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Response of Parliamentary Parties in the Republic of Slovenia to the Mass Arrivals of Migrants

The mass arrivals of political and economic migrants in Slovenia started when Hungary closed its border with Croatia. In this article, we analyze the reactions of parliamentary parties in Slovenia, focusing on the media statements of their leaders and members on the significant events since the beginning of mass arrivals of migrants to date: first arrivals of migrants to Slovenia, erection of fences on Slovenian-Croatian border, November 2015 Paris terrorist attacks, protests against accommodation of minor migrants unaccompanied by adults in Student dorm in Kranj, proposal for consultative referendum on the acceptance of migrants in Slovenia and Act on amendments to the Aliens Act. We point out some of the most defining statements to show the political opinions of individual parties and compare the responses of these parties in the light of the political division between left-wing and right-wing politics as well as political division based on the urban-rural cleavage.

Keywords: migrations, mass arrivals of migrants, Slovenia, political parties, media statements, urban-rural.

Odziv parlamentarnih strank v Republiki Sloveniji na množične prihode migrantov?

Masovni prihodi političnih in ekonomskih migrantov v Slovenijo so se začeli, ko je Madžarska zaprla svojo mejo s Hrvaško. V tem članku avtorja analizirava reakcije parlamentarnih strank v Republiki Sloveniji s poudarkom na medijskih izjavah njihovih voditeljev in članov o pomembnih dogodkih od začetka množičnih prihodov migrantov do danes: prvi prihodi migrantov v Slovenijo, postavitve ograd na slovensko-hrvaški meji, pariški teroristični napadi novembra 2015, protesti proti nastanitvi mladoletnih migrantov brez spremstva odraslih v dijaškem domu v Kranju, predlog posvetovalnega referenduma o nastanitvi migrantov v Republiki Sloveniji in Zakon o spremembah in dopolnitvah Zakona o tujcih. Izpostavlja nekatere najbolj odmevne izjave, ki odražajo politična stališča posameznih strank, in primerjava odzive teh strank glede na levo in desno politično usmeritev ter tudi glede na politično delitev, osnovano na razlikah med urbanim in ruralnim.

Ključne besede: migracije, masovni prihodi migrantov, Slovenija, politične stranke, odzivi v medijih, urbano-ruralno.

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1. Introduction

In this article, we present and analyze the response of the parliamentary parties in the Republic of Slovenia to the mass arrivals of political and economic migrants. An average Slovene citizen experiences policies through often imprecise images, which are represented by daily media and/or different political parties. Slovene citizens are mostly not willing to invest much in knowledge of possibilities to shape policies in different social areas; they are generally interested in public affairs in circumstances that directly affect their personal well-being. This situation has been clearly demonstrated during mass arrivals of political and economic migrants in Slovenia from autumn 2015 onwards, when many citizens' initiatives and participations, public dialogues and guidelines for the implementation of certain policies and legislation have taken place. In 2015, the mass arrivals of migrants began due to political and economic crisis and continuous wars in the Middle East and North Africa regions. Part of European countries, especially Germany, at first responded with welcoming migrants because in the long run they need new workforce for the growing economies. Within this article, we discuss public announcements of individual parliamentary political parties in the media since the beginning of mass arrivals of migrants to date. We do not however discuss the later stages of accommodation, acculturation and assimilation of refugees in the Slovene society; we only focus on the early stages of the immigrant arrivals and reaction of political parties to the immigrant issues. We analyze how six political parties, currently represented in the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia (Party of Modern Centre, Slovenian Democratic Party, Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia, Social Democrats, United Left electoral alliance and New Slovenia – Christian Democrats), responded (or not responded) to the crucial moments in this situation and initiatives of their electorate. Political parties are in fact those that (try to) reflect and form opinions of their (potential) voters, the citizens of the Republic of Slovenia, and in this way (try to) preserve or strengthen their political power. As such, taking the appropriate analysis, their opinions could also serve as an appropriate indicator of general public opinion.

2. Party System in the Republic of Slovenia

The Republic of Slovenia is an independent republic since the proclamation of independence on June 25, 1991. The National Assembly (Parliament), as a part of Legislative authority, consists of 90 deputies. Parties represented in the National Assembly as are: Party of Modern Centre (SMC) – 35 deputies, Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) – 21 deputies, Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS) – 11 deputies, Social Democrats (SD) – 6 deputies, United Left (ZL) – 6 deputies, New Slovenia – Christian Democrats (NSi) – 5

deputies, Deputy Group of Unaffiliated Deputies (NP) – 4 deputies, and one representative each of the Hungarian and Italian national communities.¹ In accordance with the Political Parties Act, a political party in Slovenia is defined as

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an association of citizens who pursue their political goals as adopted in the party's program through the democratic formulation of the political will of the citizens and by proposing candidates for elections to the National Assembly, elections for the President of the Republic and for elections to local community bodies (Political Parties Act, Art.1).

Slovenia is a country without a long tradition of statehood. Slovenia became independent at the same time as it transformed into a democracy: with the collapse of communism and disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991. Like in other post-socialist countries, political parties in Slovenia played a crucial role as proponents of change in the transition process from the former communist regime (Kustec Lipicer & Henjak 2015, 84–86). The further democratization and consolidation of democracy were, more than anything else, based on the role of a newly developed but still very dynamic party system (Fink-Hafner 2010, 241). As assessed by Danica Fink-Hafner, political parties became the agents of the formation of the Slovenian state, but they were also shaped by this process (Fink-Hafner 2002, 43).

Generally, we can state that political parties in Slovenia are not based on the representation and advocacy of narrow interests (e.g. individual social classes, interest groups, regions, etc.) – with an exception of DeSUS, which represents pensioners – and cannot be distinguished easily according to the standard understanding of the left and right wing, primarily based on the economic or social issues. The comparative analysis of the relationship between the ideological positioning of voters and political parties in Slovenia, with respect to their position on the political spectrum, has so far shown that the classic economic left-right position in Slovenia is one of the least relevant factors of electoral choice. Instead, most studies reveal that the main ideological division in Slovenia revolves around the interpretation of history, and in that context primarily around the interpretation of the political divisions during World War II, the interpretation of the nature of war and its participants in Slovenia, attitudes towards the Catholic Church and the previous socialist regime. The issues of the traditional versus modern attitudes and values regarding individual freedom, role of family, religion and morality, as well as the definition of national identity are closely related to these historical divisions. These elements have formed another dimension of the dominant symbolic division (Kustec Lipicer & Henjak 2015, 85–100). On the other hand, the results of the first multi-party or democratic elections in Slovenia in 1990 showed different dimension of how electorate was divided, as the majority of the votes in the parliamentary

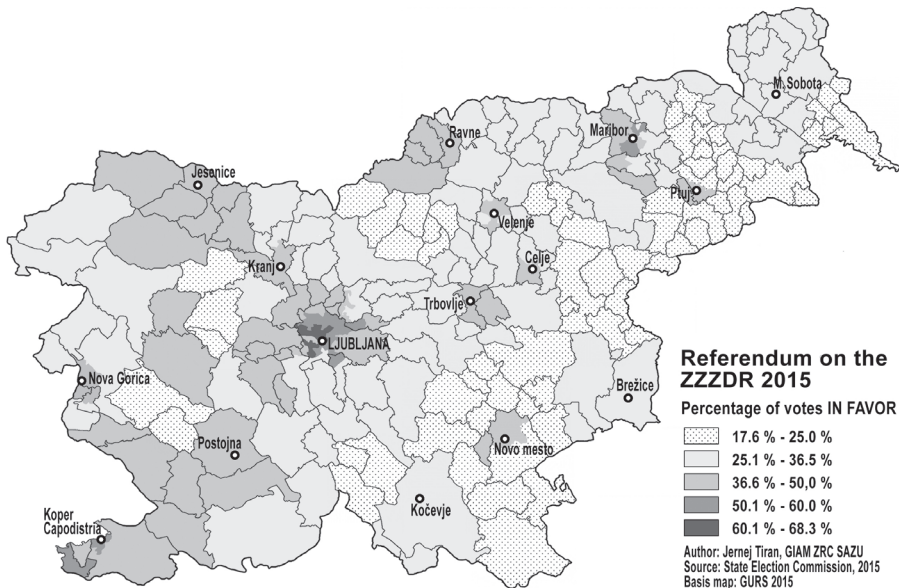
elections was won by the new democratic parties (Democratic opposition of Slovenia – DEMOS coalition) but at the same elections Milan Kučan, former non-democratic party leader (League of communists of Slovenia), was elected President of the Presidency – then a collective body (Klemenčič & Žagar 2004, 290).

In 2008, the year of the fifth democratic parliamentary elections after the independence in 1991, researches have shown that a new type of political division had taken place in Slovenia – the urban-rural cleavage. As concluded by Jernej Tiran (2011), despite the economical, spatial and population density development that constantly trends towards decreasing the differences between the urban and the rural areas, the political cleavage between the two has increased. The urban-rural cleavage in Slovenia is maintained largely by the differences in lifestyles and patterns that stem from the different identities of city and rural areas (Tiran 2011, 88–97). The rural and the urban milieu, in addition to the differences in education, religiousness, values system, occupation, structure and socio-economic status, each possess their own certain “cultural capital” (Luthar 1993, 113–37). Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the embodied state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in institutionalized state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as we can see in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee (Bourdieu 2011, 82). According to this theory, the rural milieu is characterized by greater religiosity, below average level of education and a higher proportion of rural population, and the urban milieu, which is defined in particular through the negation of traditional communities, is characterized by higher socio-economic status, lower religiosity and the domination of employees in creative professions (Vehovar 1993, 73–93). In Slovenia, a strong relation exists between cultural taste and political preferences (Luthar 1993, 113–37). The same is true for values. The results of some researches show that values are a very important factor of political orientation. This is especially true for religious values, which are among all categories of values one of the best indicators of the political orientation of Slovenes; and the religious orientation is the strongest in the less urbanized areas (Musek 2002, 1–18).

Analyses show that right-wing parties’ activities mobilize voters mainly from the rural areas, and left-wing parties achieve a high percentage of votes in urban areas (especially in Ljubljana – the capital city). This has last shown clearly in a referendum on the amended Law on Marriage and Family Relations (ZZZDR) on December the 20th 2015, which redefined marriage as “between two people” instead of “between a man and a woman” (ZZZDR 2014, 10) when

among the electoral districts where the majority voted in favor of the proposed law, were only those which include urban areas and are considered as politically leftist. On the other hand, the electoral districts in which the law was rejected by a large majority comprise rural and sparsely populated areas outside urban centers and are considered traditionally right-oriented. Distribution of votes in favor of the proposed law in percentage is presented on Map 1 (Tiran 2015). This is definitely conditioned by the aforementioned value system in urban and rural areas, but at the same time the result does not reflect the political parties' views as much as the traditional values of people within the wider electorate.

Map 1: Distribution of Votes in Favor of the Proposed Law in a Referendum on the Amended Law on Marriage and Family Relations (ZZZDR)



Source: Tiran (2015).

These findings can be properly used, even when discussing the political division between rural and urban as well as between center and periphery areas within the analysis of the response of the parliamentary parties in the Republic of Slovenia to the mass arrivals of migrants.

3. Public Announcements of Individual Parliamentary Political Parties in the Media

Slovenian parliamentary parties can be accordingly to their fundamental views and political agendas roughly divided into center/moderate, center-left or moderate left, left-wing, center-right or moderate right and right-wing politics

parties. We can say in general that: the center/moderate party presented in Slovenian National Assembly is Party of Modern Centre (SMC) – 35 deputies; center-left parties presented in Slovenian National Assembly are: Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS) – 11 deputies and Social Democrats (SD) – 6 deputies; the left-wing party is United Left (ZL) – 6 deputies; the center-right party is Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) – 21 deputies; and right-wing party is New Slovenia – Christian Democrats (NSi) – 5 deputies.

Party of Modern Centre – SMC (hereinafter SMC) is a young center political party, established in June 2014 as a Party of Miro Cerar². Only six weeks after its establishment, on July 13, 2014, the party received 34.6 % of the vote in the 2014 parliamentary election, winning a plurality of 36 seats in the National Assembly (State Election Commission, 2014). Miro Cerar was appointed as the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia. The party can be characterized in general as social-liberal and as such immigrant and refugees friendly; their voting body is mainly the voting body of once the most successful Slovene political party Liberal Democracy of Slovenia, which is now a non-parliamentary party.

Slovenian Democratic Party – SDS (hereinafter SDS) is center-right party, established as the Social Democratic Union of Slovenia in 1989, as opposition to the former Communist Party of Slovenia (it changed its name in 2003)³. It is now the second-largest party and the largest opposition party in Slovenian Parliament. The party can be characterized in general as a conservative party and as such immigrant and refugees unfriendly. Its politics, although they claim its historical roots are in the Social Democratic Party, established in 1890s, they moved from its original workers party roots to the right.

Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia – DeSUS (hereinafter DeSUS) is a center-left political party with a primary goal to represent pensioners. It has been established in 1991 and been represented in the National Assembly since 1996 (Delo 2011). The President of the DeSUS is Karl Erjavec, now the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Slovenia. The party can be characterized in general as a social-liberal party, which represents pensioners, and as such immigrant and refugees friendly. It is worth mentioning that today's immigrants are tomorrow's workers and taxpayers who will provide pensions in the future.

Social Democrats – SD (hereinafter SD) is a center-left political party, founded as United List of Social Democrats in 1993 by a formal merger of several left parties (among them the successor of the communist party of the previous regime) that had already run in coalition in the 1992 elections (it renamed in 2005)⁴. The current President of the SD is Dejan Židan, now the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food. The party can be characterized in general as a social party and as such immigrant and refugees friendly.

United Left – ZL (hereinafter ZL) is the most extreme leftist political party in Slovenian Parliament, and it was formed as an electoral alliance among the Democratic Labour Party (DSD), the Party for Sustainable Development of

Slovenia (TRS), and the Initiative for Democratic Socialism (IDS). The alliance was formed to contest the 2014 European Parliament election as a socialist and eurosceptic list (The Slovenian Times 2014).⁵ It is now an opposition party, without formal leadership as it operates by the principle of egalitarianism. The party can be characterized in general as a social party and as such immigrant and refugees friendly.

New Slovenia – Christian Democrats – NSi (hereinafter NSi) is a Christian democratic and the most conservative parliamentary party in Slovenia and as such immigrant and refugees unfriendly. The party was formed in 2000 following a split and a merger of Slovenian People's Party and Slovene Christian Democrats.⁶ It is now an opposition party, led by Ljudmila Novak.

We analyzed the response of the parliamentary parties on the mass arrivals of political and economic migrants in terms of their response to the five key and significant events since the beginning of mass arrivals of migrants in Slovenia to date. These are:

1. first arrivals of migrants to Slovenia – the beginning of mass arrivals of migrants in Slovenia,
2. erection of technical barriers or razor wire fences on Slovenian-Croatian state border,
3. November 2015 Paris terrorist attacks,
4. protests against accommodation of minor migrants unaccompanied by adults in Student dorm in Kranj,
5. proposal for consultative referendum on migrants' accommodation in Slovenia and
6. Act on amendments to the Aliens Act.

3.1 First Arrivals of Migrants to Slovenia – the Beginning of Mass Arrivals of Migrants in Slovenia

The mass arrivals of migrants in Slovenia started on October 16, 2015, when Hungary closed its border with Croatia. About 30 Hungarian soldiers around 20 minutes before 1 am installed barbed wire and closed the informal border crossing with Croatia – Botovo. Croatia redirected a migrant corridor towards Slovenia on three border crossings – a railway and road border crossing in Mursko Središće (Petišovci) and border crossing Macelj (Gruškovje). In this way, Croatia began to implement Plan C, Croatian plan, on which there was no agreement with Slovenia. The decision of Hungary to close the border with Croatia at midnight was in the words of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia Karl Erjavec, the President of the DeSUS, not a surprise for Slovenia; he stated they were prepared to this scenario. "The main objective now is to ensure security and order in Slovenia and proper treatment of migrants",

said Erjavec (Delo 2015). Because of these events on Hungarian and Croatian border, Austria also strengthened its border control.

The President of the SDS Janez Janša on Twitter urged the Slovenian Government to adopt the same measures as Hungary (Delo 2015). For the ZL closure of borders was not an option (Delo 2015). Bojan Dobovšek, the unaffiliated deputy (elected as Party of Modern Centre – SMC), has warned that if countries will not help the migrants to get to desired destinations, organized crime will (Delo 2015).

On October 29, 2015, Slovenian Government with Prime Minister Miro Cerar (SMC), discussed on comprehensive measures to control migration flows. After a government session, the Minister of the Interior Vesna Györköš Žnidar (SMC) stated that measures to manage refugee crises tend to deter and control illegal migration. She pointed out that Slovenia is the first country on the Balkan route, making the maximum effort to reduce migratory pressure, while respecting all humanitarian principles (Stranka modernega centra 2015a).

The SDS deputy Vinko Gorenak, former Minister of the Interior, defended the actions of Hungary:

Hungary is in spite of serious criticism from some EU countries one of the few EU countries that seriously protects the borders of the EU and seriously implements Schengen. A few days ago it completely closed the border with Serbia, sent there its army and directed migrants' way through Croatia and Serbia. And what is Slovenia doing? /.../ Slovenia should define the maximum number of migrants we can accept with solidarity, of course, depending on the number of migrants in other EU countries, their economic strength and population (Gorenak 2015).

3.2 Erection of Technical Barriers on Slovenian-Croatian State Border

On November 10, 2015, the Slovenian Government announced to set up technical barriers or razor wire fences at the border between Slovenia and Croatia (DolenjskiList.si 2015), i.e. the external border of the Schengen area, but at the same time the state border within the European Union. On November 11, 2015, the Slovenian army began erecting a razor-wire fence along the most exposed parts of the southern border. The fence should contribute to greater control of the arrival of migrants, so they would not cross the green border, but would be directed to the official crossings (Prlekija on net 2015). Political parties, except the ZL, agreed with this measure.

Slovenian Prime Minister Miro Cerar (SMC) explained to the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker that this measure is not about closing the border, but to ensure that people are crossing the border at the border crossings, not through the cold rivers.

Part of the parliamentary opposition has once more evaluated the Government's announcement on the technical barriers or wire fence at the border with Croatia as a logical but incomplete. In particular, the SDS has warned that the decision came too late, and the NSi that the erection of the fence is only a half-measure. Meanwhile, the ZL thought that this is an inappropriate and anti-humanitarian measure.

Leader of the ZL Deputy Group Luka Mesec wondered which of the problems the fence would solve. He reminded that the winter is coming, and people will be freezing behind barbed wire at the Slovenian border. "Clearly this is not something this government would consider important, it rather succumbs to a national paranoia created by the notorious political right", said Mesec (Delo 2015). The SDS deputy Vinko Gorenak in his statement to the media criticized the Prime Minister's words that the decision on fence was difficult for the Government. "This is a courageous act of state-building, intended for the protection of the country, people and migrants, it is something Cerar should be proud of", stressed Gorenak (2015). He also pointed out that Slovenia is in a crucial moment for the country. "Now it will be decided how the Europe will be tomorrow" (Gorenak 2015).

Leader of the NSi Deputy Group Matej Tonin stated that:

as long as the northern Europe had an open-door policy, the refugee flow only intensified, but now the North is saturated and will begin to restrict the flow of migrants. /.../ If we want to control this situation, the erection of the fence is a reasonable measure (DolenjskiList.si 2015).

At the same time he pointed out this is only a half-measure. The second half is the provision of personnel, which will ensure that the fence does carry out its function (DolenjskiList.si 2015).

The SD advocate the following view:

The technical barriers on the Slovenian border with Croatia are a temporary measure. Social Democrats firmly believe that the future of the EU is not in the fences and walls, but in an open and tolerant common European space. The Social Democrats hope that European actions will stop the pressure on the external borders of the European Union, ensure security and enable our government to remove technical barriers on the border with the neighboring country as soon as possible (Socialni demokrati 2016a).

3.3 November 2015 Paris Terrorist Attacks

On the evening of Friday, November 13, 2015, a series of coordinated terrorist attacks occurred in Paris and its northern suburb, Saint-Denis. Three suicide bombers struck near the Stade de France in Saint-Denis, followed by suicide

bombings and mass shootings at cafés, restaurants and a music venue in central Paris. The attackers killed 130 people, including 89 at the Bataclan theatre, where they took hostages before engaging in a stand-off with police. Another 368 people were injured, 80–99 seriously. Seven of the attackers also died, while the authorities continued to search for accomplices. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) claimed responsibility for the attacks, saying that it was retaliation for the French airstrikes on ISIL targets in Syria and Iraq. The attacks were planned in Syria, organized in Belgium, and perpetrated with help from citizens of France. All of the known Paris attackers were EU citizens who had fought in Syria. Some of them had returned to Europe among the massive flow of migrants (CNN 2016).

Janez Janša, the President of the SDS expressed the following opinions:

The assertions that the terrorist attacks in Paris are not related to illegal immigration are completely misguided. Of course they are related both to the current and the previous immigrant waves, and the failure to integrate immigrants from certain Muslim countries. Only vulnerable groups, women and children, should be considered as refugees. To combat-age men who are fleeing from these countries, the West must offer an opportunity to be trained, equipped and organized to defend and protect their homeland and their families. For those refugees who are already in the EU, it should be noted that they are expected to return home as soon as the situation will stabilize (Reporter 2015).

According to the investigations carried out on the involved terrorists, the SDS in particular stressed the fact that two of the attackers arrived in Belgium via the so-called Balkan route, also crossing Slovenia (Nova24TV 2016).

Prime Minister Miro Cerar (SMC) ensured that

in Slovenia there is no reason for the disturbance because the level of threat in our country has not increased these days, still, the competent authorities after Friday's terrorist attacks in Paris maintain an increased level of alertness, while also cooperating with the services of other countries (Stranka modernega centra 2015b).

Milan Brglez (SMC), the President of the National Assembly, expressed his conviction that “instead of fear which attackers wanted to sow in the European citizens, the desire for freedom, equality and fraternity will further strengthen. Europe will emerge from this episode stronger, without hatred and intolerance” (Stranka modernega centra 2015b).

3.4 Protests Against Accommodation of Minor Migrants Unaccompanied by Adults in Student Dorm in Kranj

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The principle of a Student dorm in Kranj Judita Nahtigal on February 23, 2016, decided they would not accept six minor asylum seekers unaccompanied by adults in the dorm. The proposal for accommodation was strongly opposed by the students' parents, the municipality and the local community, as well as some teachers (Šubic 2016, 1). Protests against accommodations for migrants also took place in a number of other places in Slovenia. It is important to mention that this particular dorm (as most other dorms in the Republic of Slovenia) is owned and governed by the State, and that the living expenses are highly subsidized by the State. The contracts for students staying in the dorm guarantee for their safety and well-being, but it is in the range of the State as the owner to determine who the tenants will be, if the tenants are students as these minor asylum seekers are.

The President of the SD and the Deputy Prime Minister Dejan Židan warned against intolerance, incitement, sowing fear. He told to the media that "to appeal to intolerance with political campaigns is wrong. Democratic countries cannot build their policy on the problems of refugees" (Socialni demokrati 2016b). The fact that the local community did not want to accept some migrant children without parents and that also some teachers opposed is in his opinion inadmissible. He has been wondering, "in what spirit are they raising citizens?" (Socialni demokrati 2016b).

The response of Jernej Pikalo (SD), the former Minister of Education, Science and Sport:

The Social Democrats are with deep concern monitoring the latest events regarding the accommodation of refugee children who should be placed in Student dorm Kranj. We are outraged and disappointed because of the lack of a fundamental sense of compassion for a fellow human being in those educators in Gymnasium in Kranj, who opposed the accommodation of children without mothers and fathers, the most vulnerable victims of the war in Student dorm in Kranj (Socialni demokrati 2016b).

The NSi deputy Jernej Vrtovec:

It is unacceptable to accommodate minor asylum seekers in a dorm full of other students. Parents are justifiably concerned. They are justifiably frightened and in this case they are also obliged to protest against such really strange Government's decision (Nova Slovenija – Krščanski demokrati 2016a).

One more eloquent statement from the NSi deputy Jernej Vrtovec on the costs of staying of migrants:

If someone has financial resources, why they wouldn't pay their stay in Slovenia? Why not put that money in the state budget or pay the costs of migrant accommodation? During the time of financial crisis, many of our citizens who are unemployed or working for minimum wage, are on the social fringe, nobody pays for their housing or bills. So why would we pay all these to migrants. Those who have money should contribute their share for the cost of accommodation (Nova Slovenija – Krščanski demokrati 2016b).

3.5 Proposal for Consultative Referendum on Migrants' Accommodation in Slovenia

The SDS deputy Vinko Gorenak on March 4, 2016, presented a proposal of the SDS Deputy Group for a consultative referendum on the acceptance of migrants in Slovenia. He stated that the referendum question would be: "Do you agree that the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia adopt the legislation, which will determine that the annual number of applicants for international protection will not exceed the number of applications for international protection in 2015?" (Slovenska demokratska stranka 2016). According to Gorenak, this means that the number of asylum seekers would be limited to a certain number, such as it was in 2015.

In the case of asylum seekers, the situation is relatively clear. We have many different problems all over Slovenia, the people are divided, whether they are supportive or rejective towards migrants, in the meanwhile the Government is successfully hiding costs for asylum seekers, which is why it would be right that the ruling coalition would finally listen to those who put them in power and let them decide how the legislation will regulate this field in Slovenia (Slovenska demokratska stranka 2016).

The President of the NSi Ljudmila Novak considered that the SDS proposal for a consultative referendum on migrants' accommodations in Slovenia is incomplete and must be refinished. At the same time, she said: "Slovenia needs to know what number of migrants we can successfully supply from an economic, security and financial point of view" (Nova Slovenija – Krščanski demokrati 2016c).

Already on February 2, 2016, Ljudmila Novak pointed out that Slovenia is not obliged to accept any migrant, because no agreement had been signed. "We are aware that we must be humane to the refugees. But first and foremost we need to take care of pensioners who receive monthly pensions of 400 Euros, and for all the unemployed," said the President of the NSi and added: "In this migrant crisis, someone wants to impose on us whom we must help. I do not subscribe to this" (Nova Slovenija – Krščanski demokrati 2016d). Ljudmila Novak also expressed criticism of the policy of the European Union: "Instead of protecting the EU external borders, we now have a lot of internal barriers. Slovenia must

urgently adopt the above quota, ie how many people Slovenia is even capable to take. Miro Cerar's Government unfortunately doesn't act" (Nova Slovenija – Krščanski demokrati 2016d).

The SD on March 15, 2016, among others expressed the following position:

The Social Democrats are committed to the creation of an EU migration policy by introducing clear rules on the separation of refugees and other migrants, as well as the EU agreement regarding the appropriate treatment of both. We need to help refugees whose lives are endangered by war and persecution. We must set common rules that will determine who is entitled to asylum in the EU countries. Social Democrats do not support the tightening of an asylum legislation that would deal with migrants as second-class citizens. / ... / Each of us, citizens of the Republic of Slovenia is obliged to resist radical, offensive and hostile rhetoric. If we understand, respect and hear each other, and if we can look for a reasonable solution together, migrations and migrants will not frighten us. Differences enrich, not impoverish our society, our daily lives, our future (Socialni demokrati 2016a).

3.6 Act on Amendments to the Aliens Act

Due to fears and hysteria in European Union and abroad of the possible forthcoming new wave of mass arrivals of migrants from the Middle East, and under the pressures of the right-wing parliamentary opposition parties, the Miro Cerar's Government decided to propose Act on Amendments to the Aliens Act. Emergency measures set out in the bill gave authorities the possibility to adopt special measures that would deny entry to people arriving at the borders and automatically expel migrants and refugees who had entered Slovenia irregularly, without assessing their asylum claims or the risk of them being tortured or persecuted upon return. The application of the measures would be conditional on the decision of the majority of the votes in the parliament to trigger their enforcement, following government's assessment that the public order and national security are under threat (Amnesty International 2017). In accordance with this bill, the possible asylum seekers would be under emergency circumstances denied the right to appeal to decisions of the police officers at the borders. In Amnesty International's opinion,

this bill resembles similar efforts of Slovenia's neighbors – most notably, Hungary, but also Austria – to seal their borders to those fleeing horrors of war. It rides roughshod over both the right that every individual has to ask for asylum and the obligation Slovenia has to fully assess each claim (Amnesty International 2017).

National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia with 47 votes for and 18 against adopted the controversial amendments to the Aliens Act on January 26, 2017. And who in the end voted against the Act on Amendments (further the Act)? In

the SD Deputy Group (6 deputies) 5 deputies voted against the Act. In the ZL Deputy Group (6 deputies) 5 deputies voted against the Act.

It was interesting to see how uneven were the members of the DeSUS Deputy Group (11 deputies) – some have in fact moved from the mid more to the left, others to the right. 4 DeSUS deputies voted against the Act. Against the Act were also 4 members of the SMC Deputy Group (35 deputies), among them the President of the National Assembly and the Vice president of the party, Milan Brglez.

Members of the center-right and the right-wing parties' deputy groups (SDS with 21 deputies and NSi with 5 deputies) and the Deputy Group of Unaffiliated Deputies (4 deputies) all voted for the Act, some were abstained or were not present. The deputies of Italian and Hungarian minorities also voted for the Act (National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia 2017).

It is interesting to note that the Act has passed with part of the votes of some coalition parties and vast majority of the right-wing opposition's votes. The proposal caused the rift within the governmental coalition; the reactions of the EU and the bordering states were also mixed.

The Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland, wrote a letter to the Prime Minister Cerar in which he expressed concerns by amendments to the Aliens Act. He stated:

I am concerned by amendments to the Aliens Act proposed by your government which, if adopted, will change the conditions of entry and expulsion of migrants and asylum seekers into Slovenia, raising a number of issues under the European Convention on Human rights, such as the right to due process, the consideration of individual circumstances in the processing of applications and protection of all migrants and asylum seekers against ill treatment, including 'non-refoulement' (Council of Europe 2017).

Slovenian Foreign Minister Karl Erjavec has tried to shed light on Slovenian Prime Minister Miro Cerar's statement about the opening of an Adriatic route whereby migrants might reach Croatia and Slovenia, which surprised Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenković. In Valletta at the Malta Informal Summit 2017 on February 3 Plenković said:

Perhaps it's some misunderstanding. Perhaps it's about the flow of migrants coming to Slovenia via Italy, but there has been no discussion nor do I, as prime minister, have any information from the security services about the existence of an open Adriatic route which would presuppose arrival by boat from the Strait of Otranto all the way to Istria. We haven't noticed that so far nor did I notice that Prime Minister Cerar said that at the meeting (EBL News 2017).

Passing of the Act caused also a breach within the SMC, even the President of the Slovenian Parliament, who teaches political sciences and Vice President of

the SMC, Milan Brglez, voted against the bill. The Prime Minister Cerar asked Brglez to resign as the Vice president of the SMC.

4. Conclusion

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We analyzed the response of parliamentary parties in Slovenia to the six significant events in mass arrivals of political and economic migrants. We pointed out some of the most defining media statements of party leaders and members to show the political opinions of individual parties. We must emphasize again that it was not our intention to discuss the later stages of accommodation, acculturation and assimilation of refugees in the Slovene society; we only focused on the early stages of the immigrant arrivals and reaction of political parties to the immigrant issues. We came to the following conclusions.

The Government/Coalition parties (except the DeSUS) followed the events closely and made statements accordingly, but mostly in the course of their joint governmental work and decisions, and not as individual parties. They tried to pacify public opinions in order to minimize public fears towards migrants. During the first wave of migrants, they prepared measures to accept migrants in transition to Austria in humane ways and at the same time to protect Slovene citizens, still, they proposed the controversial Act on amendments to the Aliens Act to prepare for the possible new wave of migrants.

The SMC provided the media and the public only with superficial statements, which were based on the decisions of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. As a party, they did not expose any partisan opinions; this could be because the SMC as a young party does not have any program dealing with this kind of situation. When it came to the votes on the Act on amendments to the Aliens Act, it caused the rift within the party, as some leading party members opposed the bill.

The DeSUS expressed no opinions in the media as a party at all, although their President Karl Erjavec is the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia. We can say that so called DeSUS statements were only statements of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. In the case of the Act on amendments to the Aliens Act, some leading members of the party opposed the bill.

The SD made statements according to the Government's policy and according to their social-democratic views. They were mostly very modest, but clearly step forward in their response to the accommodation of minor migrants unaccompanied by adults. They also made some very clear statements, which supported humane treatment of the migrants and (all present deputies) opposed the Act on amendments to the Aliens Act.

The ZL mostly protested the Government's policy whenever it came to restrictions towards migrants, especially when the Government erected technical barriers on the state border with Croatia and proposed the Act on amendments to the Aliens Act.

The SDS was the most critical towards the Government's policy from the beginning of mass arrivals of migrants, claiming that the policy was not fast and strict enough to protect Slovene citizens and country. Their media statements aimed to strengthen the fear of Slovene citizens towards migrants. They also proposed a referendum to limit a number of migrants, which should be admitted to Slovenia. They warned the people from the islamization of Europe and connected the migrant issues with terror and terrorists. They (all present deputies) voted for the Act on amendments to the Aliens Act.

The NSi expressed their opinions in the most direct way. Like the SDS, they criticized Government for not being efficient enough to solve migrant issues. They were the only party, which very openly defended protests against the accommodation of minor migrants in Kranj. They agreed with the SDS that Slovenia should limit the number of incoming migrants. They (all present deputies) voted for the Act on amendments to the Aliens Act. They also proposed that the Parliament should activate Article 10.b (actions in changed conditions in the field of migration) of the Act if the normal majority of deputies votes for the measure.

All parties, except the ZL, agreed with the erection of technical barriers on the border with Croatia, as this was the only way to somehow defend the Schengen regime and avoid chaotic situation on Slovenian borders at the time.

Based on the media statements of the leaders and members of parliamentary parties we came to the expected conclusions that center-left and left-wing parties supported the humane treatment of migrants and try to pacify public opinions in order to minimize public fears towards migrants during the first phase of mass arrivals of migrants. Center-right and right-wing politics parties advocated more strict measures to protect Slovene citizens and country. Their media statements aim to support or even straighten the fear of Slovenes towards migrants. We must point out that deputies of the coalition parties voted differently on the Act on amendments to the Aliens Act, what caused doubts about their sincerity on strictly defending the human rights of migrants. Slovenian Government also opposes controls at the internal Schengen borders, especially on the Slovenian-Austrian border, which are also the result of the internal Austrian political situation.

We can conclude that these opinions are in accordance with above described political division in Slovenia, based on traditional versus modern attitudes and values regarding individual freedom, role of family, religion and morality, as well as the definition of national identity. Even when discussing the political division between rural and urban as well as between center and periphery areas as a division between left-wing and right-wing politics, we can say that in general center areas are more pro-migrant oriented and peripheral areas are more anti-migrant oriented. Especially, since Slovenes are generally interested in public affairs in the circumstances, which directly affect their personal well-being, and migration crises, for now, more directly affected people in periphery.

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Notes

- ¹ See the internet sites: Government of the Republic of Slovenia, Political system – Legislative authority and Nation Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia, Deputies by deputy groups.
- ² See his introductory from the official site of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia – Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia.
- ³ See the internet site: Slovenska demokratska stranka, Zgodovina Slovenske demokratske stranke – Dvajset let Slovenske demokratske stranke.
- ⁴ See the internet site: Social Democrats (Political party, Slovenia).
- ⁵ The United Left is described as eurosceptic list, but it is not eurosceptic in the same way as the UK Independence Party or the National Front of Marine Le Pen in France, which build on anti-immigrant sentiments. This is not present with the United Left; they are more opposed to the neo-liberal agenda and economic policy of the EU.
- ⁶ See the internet site: Nova Slovenija – krščanski demokrati, Ustanovitev in razvoj.