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## **Homeland Security?: Territorial Myths and Ontological Security in the European Union**

The EU may be a sui generis polity but it has not escaped the challenge of establishing narratives that help define its territoriality. Political narratives about territoriality, especially political myths, are important instruments for political communities to develop ontological security. The article argues that the European Union faced a dilemma in the refugee crisis in balancing its foundational values with a narrative about a territory with managed external borders. The EU's territorial myth is not entirely successful in that it lacks some key narrative forms that are essential for widely diffused myths. Territorial myths are not just about establishing borders but also about defining the community; so long as this remains ill-defined, the paper argues, territorial myths will contribute in a limited way to providing the ontological security to address pressing challenges.

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For my generation, Europe's identity begins with the fall of the Berlin Wall. I was 14 at the time. Today, my son is 14 and I don't want the symbol of European identity to be a wall between Hungary and Serbia, nor a wall of distrust between the countries of Europe. For us, for Italy, Europe should be a beacon of civilisation, not a wall of fear.  
Matteo Renzi

"If one [country] closes its borders, another one has to suffer – this is not my Europe,"  
Angela Merkel

As tens of thousands of migrants and refugees streamed across the Balkans looking to reach northern Europe in the second half of 2015, the European Union and its member states were thrust into a debate about borders and boundaries. It was not simply a discussion about how to ensure open borders for the single market but one that increasingly raised questions about the boundaries of the idea of Europe and Europeans. The flow of migrants forced EU officials, the member states and Europeans to address directly the questions of who truly belongs in Europe, why and who should act to decide who is in out and deserves to be out. Concern about border security quickly heightened concern about central notions in the construction of the European Union such as security, solidarity and sovereignty. Moreover, EU and national officials recognised that questions about the management of external borders were beginning to shape political debates about the future direction of integration. The EU and member states seemed to struggle with issues related to borders and security at precisely the point when they were becoming salient in political debates about the future of integration (Léonard and Kaunert 2016).

The debate that ensued about borders and territory in the European Union also raised the question of whether and how the EU defines a territory or homeland. Like its member states, the EU has tried to weave a story of a "homeland" or territorial boundaries: a sacred narrative that enshrines why the political community was formed along with the designs of what a common future will bring. The article draws on the notion of ontological security to argue that a political

community needs to have constancy and consistency in its practices in order for action to be taken in its name. The construction of territoriality is one of these practices that can provide this security and can guide agency. The aim of this article, then, is to examine the extent to which the construction of a European territoriality, with attendant borders, has provided a degree of ontological security that may allow the EU to respond to issues such as the migrant crisis and internal security questions. It argues that the EU may be a *sui generis* polity but it has used many of the conventional narratives of the state and nation in the search to establish a degree of ontological security. However, the EU's territorial myth is not entirely successful in that it lacks some key narrative forms that are essential for widely diffused myths. Territorial myths are not just about establishing borders but also about defining the community; so long as this remains ill-defined, the paper argues, territorial myths will contribute only a limited way to providing the ontological security to address pressing challenges.

### **Political Myth and Ontological Security**

Myths are distinct narrative forms in that they are sacred narratives, repositories of a collective representation of values, beliefs, aspirations, finality, ideals and attitudes (Bouchard 2014, 38-42, Dundes 1984). Political myths provide a cognitive and normative map for understanding and making appropriate why a political community has come together as well as what is done in its name (Bottici 2007, Flood 2001). The issue is, then, not whether myths provide an accurate reflection of reality but whether narratives become sacred and are used effectively as normative and cognitive maps that define and give meaning to a political community, helping to define who, more than what, it is.

There is a significant and growing literature on political myth but relatively little that helps us understand why some narratives are more successful than others in assuming the characteristics of a political myth. A notable exception is Gérard Bouchard, whose "sociology of myth" tries to set various stages in the myth-making process. He divides it into three essential stages that lead myths

to distinguish themselves from other narrative forms: diffusion, ritualisation and sacralisation (Bouchard 2013, Bouchard 2014). In the first, a range of actors, including cultural elites, public intellectuals and academics, emplot events in a narrative form, giving them a structure that is understandable and consistent with existing collective representations. In the second phase, these narratives become part of social life and the basis for decisions about collective action. The narratives become political myths in the third phase when they assume a sacred quality, defining the basis for the political community. To question the myth is to raise doubts about the very identity and existence of the political community. Some of the conditions that lead to this sacredness include: a coherent definition of the community, including but perhaps not necessarily its territory; adaptability that also comes from a diversity of meanings; the ability to leech or build from existing (national) myths; the invention of adversaries; (Bouchard 2014, 137-152).

It is not just the content but also the form that narratives take that helps determine the extent to which they can become effective normative and cognitive maps. Whether or not political myths resonate with citizens is also partly determined by whether they are in a narrative form that is recognisable and understandable. Narratives assemble actors, actions and events in a way that makes their unfolding comprehensible and gives them meaning (Ricoeur 2010). Their success depends, in part, on the extent to which those who hear or read the stories recognise how they have been arranged (Bal 2009). The classic narrative form is Aristotle's three-part structure, with a beginning, middle and an end. Gustav Freytag's pyramid (1863) or five-stage narrative arc provides a useful structure for understanding how political myths are constructed as stories. Like Aristotle, he identifies a beginning, essentially an introduction or exposition that has an inciting moment which disrupts the existing status quo. This trigger is followed by rising action in which the protagonists face an intensifying number of conflicts and tensions that come to a head in the third part, the narrative's climax; this is the peak of the pyramid, the point of greatest tension and provides a decisive turning point. Then follows the dénouement or falling action in which the consequences of the crisis or critical juncture play themselves out between the protagonists and the

antagonists, leading to the fifth stage of the narrative arc, the resolution or conclusion in which a new order is established. Successful political myths make the world understandable because they have a clear narrative arc that leads to a resolution that has an equally clear normative message. It is not the stories that are necessarily unambiguous but the meaning they are meant to impart and share.

Political myths serve a number of functions, from helping to establish political legitimacy to ensuring continuity of institutions (Schöpflin 1997). They also can serve to provide ontological security for a polity, including the EU. The debate about the *sui generis* nature of the EU centres primarily on *what* it is – confederal, post-modern, compound, federalising, etc. – more than on who it is and why. However, as a social and collective actor, the EU may also seek out ontological security; that is, practices, routines and narratives that help define who it is and why it remains as a political community (Mitzen 2006a, Steele 2008). Drawing from its use by Giddens and international relations scholars, ontological security refers to a sense of confidence of one's identity (Berenskoetter 2014, Giddens 1991, Mitzen 2006b). Giddens claims that ontological security, “[r]efers to the confidence that most humans beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action” (Giddens 1990, 92). Ontological security claims that social actors need basic trust in the continuity of the factors that give them their sense of identity in order for them to have agency, to set objectives, define interests and act strategically. This continuity is rooted in habit and routine (Giddens 1990, 98) as well as in the stability of the environment that defines an identity. Routines are important in ordering the social world as they, “Serve the cognitive function of providing individuals with ways of knowing the world and how to act, giving them a felt certainty that enables purposive choice. They also serve the important emotional function of ‘inoculating’ individuals against the paralytic, deep fear of chaos” (Mitzen 2006b, 347).

Scholars of international relations have extended the concept to argue that states seek security in ways that ensure a consistency in the narratives and stories they tell about who they are,

what they do and why. Narratives, including political myths help provide this confidence. They provide a way to sequence events and the environment so that social actors can make choices in the face of uncertainty, rooted in the familiar and the understandable. The premise of ontological security is that states and other political actors seek to promote not only material and strategic interests but also some form of self-identity in their interactions with other actors in the international arena (Vieira 2016). As Ned Lebow argues, “The largely routinized nature of social intercourse helps people structure their identities and enhance their capacity for agency, and accordingly becomes a powerful component of their security system” (Lebow 2008, 25). He goes on to claim that these routines are rooted in narratives that shape who they are, their environment and who is external to it. Arguments about ontological security point out that the political actors, including states and the European Union, craft autobiographies and that these revolve around narratives. As Subotic argues, “States, therefore, construct “autobiographical identity narratives” to make sense of their own behavior in the international system, to give their actions meaning” (Subotić 2016).

There has been a recent interest in the role of political narratives in the construction of the European Union. Perhaps the edited volume, *European Stories*, is the most representative of this “narrative turn”. It highlights the ways in which the narrative construction of European integration was largely done at the national level, often with competing narratives of how national stories could be reconciled with the European project (Lacroix and Nicolaïdis 2010). While political myths have been very much part of the narrative construction of political communities, they have not received a great deal of attention in trying to understand the European Union until very recently (Bostanci 2013, Bottici and Challand 2013, Della Sala 2016, Kølvråa 2016, Obradovic 1996). Perhaps this is because myths have been associated with meta-narratives of “thick” forms of belonging such as state and ethnicity. However, if we accept that narratives – that is, the ordering of events with a beginning, middle and end - are important not only for creating a political community but also for how we understand the organisation of that community and the basis on which it is governed

(Somers and Gibson 1994, Somers 1994), then we can look to European stories, including political myths, as ways of examining what the EU does (or does not), why and whether this fits into cognitive and normative schemes that make it understandable (cfr:Nicolaïdis and Howse 2002) and “ordinary”.

### **Territoriality and Territorial Myths**

Territoriality has been one of the central elements in modern state and nation-building experiences. It is the basis for our notions of political power and key concepts such as sovereignty and solidarity, as territoriality, “[I]s a strategy to establish different degrees of access to people, things and relationships” (Sack 1986, 20). Establishing the territorial boundaries of what is to be the repository of legitimate political authority has defined the modern period and distinguished it from medieval notions of rule over people (Branch 2013, 4). In establishing the confines of the reach of legitimate political authority, it determines who is to be governed and by whom. Moreover, territoriality also sets the boundaries of ontological security for the state, providing it not only with the constancy of a material environment that housed the nation but also with a physical expression of its self-identity. Deciding to act was not just a question of what to do and when but also where; and where also helps determine who and why. Mitzen argues that ontological security at the individual and collective level derives from the need “to experience oneself as a whole” and to avoid constant change. The uncertainty of the social world needs to be reined in to manageable and understandable limits (Mitzen 2006b, 342-46). Territoriality can be an important instrument in creating the routinization of social relations within clearly marked boundaries that can give meaning and create a shared understanding within a political community.

Defining and establishing borders is not just an exercise in cartography. It requires employing our spatial understanding of the social world; whether on the basis of states or continents as the appropriate spatial unit, this understanding is “mythical” (Lewis and Wigen 1997). There are no “natural” borders or geographical features that necessarily define where a community starts or

ends. Rather, this is the result of a social process that is not fixed and is highly contingent, reflecting changing social and political relations (Branch 2013, Lewis and Wigen 1997). Narratives and myths can be part of this process and most national experiences have incorporated the construction of territoriality as part of the project. Moreover, territory is closely related to the concept of “home” in the formation of social groups. It provides the regularity and constancy that ontological security requires by linking the material world to values, perceptions and a sense of belonging (Kinnvall 2006).

An important narrative in the construction of the nation and state is that of the “fortress”, the hearth around which solidarity amongst those who were once strangers is forged as part of a shared political community. The “homeland”, “motherland” and “fatherland” frames are often used to capture the protective shell that shields the political community from forces beyond its borders and, sometimes, those within its midst. Interestingly, they can refer to both the state and the nation invoking narratives based on a range of elements such as geography, architecture and institutions. Often, it is combined with some of the other forms of national myths such as the return or conquest of a traditional “homeland” as the end of suffering or as a redemption for the nation (Smith 1992). The lyrics to the American patriotic song, “God Bless America”, written by Irving Berlin and often sung in place of the national anthem, capture how difference and solidarity are very much entwined. It opens with, “While the storm clouds gather far across the sea, Let us swear allegiance to a land that's free, Let us all be grateful for a land so fair.” The chosen land is the “home, sweet home” that guarantees freedom as well as sanctuary from the dangers that come from abroad. This is immortalised in Emma Lazarus’s poem about the Statue of Liberty, *The New Colossus*, with the line, “Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” The explicit reference to the Greek mythical figure that spanned the entry into Rhodes was transposed to Lady Liberty’s “conquering limbs” standing from sea to sea, a clear reference to broad expanse of America, both politically and geographically. European states also use geographic expressions to capture who they are and who belongs. For instance, Italians refer to their territory as the peninsula,

capturing the notion that Italian is part of the continent but also is Mediterranean, not just geographically.

The fortress narrative is closely related to an equally prominent and powerful tool in the process of building the nation: the myth of solidarity and its attendant notions of sacrifice and responsibility. As in classical mythology, stories of the ties that bind strangers are powerful instruments to induce citizens to engage in forms of behaviour that imply some personal sacrifice whose returns are not necessarily evident beyond generating and enhancing a sense of belonging. The notion of solidarity is clearly not just limited to nation-building as it is central to many class-based narratives of social organisation. But it is essential for the nation to have citizens feel that the state can call on them to provide some resource to come to the aid of others. Whether it is a military campaign or “buy national” exhortations, the principle is always the same: we belong to the same community so it is right that we extend what we have to those who need it. Solidarity and fortress myths work to create the “other” just as much as in the construction of “us”. They are essential instruments to determine which strangers will be worthy of our sacrifices – in the form of taxes, loss of personal freedom, military service, etc. – and who will be excluded from sharing in the benefits of our community.

The fortress myth is a narrative about the space occupied by a political community. Transnational communities may not have transnational institutions or polity but they do occupy a transnational space. In an age of virtual communities and high degrees of mobility, the exact dimensions, nature and physiology of that space might be open to question. As Edward Shils argues, societies have centres, which provide reference points for both borders and social boundaries. They determine a society’s periphery but also who is the other. Geography plays an important part of national political myths, from the invocation of winter in northern societies to the role of rivers as birthplace of the community. The natural elements are often the embodiment of the values of the nation, constantly reproduced in images, stories and symbols. They speak to the timelessness of the political community, a constant in the midst of turmoil and rupture. Architecture

is another marker of space that belongs to a community. For instance, the Roman Coliseum and St. Peter's Basilica occupy a central place in the space created by modern day Italy even though they represent periods when Italian was not even a commonly shared language on the peninsula. Geography and architecture embody what in Italian is called *il territorio*, which translated literally is "territory", but which means the entire physical and social environment of a given political space. It is created not only by cartographers, constitutions, international and political agreements but also by symbols and stories, essential to give meaning to the space created. Myths about the homeland resonate when they embody and promote widely shared values in a society. The vastness of the territory in the United States fits well with the notion of American exceptionalism, of a wealth of opportunity available to the hardy and brave (Tyrrell 2013). Nationalism has often tied this myth of territory with a call to a golden age, past or future, an arcadia in which the nation is born, re-born and flourishes (Schöpflin 1997: 28).

Territorial myths are very much part of the "cosmogenic" construction of the political community; stories that trace how and why it has come together. But, as Henry Tudor argues, sacred narratives such as those about the homeland's origins also have an "eschatological" component to them. In these kinds of myths, "The old order is abolished and the new order comes into being, but the world as such remains" (Tudor 1972, 92). While classic eschatological myths may have had apocalyptic undertones, modern political myth tends to have presented the two as being much more complementary. The "creation of things" myth is, implicitly or explicitly, a counter-myth to usher in a new order, including a political re-organisation of territory. The emergence of the territorial unit of the state in Europe was accompanied by a narrative that imagined the end of other representations as the basis for membership in the political community (Kaiser 2004). The creation of a new political space with its own borders requires narratives to give meaning to that space; this new order also implies that the old will be replaced.

A construction that aims at exclusiveness also needs to be clear about the question of what happens to the old order and its disappearance. There is a tension in both EU official discourse and

that of member states over the meaning to be given to borders and the attendant notion of “Others”. The EU’s appeal to community based on political values that can be shared by anyone (see Lacey and Bauböck in this issue) has left unanswered the question of the extent to which external borders will be fixed or subject to constant expansion. However, the need to give shape and meaning to the Union leads to attempts to define borders and thus create Others. Some member states – especially those on the front line of the refugee crisis - feel the pressure to identify the Others more readily and thus place a greater emphasis on territory and borders, while others, such as Germany, see Europe as the contrast to their past when it comes to the question of borders and territory.

### **Europe’s Territorial Myths**

It is open to question whether the European Union needs or has these territorial myths. On the one hand, discussions of territoriality narratives in the case of the European Union seem inappropriate. There are no borders in the classic cartographic sense that delineate a political community bounded within a particular area. Moreover, the EU’s own ambivalence about its finality has meant that its geographic reach is not set. There is no clear indication in EU official discourse of where the EU’s borders begin and where or when they will end (Fontaine 2010, 12). The EU’s claim to embody universal values and post-sovereign “governance” seems to suggest that links to territorial boundaries did not carry the weight that they have had for the national state (Caporaso 1996, Van Ham 2002). As John Ruggie argued in 1993, “The institutional, juridical, and spatial complexes associated with the [European] community may constitute nothing less than the emergence of the first truly postmodern international political form” (Ruggie 1993, 140). Linking territory to forms of governing was to “live in history” former Commission President Barroso claimed when condemning the Russian occupation of Crimea. The “EU is about values not borders” is a constant refrain not only in official EU discourse but has been adopted by a wide part of scholarship on the EU. And in this narrative, the metaphor is not walls, fences or even borders but bridges. As Barroso said, “Security does not come from segregation, separating communities,

building fences, but by embracing differences and diversity. Ukraine should not be a border between neighbours that don't speak to each other, but a bridge where they can meet" (European Commission 2014). As the statements by Matteo Renzi and Angela Merkel in the opening paragraph suggest, walls and fences that delineate a European border are a return to a Europe that the EU was designed to move beyond.

Renzi and others, however, are also to invoking and evoking a territorial myth that also is trying to provide a cognitive and normative map for managing external borders. Europe may not be about borders between its member states because it is "uniting people", but it also has a narrative that seeks to give it the security to know who is European and who constitutes the "other". Stefan Borg argues that the experience of European integration has not been so exceptional and distinct from state-building exercises in the past, especially with respect to practices meant to establish borders and boundaries (Borg 2015). The integration project may be rooted in universal values and appeals but the instruments to achieve them are particularistic, increasingly having to define who is excluded from sharing in those values within a defined European space. As the volume edited by Christian Kaunert et al., point out, there is an emerging sense of a European "homeland" that needs to be defended; it is not uniform and policies reflect EU distinctiveness but they increasingly make reference to a defined territory (Kaunert, Leonard, and Pawlak 2012). There have been territorial myths that have tried to construct borders and boundaries that give constancy and meaning – ontological security – to the project of European integration. European Council President Donald Tusk, in commenting on the newly formed European Border and Coast Guard, claimed that,

The way we manage *our external* borders directly affects the entire Schengen area, including its internal borders. The European Border and Coast Guard will help us better face today's challenges together. Only with effective management of *our external* borders can we return to normality within Schengen. There is no other way (European Council 2016) (italics added).

What Tusk and others were underlining was that there was a delineated European space that was “ours” and that it needed protecting from outside threats. It implicit, if not explicitly, created “Others”, whose entry into Europe needed to be regulated if not limited.

The narrative construction of the EU’s “others” was not just the reflex reaction to the migrant crisis in 2015. It can be found in the different ways in which European institutions, member states and even academics have presented the Union. For instance, in March 2012, the European Union was forced to withdraw a video it had commissioned to promote enlargement after claims that it was racist and sexist. With the title “Growing Together”, it evoked the Uma Thurman character in the movie *Kill Bill* dressed in the yellow and blue colours of the EU. She is under attack by three threatening figures – with clear references to the Middle East, Asia and Africa – in an abandoned factory, a reminder that Europe’s industrial supremacy has passed its prime. There are two clear references to a European territoriality that helps define what is Europe and who are the Europeans. First, it is the outsiders who represent threats, intruding upon Europe’s governing of its declining industrial power with instruments and means that harken back to states that resort to conflict and violence; while Europeans are those who sit and look for solutions through dialogue. However, its capacity to do so, and this is the second feature of territoriality, this can only be done through the strength that comes in numbers and the solidarity expressed through a wider European territory. As van Houtum and Pijpers argue, the EU’s understanding of borders is not so much an attempt to create a fortress Europe but a desire to feel “protected” and to create a gated community (Van Houtum and Pijpers 2007). Borders may be replaced but internally but this does not mean that the EU is necessarily borderless and open. As Nicolaidis argues, there are many competing geographic imaginaries that are part of the integration project. These may not provide fixed and permanent borders for the EU but they do need to set clear parameters for who is excluded if they are to provide ontological security (Nicolaidis 2014). The “Growing Together” video was an expression of how this need for protection is very much part of the narrative of how to stay safe in a

dangerous world. It also made references to routines, such as dialogue, that give certainty to who Europeans are so that they can have agency when faced with threats. Moreover, it is very much rooted in a sense that there is a political community that comes and “grows” together to confront the dangers in an ever more unstable world.

The controversial video was replaced by a more sanitised version of a territorial narrative but nonetheless one that still makes references to solidarity amongst those who were previously strangers. The new video, called “So different, so similar, so European” has a series of images of different social and geographic landscapes that play on our understanding of different parts of Europe based on the EU’s current member states. However, they refer to future member states who are presented here as not being so different after all. Again, there is a play on “others” and trying to define who should be included in the community and where we should place the borders. The future enlargement countries are “so European” because they wear graduation gowns just like in Britain or because they have mystic lakes like in Sweden. The new video does not entirely abandon the central theme of its predecessor as it also ends with the words “Growing Together” with a background of different shapes arranged as to form what looks like the territorial representation of Europe. “Growing Together” seems to capture the sense that there is a “Europe” that needs to have borders extended to include all those Europeans who are so different, so similar. As Lacey and Bauböck argue in this volume, despite appeal to universal values, there are questions about the limits to enlargement and, therefore, about the boundaries that define Europeans and Others.

The two videos stem from what we can call the EU’s territorial metanarrative and arche-myth. In this story, the construction of internal borders in Europe has historically led to conflict and war. What seemed like equilibrium after the creation of nation-states in Europe in fact led to a dramatic climax with war resulting from disputes about control over territory. The rising tension in the territorial narrative is driven by the modern drive to conquer territory and to draw maps of Europe that divided it into states. The crisis or climax comes when the destruction of war makes it clear that it is external borders – first with the symbolic image of the Berlin Wall during the Cold

War and more recently with securing the Greek border with Turkey – that need to be secured. But internal borders are a different matter as the resolution to the tension is found in creating a border free Europe that fully integrates a European territory through a single market and with the four freedoms (freedom of movement for capital, services, goods and people) enshrined in the treaties. Jean Monnet’s often-invoked claim that “we are not bringing together states, we are uniting people” captures the sense that creating Europe by establishing external borders and removing them internally to facilitate the single market was the means to create Europeans (Castiglione 2009, Fligstein 2008, 123-56).

As much as Europe was “about values, not borders”, there was the sense that external borders were important to ensure that those who were so different yet so similar could grow together (Huysmans 2000, Bigo and Guild 2005, Lavenex 2004). This search for a new territorial narrative in the EU found concrete expression in the third pillar of the Maastricht treaty that defined “home affairs” and the later creation of agencies such as Frontex to help manage external borders and the Common European Asylum System. The narrative has also been supported by a copious amount of scholarly research that has helped to construct a European “territory” with external borders that defines who is in and out. It has also involved imagining a European space that went beyond the confines of national borders. Maps and statistics define a European economy with clear borders, Europe’s population, its geographical features and so on.

The reaction to terrorist attacks in 2015 and 2016 also tried to recreate the sense not only of the need to create borders but that the “heart” of Europe had been struck (Fubini 2016, Barber 2016). The European Commission issued a press release in which it claimed that it was not Brussels and Paris that had been attacked but it was, “Europe as a whole” that had been targeted (Commission 2016). While EU officials and most national leaders tried to dispel the association between migrants and terrorism, arguing that “Europe” was under attack and that it needed to control its borders weaved a different narrative. The refugee crisis and the terrorist attacks led to the Commission taking the lead in calling for the creation of the instruments to implement hard

“European” borders such as a border agency. As Davis Cross argues in this volume, they also led to a number of initiatives to enhance internal security within the EU by strengthening counter-terrorism activities that identified external threats. Some member states, on the other hand, looked to erecting or re-enforcing national borders through border controls and/or fences. This included not only Hungary but also Sweden and Germany, strong proponents of open borders.

As the EU and member states struggled to manage the migrant question, it became clear that the territorial myth had not generated the basic trust in the continuity of the new territorial configuration that would have provided the security to act. The discussion about “our” borders raised the possibility of a conflict between two competing claims for both territoriality and their borders. National narratives of member states are intimately intertwined with territory. The popular and populist explanation has been that the myth of a Europe without walls failed because while internal borders may have fallen boundaries had not. While this may be the case, as witnessed by the fact that the condemnation of setting up of fenced borders by Hungary in September 2015 did not prevent other states from following suit, it may be argued that it was not so much the content of this narrative that was lacking but the form. Eurobarometer surveys consistently report that one of the most prized achievements of the EU has been the removal of internal borders and freedom of movement. Europeans not only find the narrative of integration breaking down walls as credible but also desirable. Rather, what has been missing in the territorial myth is what Todorov called the reinstatement of the initial equilibrium in a narrative; that is, the territorial crisis of the state has not been resolved with a new territorial unit that provides clear normative and cognitive reference points for addressing questions about who is part of the political community and why. The EU’s open-ended question of where its borders begin and end makes its territorial myths incomplete. Trying to remain faithful to its foundational narrative and values may not enhance confidence in the management of external borders or enhance ontological security. Both the cosmogenic and eschatological elements of the territorial narrative are not fully developed, as there is some confusion of whether it is national borders that define the EU’s space or whether the old order is

being replaced by something new. The attempts, for instance, to provide visual representations of the homeland on the euro indicate that it is not clear whether the new space is replacing the state. The use of generic images not clearly identifiable with any specific place suggest an attempt to create a sense of attachment to a space that is governed by the new currency but it does not establish who is excluded and does not challenge existing cognitive maps of a European territory (Risse 2003). The ambiguity about the EU's finality has not created a consensus about borders, leading some Eurosceptic parties such the Front National and the Lega Nord to call for hard national borders while the EU narrative remains that of bridges.

Ontological security proponents argue that social actors need constancy and routine to give them agency, something that the EU's territorial myth has not entirely succeeded in doing. The notion that Europe is about bridges not walls is not sufficiently clear about the basis for exclusiveness. If the EU does not provide a basis for exclusion, then it is not clear what holds together those who are to be within the borders. In a strange way, the "Growing Together" video sends a much clearer message about the territorial space than "So European". According to the latter, the boundaries of Europe are not yet complete and can continue to be pushed further so long as we find some common element that holds the community together. If Serbia is as European as France because it has chic luxury shops, you can legitimately ask why not Beirut or Moscow? The problem with the Growing Together video is that the very powerful statements about the Other are not consistent with the normative map that the EU is trying to use to navigate towards its identity. The mixed messages do not provide the consistency and constancy that would give it the ontological security to act. This tension has been evident in the debate about how to respond to the migrant crisis. Europe's "values" lead some to argue for a more open policy while others use the migrant question to look to a European space under "siege" that needs to establish control over its borders, perhaps constructing (national) walls to close off the Balkan route. Those same regions that are "So different, so similar, so European" are now to be sealed off so as not to threaten the borders of the homeland. The EU seemed to be caught between narratives about bridges and walls, without

providing a clear picture of how they fit together when having to address policy issues related to the management of borders and territory.

## **Conclusion**

There are a number of possible conclusions that may be drawn from the EU's territorial myths that can help our discussion of the tensions between European borders and rising nationalism. First, the lack of a political solution to the question of the EU's finality could be an obstacle to building Europe and Europeans. For instance, framing debates around the question of "solidarity" are less effective when it is not clear where its territorial boundaries should end. The cosmogenic elements of myth need to be clear about the eschatological; that is, what happens to the initial equilibrium that the state had created in Europe in the modern period as the resolution to the crisis develops. A successful narrative has a conclusion, has a resolution and new equilibrium that the reader can understand. The lack of finality to the narrative of a European homeland prevents it from having the ontological security to act when it has to resolve questions about who is part of the community and who needs to be excluded.

Second, the question is not so much who are to be the story-tellers but whether they are credible and provide a clear, consistent narrative arc. This suggests that the question of what is to be the role of citizens in the governing of Europe is less about their level of direct participation but about the story that is being told and whether it is providing the cognitive and normative maps that can guide them through difficult times. The migrant crisis has generated a return to a narrative that provides the audience with an understandable resolution: walls can provide a solution that bridges cannot. Angela Merkel's comment that her Europe was not one where states pursued a beggar thy neighbour policy contains an inherent narrative flaw. It is the story of states deciding or not to express solidarity with each, on whether to open their borders or close them, to build walls or express solidarity. It is based on the ontological security of national borders. A sacred narrative that external borders are those of a community that has defined itself as such could help Chancellor

Merkel's Europe emerge by underscoring the opening of bridges internally with a sense that the external borders are being managed.

Third, the EU may have a *sui generis* political architecture and represents a new form of governance but it is struggling to establish a spatial representation for a political community that does not clash with its foundational narratives, thus weakening its ontological security. It has tried to establish external borders that define who has the legitimate right to be within them and who is to be left out. Like the national experience, it is trying to set out exclusiveness on the basis of universal ideals such as democracy and rights. However, the national experience had a clear narrative arc that did not have any problems in establishing that the national community had a reason to exclude others, that they did represent a threat but also served as the basis for the community to define itself. In the case of the EU, it struggles to provide a clear message: is it to be the "fortress" from or the bridge to a more open, fluid interdependent world? European integration has sought to provide its own answers to this question but there may be limits to the extent that it can derive ontological security from its territorial cognitive and normative maps.

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