s past conflicts with the Ottoman Empire and declaring the Soviet Union as the new threat to Hungarian existence. It is from here that the prejudice against the Jews would not shift to traditional ethnic groups following the Islamic faith. Film and media would portray Islam as the next threat to Hungarian ethnic identity during the Cold War. These views of colonization were used and applied by Slavic and Balkan in their relationship with Austria-Hungary. The most notable was when Hungary standardized Hungarian as the official language and banned all other languages from their schools. Now Hungary applied this concept to their current situation.

Hungarian literature and culture represented Islam as the next ethnic threat attempting to undermine Hungary. The 1899 novel *Eclipse of the Crescent Moon* written by Géza Gárdonyi was a national tale used by Mindszenty to emphasize the USSR threat to Hungary. The book has the outnumbered Hungarian town of Eger able to fend off the Ottoman army and rescue the children kidnapped by the Turks. This was representative

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of the fear and resistance Catholics put up against the Soviet Union. A film adaptation titled Engri Csillagok (Stars of Eger) was released in 1968. The use of Islam as a stand in for communism was to distance the Hungarian ancestry from their eastern roots.

The lineage of ethnic scapegoating has thus concluded with Islam as its target. The trauma of Trianon was blamed on communism which in reality was blaming the Jewish population. When the suffering of the Jews could be appropriated for a national narrative communism needed a new scapegoat. This role defaulted to Islam. Now with Europe facing a large wave of refugees, this unrecognized trauma is now being taken out on the Syrian refugees. In addition these refugees are accused of not holding the same religious or “Christian values”.

Religion

Religion is the second pillar of disillusionment Orbán uses to support his vision of Hungary. Orbán and national conservatives prioritize “traditional Christian values”. The emphasis on Christian values is just a facade to maintain a political base. This is not original to Orbán as both Horthy and Mindszenty called upon Christian values to motivate individuals into action. These actions ended up contradicting or undermining other Christian denominations. This proves them to not be ideological based, but reveals them to be personal attacks against political opponents.

Horthy used the idea of “Christian values” to demonize the Jewish community and seize power. This was displayed in his personal letters. When discussing plans during the White Terror to remove communists, Jews and the media he referred to them as
enemies of Christendom.\textsuperscript{50} This riled up the monarchist faction of the Hungarian military. Horthy used the guise of religion to dupe them into thinking they were liberating Hungary from the Communists.\textsuperscript{51} Their goal was to restore the throne to the Habsburg King Charles the IV. In fact Horthy finagled the political circumstances to become Regent of Hungary. This was due to the League of Nations not wanting a Habsburg ruler to sit on the throne of Austria or Hungary. He was able to keep his position in the government by promising to recognize the Habsburg claim when the timing was right. A Habsburg would never sit on the throne and instead all the monarchists did was kill Hungarian civilians and install Horthy as their leader.

Horthy again used the Christian values argument when trying to reclaim Hungary’s former territory now held by Czechoslovakia and Romania. In negotiations Horthy claimed that areas lost due to the Trianon needed to be returned to Hungary, a proper Christian state.\textsuperscript{52} Statements referring to the Christian state were made to apply pressure on Hungary’s Slavic neighboring states and to garner favor abroad to return parts of the former Kingdom of Hungary. Czechoslovakia attempted to reach out to the democratic pastries within Hungary, but this would be a fruitless endeavor.\textsuperscript{53} Nazi Germany would eventual form an agreement with Hungary and divided the territory Czechoslovakia. Again Horthy had played the Christian values card and was rewarded with the political outcome he desired.

\textsuperscript{50} Horthy, \textit{The Confidential Papers}, 3.
\textsuperscript{51} Horthy, \textit{The Confidential Papers}, 17.
\textsuperscript{52} Hanebrink, \textit{In Defense of Christian Hungary}, 95.
Mindszenty too would also play the “Christian value” card to personally attack political opponents. The communists within Hungary and Catholic Church were a prime example of oil and water. Mindszenty proclaimed Communism and Christian Europe were two irreconcilable systems of faith. While this may have been true for Mindszenty it was not true for all Christian Hungarians. Some Christians had a working relationship with the communist party.

A band of Jesuits priests formed an organization called KALOT and had a working relationship with the Communists. KALOT roughly translates to Body of Catholic Agricultural Youth Societies. KALOT was the equivalent of the boy scouts, but had a history with the Arrow Cross party. When the transition to communism occurred, the leaders of KALOT worked together with the communist leadership. This did not sit well with Mindszenty who took a position of absolute resistance to the communist regime. Mindszenty argued with KALOT and threatened to disavow them from the church and questioned their catholic morality. This all or nothing approach proves that the Christian values were arbitrary and that this was a political crusade for Mindszenty.

In the end “Christian values” did not represent a continued and shared tradition of guiding principles. For Horthy, they represented a political opportunity to make others do his bidding. For Mindszenty it was a way to disavow the communist and anyone who collaborated with them in Hungarian politics. For Orbán it is the same. The Syrian refugees represent a political obstacle. By denouncing them as not holding traditional Christian values, he is able to garner support from his sycophants and maintain his grasp.

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on political leadership. The same all or nothing approach was taken by Orbán and Mindszenty. They refuse to compromise or cooperate with their opposition on any issue. This was all a ploy for Mindszenty and Orbán to maintain their political power. By refusing to cooperate with the opposition the situation becomes more desperate for a solution. Thus the opposition must give in to their demands to solve the issue.

*Political Affiliation*

Political affiliation is the third pillar of disillusionment Orbán has constructed in vision of Hungary. Orbán and national conservatives prioritize political allegiance to the party. This is meant to give the appearance of ladder climbing or career progression, but in fact is meant to keep individuals submissive to the Orbán. Both Horthy and Mindszenty were part of the traditional elite of Hungary and attempted to keep the status quo for their own benefit.

Miklós Horthy de Nagybánya was born into a minor noble family on June 18th, 1868. He joined the Austro-Hungarian naval academy at a young age. After graduating the academy Horthy swore his loyalty to the Habsburg Emperor Franz Joseph the 1st.

Horthy rapidly ascended the chain of command becoming the Commander-In-Chief of the Navy at the tail end of World War 1. He commanded The Austro-Hungarian Navy and participated in only a small number of insignificant skirmishes. His most successful operation was putting down the Cattaro Mutiny on February 3rd, 1918. The mutiny led to the resignation of the previous Naval Commander- In-Chief and Horthy was chosen as the replacement by Emperor Charles the 1st. At the end of the War as the Austro-Hungarian Empire began to collapse Admiral Horthy surrendered the fleet to the
Southern Slav National Council (the predecessor state to Yugoslavia). The surrender was done against the Emperor’s instruction. He then returned to Hungary in the midst of political anarchy. Horthy was adept at climbing the political ladder for minor feats. He made admiral without winning a significant engagement.

After World War 1, Hungary was rife with political instability and turnover, allowing Horthy to springboard to the top position. The Hungarian’s People's Republic was proclaimed by Hungarian Prime Minister Mihály Károlyi with the blessings of the Emperor on October 31st, 1918. Mihály Károlyi’s 1st decree was to dissolve the personal union of Austria and Hungary. This was done to deflect accountability of the war away from Hungary. In addition, Charles released a declaration withdrawing from politics of both Austria and Hungary. The declaration never mentioned abdication to the rights of the thrones of Austria and Hungary leaving room for a potential return. This return would never come to fruition. In March of 1920 Horthy was declared Regent of Hungary. This made him the most powerful political force in Hungary. He now had a solid foundation to maintain his political power.

Attempts to dislodge Horthy as Regent were fruitless. On two separate occasions Charles the IV attempted to reclaim the throne. Both attempts ended in failure with Horthy persuading Charles to leave before other nations intervened. Even though Horthy did attend Charles’s funeral it was a hollow act. Horthy had hijacked attempts to restore the Habsburg Monarchy by installing him as the de facto ruler. He proceeded to

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57 Horthy, The Confidential Paper, 3.
58 Von Habsburg Karl, The Proclamation of the Abdication of Emperor Karl I of Austria, (November 11th, 1918).
59 Horthy, The Confidential Papers, 29.
incorporate more fascist elements to Hungary in an attempt to maintain his spot as regent. Even among his fascist supporters Horthy showed little loyalty.

Mindszenty’s rise to power in some ways resembles Horthy. He came from the clergy which was second behind the military aristocrats in political power. As a member of clergy he opposed the Nazi execution of the Jews. For his faithfulness he was quickly promoted to cardinal. Before his appointment as Cardinal, Mindszenty was active in politics and protested Horthy’s government to defend the right of land distribution and tax leniency. Before even that he had supported the return of Charles the IV. In political participation, his role was to keep and maintain the power of the church and thus his authority. This was also a contributing factor of tension between the Hungarian Roman Catholic Church and the Communist Party during the Cold War.

Mindszenty used every opportunity to smear the Communist opposition. When KALOT was disbanded when one of its members murdered a communist official Mindszenty jumped on the political opportunity. Mindszenty used his church connections and preached a lie during the sermons that his old rival KALOT did not shoot the official, but instead the official committed suicide. This resulted in public opinion swaying toward Mindszenty’s view that compromising with the communist and Soviets was futile. This resulted in stricter policies against the Hungarian people by the Soviets. Mindszenty's refusal to compromise would eventually lead to the 1956 Counter-Revolution which would decimate the city of Budapest.

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Hungarian nationalism has been designed by those in power to have one person from the elite making decisions. For when the military elite were in charge that man was Miklos Horthy. When the military elite were vanquished after World War II that role fell to the Catholic clergy. The Catholics under Mindszenty’s direction fought tooth and nail to maintain their power. Within the fall of the Soviet Union the role of leader was obtained by Viktor Orbán. Just as Mindszenty and Horthy rewarded loyalty, we see Orbán award lucrative contracts and positions to those who are loyal to him. The cycle of the one man show continues. Unfortunately for the refugees, they are at the center of a political battle between Orbán and the European Union for how to handle the humanitarian crisis.

Conclusion

In conclusion Hungarian nationalism is stuck in a cyclical battle with authoritarianism. Those who wish to maintain the status quo continue to abuse the trauma of the past. This includes Orbán appropriating anti-Semitic rhetoric to support his legitimacy as Prime Minister of Hungary. The ethnic persecution of Jews has evolved over the years, first as radical racial policies persecuting the Jews, then appropriating their suffering for said persecution. Now, this persecution is being applied to the refugees fleeing Syria. In Hungary’s case, Christian values ended up being nothing less than tools to obtain political power or dismiss the human value of others. Political affiliation is used to climb the political ladder and maintain positioning at the top. For the Syrian Refugees they are a victim of circumstance. They are attempting to make a better life out of the trauma that has occurred and Hungary is looking for another victim to push the “we are
the real victim” national narrative. Hungary will be stuck in the national conservative cycle until someone admits to the failures and mistakes of the past.
Bibliography


