# MOBILIZATION OF THE "OTHER" IN SLOVENE NATIONAL IDENTITY DURING THE 2015 REFUGEE CRISIS*

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## ABSTRACT

In the aftermath of the 2015 European refugee crisis, a wave of scholarship has considered Eastern European populist leaderships to explain these states' policies toward refugee influx. This article challenges these accounts by contending that relationship between the influx of foreign nationals in the name of migrants into a national homeland and deteriorating national perceptions deserves greater attention to understand social strife within Slovene society against the flow. To this end, it examines Slovene intelligentsia's policy of construction of Slovene national identity and its stereotyping of Balkan 'Other' during the breaking up of Yugoslavia. Concretely, it applies a postmodern approach that identities are fluid and benefit from modernist theories on nationalism to explain deteriorated perceptions of post-communist Slovene society toward distinct Slovene national homeland in the time of refugee influx. The article finds that the Slovene national identity that was constructed during the secession from Yugoslavia under the influences of Europeanization and globalization has been re-constructed during and aftermath of the 2015 refugee crisis and the Other of Slovene identity mobilized or changed from the Balkan to the Middle East and Islam and that can be investigated through developments, a) changing perceptions of the Slovene nationals, b) Slovenia's new asylum law, c) collaboration of Slovenia and the Balkan states d) discourses of prominent Slovenes and social media groups.

**Keywords:** Refugee Crisis, National Space, Imagined Communities, Nationalism, Other.

## 2015 MÜLTECİ KRİZİNDE SLOVEN ULUSAL KİMLİĞİNDEKİ "ÖTEKİ" NİN DÖNÜŞMESİ

### ÖZ

2015 Avrupa mülteci krizinin ertesinde, bir dizi akademik çalışma Doğu Avrupa'daki devletlerin mülteci akışına yönelik politikalarını açıklarken popülist liderliklere odaklanmıştır. Bu makalede ilgili çalışmalardan farklı olarak, Sloven toplumunda mülteci akışına yönelik toplumsal tepkiyi anlamak için milli olmayan unsurların, milli sınırlar içine girmesiyle bozulan vatan algısı çalışılmaktadır. Bu amaçla, çalışmada Sloven entelijensiyanın, Sloven milli kimliğini inşa etme politikası ve Yugoslavya'dan kopma sürecinde stereotipik hale getirilen Balkan 'Öteki'si incelenmektedir. Mülteci krizi sırasında münhasır Sloven milli vatanına yönelik postkomünist Sloven toplumunun bozulan algılarını açıklamak için milliyetçilik çalışmalarındaki modernist teorilerden ve kimliklerin akışkanlığının anlaşılmasına yardımcı olan postmodern yaklaşımlardan faydalanılmaktadır. Makale Yugoslavya'dan ayrılma sürecinde Avrupalılaşma ve küreselleşme etkisi altında inşa edilen Sloven ulusal kimliğinin, 2015 mülteci krizi sırasında ve sonrasında yeniden kurulduğu ve Sloven kimliğinin Öteki'sinin Balkan'dan Ortadoğu ve İslam'a dönüştüğü savunulmakta ve bu argüman şu konular üzerinden incelenmektedir: a) Sloven yurttaşların değişen algıları, b) Slovenya'nın yeni sığınma yasası, c) Slovenya'nın Balkan devletleriyle iş birliği ve d) önde gelen Slovenlerin söylemleri ve sosyal medya gruplarındaki paylaşımlar.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Mülteci Krizi, Milli Mekân, Muhayyel Cemaatler, Ulusçuluk, Öteki.

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**INTRODUCTION**

This study aims to seek explanations for the question of why the 2015 European refugee crisis exploded Slovene nationalism, although it was not a settlement, only a transit country for the refugees. People escaping from the wars of the Middle East especially at the time of escalation of conflicts in Syrian Civil War used the Balkan route to seek asylum in Central and Western Europe. Nearly half of a million refugees passed Slovene Schengen border within five months following October 2015 which degenerated "banal habits of everyday life", which enables the reproduction of national identity, and triggered country-wide nationalism (Billig 1995: 6-7). A section of Slovene society gathered around social media declared that refugees are coming threat to their homelands while relating them to struggles of their ancestors toward enemies.

The national space or "homeland" is comprised of 'acceptable' citizens who are members of the nation (Billig 1995: 8). Members of a nation have common social formation through modern education and cultural apparatuses which aims to homogenize society and constructs elements of national identity. However, visibility of minorities, ethnicities, migrant workers, refugees, asylum-seekers, the erased (of Slovenia) and the suppressed in the age of globalization interrupted the idea of "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991: 6). Nevertheless, industrialization in Yugoslavia challenged Ernest Gellner's thesis of "nationalist principle" which pertain to the modern era and sociological necessity, because it reveals increasing necessity of unskilled worker expected from other countries (1983: 1). Concentration of these forces on the national space, this study claims, caused changes on imagining of 'them' or 'enemy' and stereotyping of the 'Other' in Slovene post-communist society that generated Islamophobia.

The role of Syrian refugees in the re-construction of Slovene national identity is unique to a specific historical period because of exacerbation of Syrian Civil War and forced migration of millions of people. Hungarian government's decision on the tightening of the border controls caused closure of the route toward Central and Western Europe which created a new route toward Slovene lands. However, use of Slovene homeland for a limited time during migration flow affected reproduction of Slovene national identity. Implementations such as checking, and counting was practiced in the control points away from Slovene border; dispatching to Austria within a corridor by the custody of police forces did not directly affect spatiality of Slovene everyday life. It can be depicted that refugees have never been in Slovenia for a Slovene

who is not following old media and new media tools. However, there is nothing kept secret in a sovereign space of states from societies in an age of information and communication, with highly developed media technologies, and wide and fast use of the Internet. When the walk of refugees into Slovene homeland was captured by drones with a high-quality shooting reveal that actions inside of the national borders cannot be hidden from anyone. This reality, at first seems positive because of speed and intensification of knowledge, could be a reason of public unrest. Slovenes were not passive to the passage of more than hundred thousand refugees from their imagined homelands and partitioned into two political poles with the influence of rising populism in the Eastern Europe. On the one side, humanitarian civil society activists organized programs according to the refugee rights that emerged from international conventions, intergovernmental agreements and international rules accepted as norms. On the other side, organized through social media and using anti-refugee, anti-Islamist hate speeches, and discourses, nationals who imagines a threat approaching to their homelands as experienced by their 'ancestors' in the past. The article argues that Slovene identity which has been constructed in the era of globalization and Europeanization is reproduced during the refugee crisis; its Other becomes 'the Middle East and Islam' instead of 'Balkan' because of changing societal perceptions and collaboration of Balkan states on the border policies during the passage of hundreds of thousands of refugees over Slovene homeland.

This study posits itself as postmodern by claiming that identity is reproduced in everyday life. Focusing on daily life separates it from modernist texts in the studies of nationalism; therefore, the study focuses on viewpoints of individuals living inside of that spatial formation by the unveiling of discourses used spontaneously in everyday life. For this reason, identity reproduction is examined in everyday life's spatiality instead of focusing on meta-narratives. It is accepted that reproduction process is not standard and stable; instead, comparisons between a selection of periods will reveal its fluidity. In the first part of the article, a postmodern approach will be developed for analyzing reproduction of Slovene national identity and the rise of Slovene nationalism while taking globalization and Europeanization processes into consideration. A selection of modernist arguments will be criticized from today's vantage point when globalization allows visibility of sub-national differences and Europeanization creates supranational similarities. In the second part, construction of Slovene national identity during the last years of Yugoslavia and following the independence in 1991 will be examined under the influences of becoming a nation-state, globalization, and

Europeanization. The identity construction process, which sought cultural homogenization, transformed terms of "Balkan" and "south" as "Other" under the influence of Yugoslavia's partition process and Europeanization. In the third part, Slovene administration's policy responses toward refugee crisis by changing asylum policy and establishing border cooperation with other Balkan states experienced since September 2015 and their impact on Slovene state-society relations in terms of identity will be analyzed. Reproduction of the identity of Slovene society will be determined reactions from social media groups, and discourses produced by prominent figures such as historical references and re-evaluation of the Other.

**A Postmodern Approach to National Identity in The Era of Globalization**

Nationalism is defined as "a principle that political and cultural unit should be congruent" (Gellner 1983: 1). Ernest Gellner argues that the nationalist principle is a sociological necessity peculiar to the modern age. This definition provides clues about the proper form of the nation-state that failed to create a homogenous population in the modern era. Homogenization policies have not been capable to reach success in the former Yugoslavian space, which allowed the coexistence of different communities at least at the republican level for a long time. Moreover, the visibility of sub-national identities and their fragmentation are rising trends due to the opportunities created by globalization. Furthermore, industrialization and economic development of the northern provinces in Yugoslavia had created the need of a new labor force. These unskilled or low-skilled workers became 'foreigners' for newly founded nation-states on the one hand, and sociological necessity on the other. This transformation in the post-communist space challenged Gellner's nationalist principle.

Gellner argues that culture has loaded with responsibilities to protect social order in the modern industrial age of humanity. Mass production that requires common language for labor force is generated in this age (Gellner 1983: 35). This sociological necessity caused evolution of mass education exercised by the modern state. Mass education in the national languages provides both identity to members of the nation-state and loyalty to their culture (Gellner 1983: 36). It can be claimed that newly visible communities such as minorities, ethnicities, migrants, and asylum seekers in present societies do not take standard education and have no sense of loyalty to the "high cultures" which has been universalized in the national population (Gellner 1983: 51). These 'foreigners' who are coming from outside of the social formation also contributes involuntarily reproduction of national identity in everyday life as being 'Other'.

# Mobilization Of The "Other" In Slovene National Identity During The 2015 Refugee Crisis

Benedict Anderson defines nation as a political community whose members do not recognize each other but imagines living in coexistence (1991: 6). He argues that this act of imagination reveals a perception of brotherhood and citizenship among nation's main elements that encourages them sacrificing themselves for other citizens living on the same national space (Anderson 1991: 7). However, it can be claimed that refugee influx of 2015 damaged this act of imagination. In the usual way in the "eastern form of the nation" depicted by Hans Kohn (Özkırımlı 2013: 58), citizens imagine the nation as a community of brothers or extension of families enjoying political equality and loading economic burden together. However, citizens perceive these foreign people as hierarchically lower and the ones who will not sacrifice themselves for the sake of the nation. Thus, meddling foreign elements into the imagined stable communities deteriorates the imaginative act of citizens. Anderson indicates the development of "homogenous and empty time" that enables imagination of a society lying from past to the future (1991: 24). Nation's image struggling with enemies in the past is a source of homogenous time imagination and formal history education. This teaching is supported by different images, myths, and narratives of enemy. Today's objects of intensive migration movements to Europe are represented as 'today's' enemies. Anderson's thesis on the roots of the rise of modern nations is suitable explaining enemy imagination, xenophobia, and reproduction of the 'Other' in the age of globalization.

Since the 1980s, the shift in social sciences such as mistrust to meta-narratives, alteration of subjectivity, concepts of relativity, inter-disciplinarity and ideational turn have influenced the studies in the field. Patriarchal and western-centered theories that ignored power relations and neglected the everyday were dominant before the postmodern turn (Özkırımlı 2000: 192). New studies based on different epistemologies do not pursue dominant ideologies; rather they include voice of former colonies, women, blacks, ethnic minorities, workers, and migrants. These approaches are related to postmodern openings by paying attention to experiences of colonies, gender, subjectivity, individual experiences, narratives, discourses, and the reproduction of nationalism in everyday life. These studies revive the method of discourse analysis to reveal how dominant narratives and national identity produced.

Homi Bhabha and other postmodern researchers who are followers of Jacques Derrida, Frantz Fanon, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Lacan examined the role of ethnic minorities, foreign workers, immigrants from former colonies in the construction of national identity (Özkırımlı 2000: 197). Bhabha states that at the point where dominant narratives end,

alternative voices emerge (1994: 4-5; 2016: 47). For example, when it comes to the epistemological limits of ethnocentric narratives, he criticizes the behavior of national historians of their discussions about the clear origins of nations and states that the cultural temporality of the nation is a social reality (Bhabha 1990: 1). According to Edward Said, under the influence of Gramsci, the nation is a narrative instrument in which culture is used productively for the purpose of subjugation and influence (1983: 171). In this context, the Other is not outside the national narrative, but inside the cultural discourse (Bhabba 1990: 4). In fact, with an interpretation of Freud, one of the psychoanalytic studies that these scholars frequently refer to, in the case where a tight border is maintained between the territory of the country (such as the Schengen border for Slovenia), when the narcissistic wound is restrained, the aggression will be projected onto the Outside or the Other (Bhabha 1994: 149; 2016: 279).

These new studies concern with everyday life and investigate reproduction of identities which were thought as unchanging in the spatiality and temporality of everyday life. It is revealed that nationalism reminds itself through songs, dances, customs, dialects, fears, and prejudices for reproduction. Michael Billig accepts the rise of nationalism during national days and crisis times or the fall at the aftermath (1995: 45). However, he determines how national identity becomes habit in everyday life and reproduces itself via numerous routines instead of emphasizing crisis times or "hot nationalism". The space of everyday life turns into national space through these ordinary habits and routines called as "banal nationalism" (Billig 1995: 43-46). The image of the Other, which was summoned from the Slovene national narratives during the refugee flow, was reframed again, and after the end of the crisis, it was left to the ordinary passage of life with renewed fears and consolidated prejudices.

An elaboration of indicated approaches demonstrates that the refugee crisis recalls nationalism, and nationalism reminds itself by sustaining usual prejudices, fears, anxieties, and troubles. Étienne Balibar argues that the border regions are not marginal in the formation of public opinion, but rather at the center of public opinion (2004: 2). As a matter of fact, the refugee flow, which did not affect the urban life in Slovenia, but occurred from the border regions to Austria, settled on the agenda of the Slovene national public opinion. In this process, even the possibility of increasing cultural diversity in a national spatiality had increased the perception of the threat from the Other (by arousing from the past) to Slovenia's borders, where densely constructed with European myths. What the postmodern approach contributes to the context of this study is the reproduction of national identity by popular culture mediums through communication technologies. For this reason, prominent groups on Facebook, which is one of

the products of popular culture and which is used actively during the refugee crisis and where people could be mobilized, are examined. Roles of the marginalized in the definition of national identity are examined through discourses emanating from those channels, newspapers, and politicians.

Since the refugee flow turned to Slovenia, national identity started to be reminded by using basic expressions such as 'us', 'they', 'here', hence banal identity has come into play. (Özkırımlı 2013: 242). Refugee influx to Slovenia caused the rise of nationalist discourses in everyday life where identities reproduced in banal way of social life. It can be claimed that the influx provoked perception of threat over the existence of Slovene national homeland. This perception of threat because of passage of nearly 500 thousand refugees generated a crisis among 2-milion-Slovene society and triggered nationalism. However, refugee crisis of 2015, came across to a time while Slovene national identity was being Europeanized, it also caused reconstruction of national identity which shaped daily routines and rhetoric toward 'Others'.

### 'Europeanization' of Slovene National Identity

Slovene politicians joined the state project of South Slavs (Yugoslavia) at the end of the First World War. During the interwar years Serbian hegemony was established in the First Yugoslavia. After the Second World War, the Socialist Republic of Slovenia was created in the Second Yugoslavia, which was re-established in a confederative structure. Thus, for the first time in the modern era, a Slovene state emerged that would support the Slovene national culture. With the 1963 Yugoslav Constitution, the republic's autonomy was increased, and it obtained the right of national self-determination with the 1974 Constitution.

Tito, who was a charismatic leader and consolidative power of Yugoslavia, was dead in the early 1980s, followed by the rise of national problems caused dissolution process of Yugoslavia. In this era, Slovene political elites declared remarks on the necessity of the preservation of Slovene cultural community under the guidance of a future independent Slovene state. Democracy movements of the mid-1980s in Slovenia demanded individual liberties, pluralism of political sphere, independence of civil society, demilitarization, and a market economy (Zorn 2009: 282). "Slovene cultural identity was politicized for the first time" by these movements, ideas on independence emerged in the national form (Zorn 2009: 283).

At the end of the 1980s, anti-Yugoslav intellectuals gathered around Nova Revija journal and Slovene Writers' Society. Slovene National Program was published in Nova

Revija's January 1987 edition and this text became a manifest of political secession. Ivan Urbančič criticized Communist Party's absolute control over civil society and representation itself with one nation and one citizenship (1987: 37). The Nova Revija circle focused on independence of Slovenia and fixed Slovene identity rather than demands of social movements for democratic and plural identities (Hansen 1996: 481). Social movements aimed to change relations of otherness into differences, but the Nova Revija circle started distancing of Slovenes from the Balkans, Yugoslavia, and Serbia. At the end of the 1980s, Slovene communists separated from the League of Yugoslav Communists and changed their arguments as supporting national interests instead of class interests. Slavoj Žižek describes the zeitgeist in the beginning of the 1990s as Slovenes are afraid of suffocation by Serbs, because they would lose national identities (1990: 50-62).

The conflicts between discursive dichotomies as communism-democracy and Slovenia-Yugoslavia became more obvious. Slovenia's participation into Yugoslavia was attributed as "security needs of a small country", however, it was claimed that Slovenia was the most-developed republic of Yugoslavia and exploited by remaining parts of country (Zorn 2009: 284). Slovenes imagined standing on the North in the map of Yugoslavia; remaining ones were living in the south, and in the Balkans (Norris 1999: 14). Separation of Slovenia from Yugoslavia, Serbia and Balkans was pursued by discourses and images on Slovenes who were northern, hardworking people, and exploited by southerners. They aimed creating legitimate ground for political separation of Slovenia from Yugoslavia. At the same time, they put Slovenes hierarchically over other Balkan and Yugoslav peoples and include exclusive discourses in Slovene identity. Identity construction can be understood through Jacques Derrida's argument on the speech/writing that is based on subordination through depicting the marginal and establishing strong hierarchy over it (1982: 329). Confirming that Žižek revealed the mythological narratives on the southern people referring to Serbians and Bosniaks who were exploitative "because of their proverbial laziness, Balkan corruption, dirty and noisy enjoyment and because they demanded bottomless economic support, stealing from the Slovenes" (1993: 204). Veronika Bajt indicates that use of "south" is pejorative in modern Slovene society by relating south with backward Balkans whose people are lazy (2005: 53).

Slovenia's national identity has also been Europeanized since the political independence declaration in 1991. Slovenia's economic relations with Western Europe, political relations with Germany, EU, and NATO memberships as well as European myths propagated during the Yugoslav civil war were influential. Anthony Pagden indicates that Europe is portrayed as the

image of home of freedom and right administration in the myths (2001: 37). Mythic attributions to Slovenes as Europeans who are obeying of the laws, not being oppressed as Asians or do not cede their rights to one-man's desire. The myth on the Slovene homeland claims that the historical roots of modern Slovenia dates to the Slovene ancient kingdom, depicted as home of democracy, established in the 6th century in the name of Carantania. This kingdom is imagined as famous with its democratic institutions, a strong system of law, elections of governing dukes and ensuring developed legal rights to women (Hansen 1996: 475). Amateur historiography can be called as Veneti hypothesis that emerged in the mid-1980s and responded with enthusiasm by Slovene diaspora communities after the end of the Cold War (Skrbiš 2002: 46-48). Its main aim was distinguishing Slovenes from Slavic roots in an economic and political crisis time among the communist elite (Skrbiš 2002: 42). The Veneti hypothesis was reinforced by the Palaeolithic Continuity Paradigm claimed that they were the ancestors of Slovenes who carried farming revolution from Mesopotamia (Vuga 2011: 163).

Maria Todorova argues that Europe has used the term Balkanization since the beginning of the 20th century which created Europe's other as the Balkans that symbolizes tribal, backward, primitive and barbarian past in human history (1997: 3). Slovenes constructed the Balkan in the context of other following the independence and during the Yugoslav civil war. The border between Slovenia and Croatia depicted as a line separating 'civilized' Europe from 'backward' Balkans. Žižek refers this "imagined" border as Kolpa River indicates that Slovenes live on the one side of the river in the Central Europe; 'Croats who are already Balkan' live on the other side of the river (1992: 39). Stjepan Mestrović determines that Slovenes suppose their borders with Croatia as a border between West and 'Orient' (1994: 61). The imagined border, ascribed with this kind of narratives, becomes a perceptional reality when it has a role to cement the national identity. Although it is a part of former Yugoslavia, all these narratives were used enriching Slovenia with an image of the European state. Slovenia was depicted with abstract ideals such as a "pluralist society with European and democratic traditions," whereas Serbs were characterized with negative denotations as "a despotic people outside of European culture and traditions" (Norris 1999: 14).

After the independence a new Slovene constitution was amended including rights of national minorities. Serbs and Croats who had been in Slovenia nearly forty or fifty years and had a higher number when compared with Hungarian and Italian nationality, were not granted minority status, and given any cultural rights (Hayden 1992: 658-659). The nationality law

based on *jus sanguinis* principle in Slovene constitution do not contain people migrated from Yugoslavia. These people erased from population records and accepted as "erased" people since 1995 (Vezovnik 2013: 606). Slovene national identity was in the process of 'Europeanization' established troubled relations with those who evokes Balkan 'Other'. The Bosniaks who take shelter in Slovenia following the Bosnian War were inexplicitly excluded because they were coming from South Slavs. Anti-Muslim attitude and Islamophobia sourced from church teachings, history education and 9/11 attacks anticipated for a crisis time. They emerged for the first-time debates on the construction of a mosque in Ljubljana. Delo, widely circulated newspaper in Slovenia, compared Muslims in Slovenia and "the Turks" who invaded for looting Slovenia between 15th and 17th centuries (Vrečer 2007: 138). Charlie Hebdo attack of January 2015 and Paris terror attacks of October 2015 caused security problems in Europe. Simultaneously, increased hate speech against refugees, migrants, and Muslims both in Europe and Slovenia in the eve of 2015 European refugee crisis.

### Constructing The New 'Other' of Slovene Identity

474,000 refugees had passed from Slovenia to arrive in Austria and other northern European states between October 2015 and February 2016 (Novak 2016). Slovene government started policies on border controls in the eve of refugee flow in September 2015 when refugee influx toward border states was too intense; other political parties in the assembly attempted to adopt a new asylum law. Having suffered from a similar problem in the region, Balkan and EU-member states of the region started a collaboration on the border control policy. These policies pursued in the state level and discourses reinforced by social media and prominent figures affected perceptions among Slovenes. The study aims to reveal that the 'Other' of Slovene national identity was mobilized because of these policies and discourses.

### Slovenia's Policies toward Refugee Influx

The authority of police forces was given to the military for internal security threats with the refugee crisis in Slovenia, allowing room for the "policisation of the armed forces" (Sotlar & Tominc 2016: 327). Of September 2015, Slovene armed forces began to support *Service of Protecting Civilians and Police Service* logistically by the decision of the parliament. Since October 2015, 5500 soldiers are charged with supporting of administering flow of refugees (Slovenian Armed Forces 2015). As Garb mentions, for the first time their institutional histories, Slovene army and police were cooperating each other (2018: 7). In Slovene civil society, there were reactions against increasing powers of military, gathered around Student's

Radio (Radio Študent) in Ljubljana attempted to make this issue topic of a national referendum (URL-1). However, the National Assembly blocked this attempt by 6 versus 71 votes. Although there was an application for the Constitutional Court as the higher court suspending law's execution, the law on extending military powers was put in practice in December 2015.

Christian democrat and conservative oriented party New Slovenia (NSi), which took five percent of the votes in 2014 general elections, called for an urgent meeting in the Defence Commission of the Assembly. One of the opposition political parties, SDS parliamentarian Branko Grims, emphasized their full support to the proposal for "security and unity of women and children of Slovenia" (URL-2). Slovene army acquired 'existential police powers' because of the voting in the assembly accepted by the majoritarian consensus with 69 yes votes versus 5 no votes (URL-2). Slovene Prime Minister of the time, Miro Čerar, argued that duration of the surveillance task would have been only three months (Novak 2016). Following months demonstrated that the amendment had militarized the Schengen border of the time between Slovenia and Croatia. The intensification of the refugee flux, the Slovene military recruited police force for maintaining border control and the number of military forces in this mission were increased.

Although the refugee movement was halted and the Balkan route was closed in March 2016, a debate was started and negotiated in the Slovene National Assembly between March and June 2016 about rewriting the International Protection Act (*Zakon o mednarodni zaščiti)*. The resolution draft can be evaluated as evidence of withdrawal from the right of seeking asylums for all refugees in Slovenia (Amnesty International 2016). The act represents a step back in assuring the individual's right to access in international protection (Vezovnik 2018: 44). The government had a plan to decrease the number of asylum seekers and limit their number of stays in the state borders. Rather than widening concept of "secure third country", amendments in Slovene assembly aimed to evaluate applications on the border control points. They created possibility to produce "refoulment risk" for refugees and inadequate acceptance conditions according to a report (Amnesty International 2016). The amended limitations demonstrate Slovenia's violation of international law. The main aim of these legalized limitations was leaving Slovenia out international responsibilities and transferring asylum seekers to the third countries (Amnesty International 2016).

The draft on the Article 51 of the International Protection Act includes those applications of the asylum seekers arrived at Slovenia from "the first secure country of asylum"

is evaluated as "inadmissible application" and accepts its rejection (Amnesty International 2016). Article 52 finalizes the applications of the asylum seekers coming from a "secure country of origin" is evaluated as "manifestly unfounded" application (Amnesty International 2016). Therefore, the amended act limited fifteen days requirement of appeal by asylum seekers to eight days (Amnesty International 2016). Receiving applications is not guaranteed during the migration influx. Voting on the draft was held on the 5$^{th}$ of March at Slovene national assembly and ratified with 4 against 45 votes in favor. Center-right parties did not attend and boycotted the voting, because the draft could have tougher rules.

Next year, although the crisis was halted, debates were not frozen. There was an amendment on the Law on Aliens (January 2017) that discussed in the Slovene public opinion. The law which limited the entry of refugees into Slovene territory was adopted by the assembly with 47 yes vote against 18 objections to it. The supporters, especially opposition parties, defended that entry into Slovenia could not provide right of seeking asylum, because they were coming from secure EU neighborhood states. In contrast, President of National Assembly of the time, Milan Brglez, evaluated the amendment as unconstitutional and said no (URL-3).

These amendments in Slovenia's national law demonstrates violation of Geneva refugee regime dated 1951 and the EU law and intersected at the time with the new cooperation of Balkan states. Slovenia, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, and Austria had cooperation for decreasing refuge influx and accepted adoption for common procedures on 18 February of 2016. Entrance of the Afghan subjects not related to conflicts in Syria and Iraq were not allowed entering Macedonia and Serbia no more.

**Cooperation between Slovenia and the Balkan States against the Influx**

Dimitris Dalakoglou (2016) analyzes two great reconstruction periods in Europe following the Second World War and Post-Cold War from spatiality and transformation of space. Unskilled and low skilled labor forces of the East region of the Cold War dispersed to entire continent for working at the mega construction processes. Emerging socio-cultural capitalist relations because of these projects created own 'new low classes': Eastern Europeans (Dalakoglou 2016: 182). Moreover, the Amsterdam Agreement (1997) turned borders of the EU members as the borders of Europe with increasing border controls and surveillance. In context of Dalakoglou's explanation, the agreement has shaped EU's borders against 'eastern archetype' and controls human movement excessively, entrance and exit from Europe, in contrast to ideals of the union, in this case basic human right of free movement. In the case of

European refugee crisis, European states made a collaboration between Balkan states for deterring refugee movement and administering it through a passage corridor to the end country. Germany, as the final desired destination, settled those newcomers as a cheapest reservoir of work force (Georgi 2016: 197). This cooperation between EU states, Slovenia and the Balkan states consolidated the image of Slovenia as the European state and shifted the European borders to the eastwards where Bulgaria and Greece lie.

As state practices analyzed, on early August 2015, Bulgaria began constructing a razor-wire fence along its border with Turkey to stop the refugee flow (Mortimer 2015). On 25 October 2015 heads of eleven EU member state and three Balkan states met in Brussels with emergency code for discussing "migrant crisis" and addressed the situation as "urgent". After the meeting German Chancellor Merkel announced that "Europe must show it is a continent of values and it is a continent of solidarity" (URL-4). Macedonia also started series of precautions toward the influx in the southern borders and declared a state of emergency (URL-5). The image of Slovenia as the border guard emerged in late October 2015 after Hungary closed its borders toward refugee passage and this image of Slovenia intensified in November 2015 (Horvat 2017: 113).

Albanian prime minister decided closed border policy against refugees in February 2016. In the same month, police chiefs from Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, and Austria met and agreed on the mutual plan that registering and transporting refugees from border regions toward Austria (URL-6). Leaders of Visegrad Group (Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia) met with Bulgarian and Macedonian counterparts in Prague by March 2016 and had a pledge for helping Macedonia and other Balkan countries on their border protection (Gotev 2016). Slovene PM Miro Cerar declared that Balkan route is effectively shutting down by the initiative of the Balkan countries as well as Greece (URL-7). Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, and Macedonia made an announcement for the implementation of Schengen rules on their borders toward refugees.

After that, Balkan states came together struggling against refugee influx closing their borders toward refugees coming from Syria, other countries from the Middle East and Afghanistan. Authoritarian populist Hungarian government's declarations were even evaluated as racist and anti-refugee rhetoric which has been a rising trend in Eastern European countries. Dalakoglou interpreted this trend as exportation of racist and anti-refugee policies of Western European states to Eastern Europe (2016: 184). As indicated, this policy was start off by the

Amsterdam Agreement in 1997 before Europe's border had shifted to the east. During the refugee crisis, Europe's imagined frontiers shifted to the eastwards by this tight border control decisions of the Balkan states. Through control practices resemble with the Western Europe, spaces and border points of Balkan states have entered Europeanization process. Low-wage laborer Eastern European 'Other' yielded itself to death bodies of non-European women, children and men came to Europe's shores (Dalakoglou 2016: 184).

Thus, Europe's 'Balkan' Other states transformed into heroes defending European borders. While a humanitarian tragedy appeared in the Syrian-Balkan corridor, European leaders were debating the exact borders of Europe and where they could stop and exclude refugees. These policies contribute to Eastern European and Balkan states' accession to Europe, which is also a spatial identity construction. The usage of "Balkan" as 'Other' of Slovene identity is turning into Islam and the Middle East, because of Slovene politicians' reactions toward refugee influx through discourses, amendments, border control policies, and shift of the European borders to the east of the continent including the Balkans.

**Reaction of the Slovene Society toward Refugees**

Racist hate speech was spreading in the public sphere and paranoia became dominant in Slovenia which were mainly associated with right-wing political discourses. It has a relation with policies pursued by the government, amendments in the assembly and declarations to the public opinion through the media. The Slovene government, assembly, and politicians, and media organs evaluated foreigners as "threat", "Slovenes as victims" (Vezovnik 2017: 123) and, therefore, it caused security precautions by assigning police tasks to the military. Amendments were put into practice limiting the stay of refugees in Slovenia as discussed in the previous part and "preventing disunity of Slovenia".

Slovakia and Hungary's anti-refugee actions demonstrate the failure of EU's integration process and refugee regime which also have influences Slovene politics. Slovenes' implementations violated both EU laws and international standards occurred with rising racist discourses against refugees. Slovene journalist S. E. offered shooting of refugees when they close to border more than 500 meters, but there has been no legal action charged against him. E. I., parliamentarian of Democratic Party of Slovenia (SDS), which was the main opposition party close to center-right and became the leading party after the refugee crisis, made similar hate speeches. Many figures who are not well-known at public sphere mentioned even 'gas chambers' with historical references. No legal action was taken toward cruel practices against

refugees and hate speeches. Mojca Pajnik argues that acceptance of refugees as threat by most of the Slovene society with the support of media is an "institutional racism" (2016: 67). Even in a mass rally supporting refugees organized on September 2015, two men caused a minor incident with banners against "Islamization" (URL-8).

Another sphere in which anti-refugee comments made since 2015 is widely used the social media. In the social media, Facebook pages opened as "Protect Your Borders" (Slovenija Zavaruj Meje), "Radical Ljubljana" (Radikalna Ljubljana), "Stop Migration to Slovenia" (STOP migrantom v Slovenijo), "Sloven Militia" (Slovenska milica) and take many likes from their followers. Examining the discussions in these pages, Veronika Bajt concludes that messages in these pages are nationalist, xenophobic, and homophobic orientation (2016: 54). One of the most common discourses in daily life sourced from one of these Facebook pages: "We, Europeans have to protect our identity against mass migrations from Africa and Asia and proliferation Islam in Europe". Another discourse claims that "approaching battle is the last battle of Slovenes" and bearing resemblance with the Ottoman invasions.[†] Another discourse is on the Hitler's rightfulness, only way is the annihilation of refugees to protect Slovenia and Slovenian nation (Bajt 2016: 54).

The Facebook page "Protect Your Borders" (Slovenija Zavaruj Meje) take 27.225 likes before its closure by the Facebook executives. Administrators of the page indicated that they aim to provide safety for Slovenes, their cultures, their peace, and their children, so they came together to protect Slovene borders (URL-9). They evaluate migrants, their cultures, their identities as threat toward demographic composition of Slovenes. They claim that Europe was invaded many times in the past, but preserving identities were achieved by standing together. They share from other Facebook group Defending Motherland 2015's (Teritorialna obramba) explanation as a mission of the group:

> "Experienced many times in history, Slovene identity and culture are confronting a serious threat. We served foreigners who stole our estates; we forced to change our culture, language, and names. Today in 2015, it is repeated. Hundreds of thousands of so-called "refugees", whose 90 percent are young, are coming toward to us. This is not a migration, this is invasion" (URL-10).

The Facebook group called "Ljubljana is against the migrant center" (Ljubljana je proti migrantskemu centru) organized a meeting in the city center on the 26th of February 2016.

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[†] I coincided these statements in the pages of indicated Facebook groups which were then closed.

Some of protestors had Slovene flag with Carinthian tiger, Carinthia famously believed ancient Slovene kingdom, others had banners with the words 'Stop Islam' (URL-11). In the following summer, the Facebook group titled as "Identity Generation of Slovenia" (Generacija Identitete) founded to fight for sustaining ethnocultural identities. 14 members of the group participated in an activity of young people coming from different countries of Europe in Vienna on the 13rd of June 2016. The organization titled as "Defending Europe" had slogans on the motherland, freedom, and tradition. One of the representatives of the Identity Movement stated that they did it before in Siege of Vienna against the Turks which showed that they could be successful fighting together against the enemy. The Slovene group referred to concepts of discipline, order, and association by interpreting mass migration as systematic colonization of Europe and displacing of local European populations. There was a call for unity and association against annihilation of the future of European people by emphasizing threat of Islamization against authentic identities (URL-12).

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, reconstruction of the other of the Slovene national identity during the refugee influx is revealed in this study that evaluates identities not fixed, but as changeable in process, especially in the crisis time. It is determined that Europeanized during the separation process, the "Other" of the Slovene identity was constructed on discourses of Yugoslavia and the Balkan. However, policies followed by the state, including legislation and executions, public opinion statements, discourses spread from social media groups, and collaboration of the Balkan states during the refugee crisis, is mobilizing the Other of the national identity toward the Middle East and Islam. Slovenes' homogenous time perception from propagated past to future enables the creation of today's enemies. The survival problem of the Slovene imagined community has a role producing enemies, hate speech, and xenophobia by the administrators, prominent politicians, journalists, and social media figures. The study demonstrated that the refugee influx created a crisis in the Slovene state and society that degenerated banal rituals and everyday life. Although the crisis ceased, the process of change in the reproduction of Slovene identity was sparked off. Enemy imagination and the Balkan as the 'Other' of Slovene national identity have changed into the Middle East and Islam.

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