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THE SECURITISATION OF MIGRATIONS IN EUROPE: THE CASE OF SLOVENIA

Abstract. *This article explores the securitisation of migrations in Slovenia as a transit country for migrants during 2015–2016. We examine the representation of migrations in the printed media, social media and in political discourse. The article contributes to the theoretical debate by proposing a dynamic migration-related security continuum which takes into account the legitimate security concerns of the migrants, the transit countries, and those of the host societies. The empirical analysis explores the attempts to frame migrants in the context of securitisation. Our findings reveal that the printed media was relatively neutral in this process or even opposed the over-securitisation of migrations, whereas political actors were biased. The Slovenian government adopted a balanced approach in terms of recognising the legal rights of migrants, especially of refugees, as well as the legitimate security concerns of its own citizens. In practice however, restrictive measures were applied which contributed to the securitisation of migrations. The main opposition political party spearheaded the securitisation of migrations with a discourse based on selective information, simplification and exaggeration. Our analysis of the survey data reveals that this influenced public opinion.*
Keywords: *securitisation, framing, migrations, migrations-related security continuum, political actors, public opinion*

Introduction

The question of mass migrations entered the security debate in the mid 1980s[1]. Prior to this, the debate had focused on the various problems experienced by migrants, especially refugees, forced to leave their countries as a result of armed conflict. The major political and security changes anticipated

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[1] *See Hill, 1989; Weiner, 1990, 1993; Rystad, 1992; Loescher, 1992 and Jacobsen, 1996.*

in Eastern Europe raised concerns in the West as to what the mass movement of people would mean for the security of states and regions. As Weiner (1990: 1) noted, while the mass movement of people can affect the security of states, the security considerations of states may influence the movement of people. The next major milestone that enforced the construction of the security-migration nexus was the terrorist attack against USA on 11 September 2001 (Burgess, 2011: 14; Pinyol-Jimenez, 2012: 36), and that logic was repeatedly witnessed in Europe with the Al-Qaeda and ISIS terrorist attacks in Spain, Great Britain, France, Belgium, Germany and other countries. As a result, migrations became related to national and regional security, and the migration policies reflected this security bias while neglecting the humanitarian dimension. State border controls and admission policies became the main instruments to control migration flows in order to provide security for nation states. Securitisation strategies and restrictive migration policies have led to a process of illegitimating the presence of immigrants in Europe (Pinyol-Jimenez, 2012: 42).

The increasing sense of insecurity relating to migrations is not limited to public opinion but has also shaped the formation of restrictive migrant policies which have often appeared to oppose Europe's prevailing culture and values, and have contravened international law (Burgess, 2011: 14–15). We have often witnessed public claims that migrants have negative security implications for their host societies, from acting as economic competitors and creating job insecurity, health risks and crime, to distorting the national identity, raising xenophobia and discrimination.

The securitisation of migrations was reinforced in Europe, especially in 2015, when some European countries experienced a massive influx of refugees and other migrants[2], mainly from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The number of people applying for asylum in the European Union (EU) more than doubled in 2015, reaching a record 1.26 million, according to the EU statistics agency (Rankin, 2016). This trend sparked a crisis as countries struggled to cope with the influx, and the EU was divided as to how to deal with the crisis.

The wave of mass migration brought about a number of theses on the migrant-security nexus that could be summarised as follows: migrant flows are abused by Islamic extremists in order to reach destination countries in Europe to perpetrate acts of terrorism; some migrants could be radicalised in camps, in religious and educational institutions, and in prisons and might

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[2] *We will predominantly use the term 'migrants' to refer to this particular group of people. Namely, according to the International Organization for Migrations a migrant is 'any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is' (IOM, 2017).*

have converted to extreme Islamic ideas and become terrorists; if not properly integrated into their host societies, individuals might become part of organised crime groups; mass migrations stimulate a rise in extreme-right political ideas that reject migrants, disseminate anti-migrant rhetoric and xenophobia, and create conflict with governments, state security forces, migrants and left-wing political groups which tend to support migrants[3]. By contrast, the legitimate security concerns of the migrants themselves have rarely been raised in the mainstream debate.

In this article, we will examine the attempts to securitise migrants in one particular EU country, namely Slovenia, which was predominantly a transit country for migrants during 2015–2016. We will begin with a brief overview of the prevailing theoretical arguments on the migration-security nexus and explain the concept of framing. We will then introduce our methodological approach and undertake an empirical analysis of the attempts to securitise the migration flows crossing Slovenia by using framing. We will present our results and discuss key findings.

The analysis was based on the following *research questions:* (1) to what extent did selected printed media contribute to the securitisation of migrants by using framing?; (2) what was the government's migrant-related discourse as presented in the printed media and what kind of extraordinary measures did the government adopt to manage the migrant crisis?; (3) to what extent was framing used by the opposition in its discourse on migrants to securitise them, and what methods did they use to achieve this?; and (4) what was the public's reaction to the migrant crisis and to the media and political discourse on migrations? In order to explore the level of securitisation of the migrant phenomenon in Slovenia, we applied a *content analysis method* to assess the messages in the printed media. The two publications we chose were *Slovenske novice* (Slovenian News) and *Delo* (Labour)[4]. Firstly, we reviewed their editorial policies and analysed their style of reporting, and secondly, we indirectly assessed the attitudes of the government and opposition towards the migration crisis as reported in these two publications. We also explored the public discourse pertaining to migrations of the main opposition party, the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), as found on Twitter, Facebook, and parliamentary transcripts. Finally, we conducted *a secondary analysis of public opinion data* on migrations, relating to the security concerns of the general public.

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[3] *For example, Germany and Poland witnessed clashes between demonstrators for and against migrants. In Slovenia in March 2016 a public argument broke out between right-wing and left-wing protesters.*

[4] *The analysis of reporting of Television Slovenia about the same migrant crisis has already been accomplished by Vezovnik (2017).*

Mass migrations and security

Securitisation is a process in which an issue is presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure. Therefore, a political actor (whether a state agent or otherwise) claims a right to deal with the issue by extraordinary means, and the right to break the normal political rules of the game. Consequently the issue becomes an existential threat, not because it necessarily is a real threat but because it is presented in this way (Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde, 1998: 23–24). Mass migrations were often perceived as a potential threat to traditional patterns of language, culture, customs, religious and national identity, cohesion and way of life. There were also analysts who suggested that the securitisation of migrations might lead to their militarisation, and warned that traditional security structures such as the military were unsuitable for solving what was essentially a political problem (Fierke, 2007).

Migrants are often viewed as a political threat or security risk in their home country because they often oppose their own country's political-military regime. In their host nation they are viewed as a security threat[5], as a social and economic problem, and a threat to the local cultural identity. They may be used as leverage by the host country against the country of origin[6] (comp. Weiner, 2011). Therefore migrants are often associated with terrorism and crime and perceived to be a burden on the economic, educational, health, welfare and employment systems as revealed by Huysmans (2006) and Hammarstad (2014).

According to Lohrman (2000) the mass movement of people across national borders influences security on three levels. Firstly, transition countries and host nations interpret mass international population movements as a threat to their economic well-being, public order, cultural and religious values, and political stability. Secondly, the relations between the states are tested because population movements tend to create tensions between them and burden their bilateral relations, undermining regional and international stability. Thirdly, there are also implications for the security and dignity of the migrants themselves who are subjected to involuntary forced resettlement, inhumane conditions in refugee camps, the greed of smugglers, dangerous routes to destination countries, the unpredictable

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[5] *To illustrate, Kosovan Albanian refugees fleeing en mass to Macedonia in 1999 swelled the Macedonian Albanian minority which represented around one third of the entire population; it is unsurprising that tensions between Albanians and Macedonians in Macedonia subsequently escalated to political struggle and pockets of armed conflict which ceased in 2001 with the signing of the Ohrid Agreement.*

[6] *In 2016, Turkey used migrants as a political leverage to achieve some strategic objectives relating to its neighbouring countries and the EU.*

behaviour of international actors, and are often unwelcome in the destination countries (see also Todor, Repez and Postolache, 2014). Burgess (2011: 14–15) concurs that migrants are also challenged by security considerations in terms of the insecurity that motivates them to leave their countries in the first place, in terms of the security issues while in transit, especially if they want to enter the destination country illegally, and in terms of being subject to exploitation on the labour market, victims of human trafficking, and subjected to general social marginalisation and discrimination in the host country (see also Guild, 2009).

There are some authors (such as Adamson, 2006) who predominantly emphasise the national security concerns of states without taking the security concerns of migrants into account. Adamson considers the relationship between security and mass migrations in the context of the globalisation process and claims that migrations affect states' interests in the national security realm. First of all, state sovereignty is at stake in terms of its ability to control its borders and secure autonomy. Mass migrations affect border control issues, the preservation of national territory, identity and national objectives. The balance of power among states can also be shaken because mass migrations affect the ability of states to plan and implement their economic, political/diplomatic and military authority. The latter argument may influence the nature of violent conflicts between states due to the effect that migrations have on internal conflicts, organised crime and international terrorism.

On this basis, stricter borders controls and immigration reforms were introduced by governments 'to protect national security'. This process stoked various fears of migrants and served to dehumanise them, leading to their rejection, deportation and the deprivation of help which they required (Hammarstad, 2014). The impact of migrants on national security has often been exaggerated and manipulated by political actors for short-term political gain. As Lohrmann (2000: 5) suggests, the migration-security nexus was not self-evident; rather, both concepts should be comprehended as a result of the discourses and practices of social groups and institutions in a given particular cultural, social-economic and political context[7]. As Choucri (2002) observes, this nexus depends on one's perspective. Similarly, Pinyol-Jimenez (2012: 38) warns that analysing the migration-security nexus is a complex issue because both concepts are 'inherently subjective'. It is questionable whether the 'urgent security issues and threats' are real or merely constructs to mobilise public opinion and create the legitimacy and authority for dealing with that 'threat'.

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[7] *In the security context, Simmons (2006) suggests that demographic movements and the attacks of various extremists are two factors that dominate national security at the global level.*

Framing

If certain media and political actors in Slovenia intended to securitise migrations, the best method of achieving this appears to have been 'framing'. Framing is an integral part of conveying and processing data on a daily basis. The intention is to convince an audience to believe a certain idea and/or to mobilise it for a certain cause. The term is used in media studies, psychology, sociology, political science, but also in medical studies. In social sciences, framing is generally understood to mean the social construction of a phenomenon by the mass media, by political or social organisations, leaders, movements or other actors. The intention of framing is to gain selective influence over the audiences' perception of social events and processes. Druckman (2001) draws the distinction between 'frames in thought' (mental representations, interpretations and simplifications of reality) and 'frames in communication' (communication of frames between various actors). In politics and mass media communication, framing means the use of rhetoric in a way that encourages certain interpretations and discourages others.

In the field of psychology, framing is a schema of interpretation, a collection of anecdotes and stereotypes that individuals rely on in order to understand and respond to events and processes (Goffman, 1974). Influenced by biological and cultural factors, people build mental filters that help them make sense of a complicated world. Framing is effective, Fiske and Taylor (1991) claim, because it is a heuristic or mental shortcut and it enables people to process information quickly. This fact gives tremendous power to those who send (frame) the information to the audience, because by using schemas they influence how the receivers will interpret the message (Entman, 1993).

Generally speaking, in the communication process, framing defines how the mass media shapes public opinion (Scheufele and Iyengar, 2014). Research in the field reveals two general approaches: firstly, frame building, in terms of how frames create social discourse about an issue and how different frames are adopted by journalists; and secondly, frame setting, in terms of how the media's framing influences an audience (Tewksbury and Scheufele, 2009). As Iyengar suggests (1991), the influence of the mass media could be exerted through an episodic news frame which takes the form of a case study or event-oriented report and depicts public issues in terms of concrete instances, or through a thematic news frame which places public issues in a more abstract context directed at general outcomes or conditions. In practice it seems that the mass media have several options when using framing in their communication activities, especially by selecting which issues, topics and events to cover, by omitting to mention others, and by promoting only certain values, facts and considerations during their reporting of selected issues, topics and events.

Pinto (2014) has already connected securitisation, as understood by the Copenhagen School, with framing. Pinto approaches framing through a specific analytical scheme offered by Snow and Benford (1988) within the context of social movement research and the specific case of the Arab Spring protests in Bahrain. Pinto (2014: 163) integrates the phenomena of securitisation with framing, coining a new term 'security framing'. By contrast, in our analysis we use both phenomena separately, understanding the securitisation of migrations as the potential *purpose* of the mass media and political actors, and the process of framing as a possible *method* for them to achieve this purpose.

Empirical analysis

The frequency of considerations about the migration-security nexus in Europe increased in 2015–16, when some European countries experienced a huge influx of refugees and migrants from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries. As we explained in the introduction, we will focus on the case of the securitisation of migrations by using media and political debate framing in Slovenia as a transit country for migrants.

Method: qualitative and quantitative approach

The starting point of our analysis is the chronology of events in the critical phase of the migrant crisis in Slovenia marked by the entry point in mid-September 2015, when migrants started to enter the Slovenian territory *en mass*, and the exit point in mid-March 2016, when the Balkan migration route was closed as a result of the agreement between the EU and Turkey to prevent illegal border crossings (EU-Turkey Statement, 2016).

The crucial events of chronology in the abovementioned period occurred on 17 September 2015, when 300 migrants crossed the Croatian-Slovenian border, on 17 October, when Hungarian authorities closed the borders between Hungary and Croatia which re-directed migrants from the Serbia-Hungary-Austria-Germany route to the Serbia-Croatia-Slovenia-Austria-Germany route), on 21 October, when the daily number of migrants entering Slovenia peaked at 12,616, on 25 October, when the Slovenian Armed Forces (SAF) was ordered to work alongside the police at border crossings (the new article of the Defence Act came into force as an option from 11 December), on 11 November, when first meters of razor-wire fence were erected along the Slovenian-Croatian border[8], on 16 February 2016, when

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[8] *The razor-wire fence has been erected along approximately 200 kilometres of the 670 kilometre land border between the countries. This project continues at the beginning of 2017, despite the fact that the crisis is over.*

the number of migrants entering and crossing Slovenia in the last months reached 470,000, on 24 February, when the parliament voted by a two-thirds majority to engage the members of the SAF to perform the extraordinary policing duties mentioned above, on 8 March, when the Balkan migrant route was closed, and on 18 March, when the agreement between the EU and Turkey was reached, stipulating an end to the illegal border crossings[9].

We performed our content analysis of *Slovenske novice* and *Delo* in the following way: we initially checked all articles published online during the period 1 September 2015 to 31 May 2016. For each publication, more than 200 articles were available for analysis. Our sample consisted of 45 articles from *Slovenske novice* and 30 from *Delo* which covered the crucial events identified in the chronology of the migrant crisis. Our content analysis primarily focussed on concepts relating to the securitisation of migration flows using framing. Based on our sample of newspaper articles, we reviewed the editorial policies and analysed how both newspapers reported on the migrant crisis, and concurrently extracted and discussed the most frequent and typical messages the government and the opposition conveyed to the readers through these newspapers. Therefore the intention of our content analysis was not to measure the frequency of items but rather a qualitative conceptual analysis (comp. Barelson, 1971).

For the same period (1 September 2015 to 31 May 2016), we also analysed the public discourse on migrants which was published on the social media of leading representatives of Slovenia's main opposition party, *Slovenska demokratska stranka* (SDS, the Slovenian Democratic Party), which adopted a strongly anti-migrant line. We analysed 72 messages released on Twitter and 23 on Facebook. Additionally, we also analysed transcripts of two leading SDS discussants at the regularly parliamentary session held on 20 May 2016.

Finally, we conducted a secondary analysis of public opinion data obtained from three survey agencies to determine whether there had been any change in Slovenian public opinion as a result of the migrant crisis with regard to public perceptions of security, and the popularity of those political actors who influenced the public's perceptions. The data was obtained from the following surveys: Defence Research Centre and the Public Opinion Research Centre at the Institute of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana (November 2015 – February 2016, adult inhabitants of Slovenia 18+, N = 1,024), *Delostik* (September 2015 – March 2016, adult inhabitants of Slovenia 18+, N = 400) and *Ninamedia* (August 2015 – May 2016, adult

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[9] *Until this date almost half a million migrants entered Slovenia, although the vast majority of them continued onwards, first to Austria and then to Germany and Sweden, respectively. According to the official figures of the Ministry of Interior, only 368 migrants actually chose to remain in Slovenia as of 6 April 2016 (Ministry of Interior, 2016).*

inhabitants of Slovenia 18+, N = 700). We measured those theoretical variables (migrants as a security threat, migrants as a humanitarian problem, the attitude towards EU and domestic migrant policy, public support to political parties and their protagonists that securitise migrations) that were crucial for the subject of analysis.

Printed media analysis

Slovenske novice is a tabloid newspaper with the highest circulation of any newspaper in Slovenia: approximately 67,000 copies per day. The newspaper reported on several incidents relating to migrants: in Slovenia a fire was set in a camp and a group of migrants stoned the firemen; a fight occurred between migrants in a camp, migrants broke the wall socket in order to recharge in their mobile phones; in Sweden, a migrant (aged 14) killed his schoolmate (aged 15) using a knife; an asylum seeker killed a woman (22); migrants attacked Refugee Centre staff; in Germany authorities appropriated money and jewellery from refugees; a refugee died of cold waiting for days in front of the Refugee Office; refugees were sleeping when a firemen set a fire; refugees attacked a woman and two senior citizens; the public was incensed by the proposal to shoot at migrants in order to halt their arrival in the country (a proposal of the movement 'An Alternative for Germany'); new disasters on the Mediterranean Sea claimed additional lives, children among them; pregnant women use their hands to protect the lives in their bodies.

Slovenske novice also published news from the international press: one terrorist who was part of the migrant flow was caught in Italy; the Hungarian Prime Minister, Orban, stated that more and more terrorists were misusing migrant flows to reach the EU; the Czech President, Miloš Zeman, suggested that the migrant wave is an alternative Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood designed to conquer Europe: 95 bombers allegedly entered the EU from Syria waiting for the order to carry out terrorist attacks. At least three terrorists who perpetrated the attack on Brussels arrived in Belgium through the Balkan route, having passed through Slovenia.

The content analysis indirectly reveals the main attitudes towards migration and the level of its securitisation by the representatives of the government coalition and the opposition political parties[10]. Representatives of the former stressed that during the migrant crisis the state institutions were prepared to act effectively and in a coordinated manner. Slovenes

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[10] *The centre-left government coalition consists of three political parties: the Modern Centre Party (SMC); the Social Democrats (SD); and the Democratic Party of Pensioners (DESUS). The leading opposition party is the right-wing Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), often supported by New Slovenia (NSi), a Christian democratic party. The third opposition party is the United Left (ZL).*

are a nation of solidarity and humanitarianism, but the government cannot allow migrants to enter and stay in Slovenia uncontrolled. On the one hand, according to international law we ought to help migrants; on the other hand, we ought to protect the security interests of citizens of Slovenia. The 'technical fence' along Slovenian-Croatian border is needed to control the migrant flows, nevertheless, although the migrant crisis poses a security risk, not every refugee or migrant is a terrorist as the opposition suggests. A few tens of migrants were additionally checked from a security point of view, but their connections to terrorism were not proven. The military need to help the police at the border. The referendum on migrant settlement proposed by the part of opposition is against European laws and against several international conventions.

Representatives of two opposition parties, SDS and NSi, have suggested that Slovenia should close the border to migrants as Hungary has, and this would increase the security of citizens and migrants at the same time. The opposition has suggested that the government is not prepared for the migration flow, its reactions are too slow, and the Slovenian border is full of holes like a 'Swiss cheese'. There are increasing numbers of terrorists among migrants and an attack could occur in any of the transit countries, including Slovenia. Allegedly, there were a few tens of fighters from Syria and Middle East identified in Slovenia, a 'fact' denied by the government. The opposition asked whether the government considers adopting a measure similar to the Slovak authorities' ban on Muslim migrants from entering the country. SDS, supported by NSi, proposed a referendum on whether some migrants should be resettled to Slovenia as part of the EU-wide policy to share the migrant burden. 'Homeland is a home and those who live in it should have the right to decide whom they will let in and how many', the opposition claimed.

Delo is a broadsheet newspaper with the second highest printed circulation in Slovenia of 37,000 copies per day. The views on the migration crisis expressed in *Delo* could be summarised as follows. Although some countries are generous towards migrants (e.g. Germany, Austria and Sweden), they concurrently experience a rise in nationalism and xenophobia. As a consequence, some European borders become fenced and militarised which is an attack on the European idea. The EU should instead accept migrants, provide them with work and attempt to solve the causes of migration. Europe cannot be a fortress; European policy should not be driven by public sentiments, and politicians should make rational decisions. There will be difficulties in preventing the re-nationalisation of Europe if the EU's migration policy fails. Populism becomes more influential due to the fact that some moderate political parties adopt nationalist rhetoric to play to public expectations, while populist parties become part of government

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coalitions with a much stronger right wing than has been the case in the recent past. Populism is a consequence of the manipulation of public fears. Europe is jointly responsible for the 25,000 victims who have died in the Mediterranean since 2000. We should not forget that migrants have names, faces, destinies, stories and futures and they cannot be treated 'as a nuclear waste'.

Delo also commented on the attitude of some European leaders towards migrations: Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban has become a European gatekeeper, a crusader who thinks he defends Europe against the 'Turkish invasion'. The treatment of migrants is inhumane and the police are misusing their powers when dealing with them. Orban has managed to build a razor-wire fence and to redirect migrant flows to Croatia and Slovenia. This policy is a consequence of historical myths developed by the European right. It's surprising that the restrictive migrant policy is supported by the Hungarian Church. 25 years after the fall of the 'iron curtain', Hungary has erected a new wall in Europe using the military, police and prisoners. On the other hand we should not forget that many Hungarians help migrants and have deep sympathies for them, a fact often neglected by the international media; the Czech President Zeman claimed the Muslim Brotherhood sponsored the current migration flow. They cannot attack Europe militarily but they can gradually conquer it through migration. Prime Minister, Bohuslav Sobotka criticised Zeman for holding extreme views and for collaborating with the extreme right; however he also rejected EU-defined migrant quotas, claiming that Brussels' insistence on these quotas strengthens radicals and hampers the European idea. The Slovak Prime Minister, Robert Fico, is adamant that migrations are connected to terrorism. Foreign Minister, Miroslav Lajčak, notes a huge discrepancy between the Slovak public opinion and the Brussels quota policy. Slovakia and Hungary sued the EU over migrant quotas which they argue were imposed on EU members. Poland formally accepted the first quota of 7,000; however, after the election victory of the right-wing coalition, the government rejected further burden-sharing.

According to *Delo*, internet forums in Slovenia were used to spread hate speech and xenophobia. Individuals and groups use a freedom of speech principle in order to spread hatred. Slovenia should accept migrants and should reject the jingoistic anti-migrant policy. Slovenes should remember their history and recognise that one third of the nation experienced migration or life as a refugee[11]. People in Slovenia should help refugees who not only need food and shelter but also social contact.

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[11] *It is also important to stress that Slovenia has a history of accepting migrants. According to Slovenian Red Cross data, the country hosted more than 70,000 refugees, mainly from Bosnia and Herzegovina in the early 1990s (Utenkar, 2015).*

According to government representatives, Croatia was supposed to announce the daily migrant flow heading to Slovenia, enabling Slovenia to control numbers. It is not manageable to accept 12,000 or 13,000 migrants per day, as was the case in late October and early November 2015. The government justified the erection of razor-wire fence along selected parts of the border by the need to direct and control migrant flows and not by a desire to close borders, as was the case in Hungary. The fence would prevent illegal migrations as stipulated by Schengen Agreement. The government response to migrations is sober, proportional and credible: it needs to safeguard the functioning of the state, to protect migrants and to provide security to its own citizens. *Delo* published Prime Minister Miroslav Cerar's statement that the government rejects extreme standpoints towards migrants and strives to find a balance in solving the problem, taking into account absorption capacity and security, and values such as humanity and solidarity. 'To be a refugee doesn't mean you are criminal or a terrorist', the prime minister said.

The opposition by contrast argued that Slovenia was *de facto* no longer part of the Schengen regime. The government's migrant policy was insufficient and delayed, and a fence should have been erected much sooner. With the potential closure of German and Austrian borders, Slovenia might end up hosting up to 140,000 refugees. As reported in *Delo*, the political demonstration of the opposition parties named 'In the Defence of Slovenia' called for the protection of Slovenian culture and freedom. The mass invasion of radical Islam into Europe would mean the end of European culture, security and peace. Educated young people are leaving Slovenia every day whereas migrants are welcome to increase the voting basis for left-wing political parties. There are terrorists among migrants. The strongest opposition party (SDS) in the parliament proposed holding a referendum on limiting the settlement capacities for migrants (the move against a possible future EU quota policy), but this was supported only by NSi and therefore rejected by the majority of deputies. 'The import of migrants into Europe means its own destruction', was the main SDS argument.

Analysis of social media

SDS was also analysed separately due to its importance to Slovenian political life. As a party, it has recently led two government coalitions and is currently the main opposition party. It also enjoyed the most public support of all political parties in Slovenia during the migrant crisis. We have already discussed its migrant-related policy through our analysis of *Slovenske novice* and *Delo*, but further details can be seen through an analysis of Facebook, Twitter and the parliamentary transcripts of speeches made by SDS politicians. The analysis of the latter reveals that some SDS MPs called on the

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government to assume a more restrictive policy towards migrants following the examples of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland. They called on parliament to adopt measures to limit the number of migrants. SDS MPs were concerned that the legislation was too favourable towards migrants and the migrant crisis may not only have security implications for the whole of Europe but several other negative effects, as well. One SDS MP claimed knowledge that the Egypt Air plane crash in the Mediterranean in May 2016 was a terrorist act and he implied that migrants were responsible for it. The migrant crisis is seen in the context of a conspiracy theory as 'social engineering' under the cover of 'false humanitarianism'. Turkey will lead the Islamic world that will conquer Europe, and anti-democratic Sharia Law will prevail in Europe. The migrant crisis is 'a managed system of destabilisation of Europe' and is 'an organised Islamic invasion to Europe'. Certain Arab countries have political objectives regarding the migrant crisis and provide funds to stimulate it.

The majority of migrants are not fleeing their homes because of war. Muslims are liars and they are required to lie by Taqya, a commandment to lie when conversing with non-Muslims[12]. This discrediting of migrants and refugees has been continued on Facebook and Twitter by the SDS leadership and its MPs. Migrants look for the highest social incomes in European countries, they have a lot of money, almost all of them are economic migrants, and perhaps only 20 per cent are 'true refugees'[13]. Many of them were young men who should be fighting for freedom in their countries. The SDS representatives have also discredited the Slovenian politicians and citizens who support migrants: they ought to accept refugees into their own homes if they like them so much.

As far as security is concerned, the borders should be closed, and control should be rigorous because this is the greatest security issue since the independence of Slovenia in 1991. Hungarian Prime Minister, Orban, and his migrant policy is a role model for some of SDS MPs. The SDS also observes migrant flows as a long-term problem and calls for the problem to be solved at source.

Public opinion on migrations

We also performed a secondary analysis of the available survey data to check whether there had been any change in public opinion as a consequence of the media and political discourse on migrants. The survey of

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[12] *Evidently this was a simplification and manipulation; in fact, Muslims are allowed by Taqya to not to tell the truth about who they are if their life is threatened.*

[13] *It is often stressed that the 'true refugees' were those from Bosnia and Herzegovina in the early 1990s and those from Ukraine in recent years.*

the Institute of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, revealed that the Slovenian public's two main sources of concern were the social-economic crisis (lower living standards, unemployment, increased poverty etc. – 79 per cent of answers 'I'm very concerned' and 'I'm fairly concerned') and mass migrations (refugees, illegal migrants and economic migrants – 76 per cent). The level of concern about mass migrations was significantly higher than the following concerns: concern about natural disasters – 49 per cent; man-made disasters – 48 per cent; terrorist attacks – 48 per cent; and armed conflict – 45 per cent (Faculty of Social Sciences, 2016). Being strongly afraid of migrants – more than of terrorist attacks – is a paradox if migrants really were the potential perpetrators of terrorist attacks as many politicians have alleged.

Delo commissioned several public opinion surveys during the migrant crisis at *Delostik*. At the beginning of the crisis in September 2015, only 10 per cent of respondents feared mass migrations; whereas by the end of January 2016, the percentage had reached 33. More than half of the population rejected the construction of a migrant camp in their own locality. Mass migrations were seen predominantly as a humanitarian and security problem, respectively (67 per cent). 71 per cent of respondents criticised the way the EU had dealt with the crisis, whereas only 41 per cent criticised the way Slovenia had dealt with the crisis. Two thirds of respondents thought that one million migrants were too much for Europe to absorb. In a survey conducted on 20 February 2016, a majority of respondents (54 per cent) supported the policy of drastically restricting migrant flows into Europe, and the same portion agreed to close the Macedonian-Greek border to migrants. Both elements of the abovementioned migrant policy were rejected by only one quarter of respondents. The main problems facing the EU were considered to be: unemployment (32 per cent); the increasing number of refugees (20 per cent); the increase in political extremism (14 per cent); and global warming (13 per cent). In March 2016 when the migrant crisis in Slovenia was no longer acute, the majority of the population (53 per cent) reported that they would not object to a migrant camp in their own locality. Concurrently, 61 per cent of respondents accepted the EU quota of migrants assigned to Slovenia[14].

The cross-tabulations of *Delostik's* abovementioned surveys indicate that it is the younger generation (18–25 years) and older people (65+ years),

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[14] *The survey of the Bertelsmann Foundation conducted in mid-February 2016 (28 EU countries, N=11,410) revealed that the majority of EU citizens (79 per cent) supported the fair distribution of asylum seekers in all 28 EU member states. On average, the population of 'old' EU members was much more supportive of fair distribution than in 'new' members (85 per cent compared to 54 per cent). The similar portion of EU population (79 per cent) also expressed a desire for a common EU migrant policy (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2016).*

the more educated, unemployed and women who are more tolerant and express greater solidarity with migrants than other segments of the population. Observed from the political perspective, the supporters of SDS favour a restrictive migrant policy, whereas supporters of the United Left are the most tolerant and express the most solidarity with migrants.

Monthly public opinion polls commissioned by the Radio Television Slovenia at *Ninamedia*, to analyse the popularity of political parties ('Which political party would you vote for if the elections were held next Sunday?'), and the popularity of individual politicians and the government, reveal that the two strongest political parties, the main opposition party, SDS, and the main government coalition party, SMC (Modern Centre Party), were equally popular from August to November 2015 (each polling 15 per cent). At the peak of the migrant crisis, SDS was much more popular than SMC. Namely in December 2015 (16 versus 10 per cent), in January 2016 (18 versus 12 per cent), in February (21 versus 9 per cent), in March (17 versus 10 per cent) and in April, 2016 (17 versus 10 per cent). In May 2016, the polling ratio between SDS and SMC was 12 versus 9 per cent, meaning that the end of the migrant crisis in Slovenia had brought about the gradual renormalisation of political preferences.

Discussion

The selection of news in *Slovenske novice* appears to have been partly sensational, involving frequent reporting of migrant-related incidents and accidents. While we cannot say that the newspaper was biased as far as the migrant crisis is concerned, it did emphasise the problems caused by migrants (sex scandals, fights with state officials, fights among themselves, camps set on fire, murders etc.); but it also emphasised the problems encountered by migrants (the disasters in the Mediterranean, the difficulties of pregnant women, migrants abuse by police and military, poor nutrition and unhygienic conditions in camps etc.). The news and reports were brief and they concentrated on crucial facts based on statements from government and local authorities, opposition, security structures, humanitarian organisations, and civil society in general. Comment was absent and interviews rare. When reporting from the parliament, *Slovenske novice* covered all the relevant aspects of the discussion about migrants. The newspaper often also summarised the reports of foreign media and news agencies. We can say that the newspaper adopted an episodic news frame, applying reports about individual events without either over generalising or explaining the broader context.

On the basis of the content analysis, we cannot say that *Slovenske novice* has an editorial agenda either *pro* or *contra* migrants. Neither can we

say that its editorial policy has directly contributed to the securitisation of migrations. All we can say is that the newspaper summarised various views on the migrant crisis, and some of these views were rather radical in terms of security framing. However the paper also offered migrant-friendly opinions to the readers.

As far as *Delo's* reporting on the migrant crisis is concerned, it used a variety of forms to present the migrant crisis to its readers, ranging from reports to commentaries, statements and interviews. The latter involved mainly foreign and international personalities as well as some domestic interviewees. The selection of foreign interviewees steered the discourse in a humanistic and liberal direction, whereas the domestic interviewees predominantly, but not exclusively, covered the operational aspects of resolving the migrant crisis in Slovenia and in EU.

The articles published by *Delo* were much longer and analytical compared to those published by *Slovenske novice*. The perspective on the migrant crisis was not only national but simultaneously European and global. The analysis of individual articles reveals that the current migrant crisis was a consequence of the great powers' policy in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. The great powers managed to destabilise individual countries as well as the entire region. Apart from geopolitical causes of mass migrations, one should also take into account the economic and environmental causes. The West must deal with the causes of the migrant crisis otherwise there will be no long-term solution. On several occasions, *Delo* announced that mass migrations are likely to remain an ongoing problem. A thematic news frame was adopted by *Delo* in terms of contextualising individual events and deriving general conclusions on the basis of this.

Delo reported on and commented on migrants predominantly from the humanistic point of view, while the attempts of securitising them were criticised. *Delo* also reported much criticism of EU migrant policy and the migrant policy of individual states, especially Hungary, other Visegrad Group countries and Croatia. The newspaper warned of the international laws on migrations and human rights in general, and the legal responsibilities of states and international organisations. *Delo* unmasked the hypocrisy and paradox of the right-wing political narrative in Europe: while advocating the struggle for Europe and Christianity against Islamic migrants, they were at the same time undermining the values of solidarity, open society, humanism, humanitarianism and multicultural society. *Delo* warned that migrants had become part of the internal political struggle in Poland, France, Switzerland, Slovenia, Germany, Austria and Croatia.

The attitude of the government and the opposition towards the migrant crisis was reflected in the reports of both *Slovenske novice* and *Delo*. The Government wanted to appear to assume a balanced attitude towards

migrants while taking steps to control the flow of people. The main fear was that Austria and Germany might close their borders and that a lot of migrants would remain in Slovenia. In the process of framing its measures to manage the migrant crisis, the government (with the support of parliament) 'militarised' the border control, and used the euphemism of 'technical hurdles' to refer to the razor-wire fence, and 'the direction of migrant flows' to refer to the harsh control at the borders and the restriction on migrants numbers. The government did not attempt to frame all migrants in the security context: although it stressed the importance of security, it also rejected the over-securitisation of migrants claiming that the vast majority of them were not a threat; only a few tens of them were additionally checked for security reasons.

The representatives of the opposition parties, SDS and NSi, sought to alarm people and influence their feelings on security in relation to the migrant crisis. They then created their own proposals for a restrictive migrant policy. The latter was rather xenophobic and nationalistic, ignoring international and national legislature, as well as EU decisions. Claiming that the closure of state border would increase security of migrants was a *contradictio in adiecto*. Claiming that the majority of migrants were economic migrants and concurrently that they were 'full of money' was contradictory. The data used to prove the view expounded by SDS was exaggerated. The poor prognosis for the development of the crisis in terms of securitisation was a logical consequence.

The SDS' efforts to securitise migrants were evident from the way it framed them in the printed media, social media and in the parliamentary discussion. The SDS sought to deprive refugees of any legitimacy, claiming that most refugees were economic migrants; it linked migrants with terrorism, although terrorist attacks were mostly perpetrated by indigenous people and occurred as often prior to the migration crisis as afterwards, and its insinuations that migrants were involved in terrorist activities was without any proof; it emphasised the security dimension of the migrant crisis for the transit and host countries while ignoring the security concerns of the migrants themselves; it emphasised the need to introduce extraordinary security measures against migrants; and its various proposed political and legal solutions crossed the boundary of normal political procedure and contravened both domestic law and EU policy. This framing was mirrored in the selective information dissemination, biased statements, simplifications, the creation and consistent use of schemas, and exaggeration.

The Slovenian public feared mass migrations and accorded them a strong security meaning. Although other factors also determined the popularity of political parties in Slovenia (economic issues, social welfare policy, internal political dynamics, international policy aspects...), we can say that

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a party's attitude towards the migrant crisis and its proposed solutions to the crisis had an impact on its popularity – this was especially the case for the two dominant political parties, SMC and SDS. The latter managed to attract citizens by its radicalised and securitised attitude towards migrants. However, it is interesting to note that, despite the fact that SDS gained political momentum during the migrant crisis, its representatives were far from being the most popular politicians in the country. SDS representatives were at the very bottom of the list of top 22 politicians in Slovenia and the party president even dropped off the list at the beginning of 2016.

Conclusion

The recent migrant crisis in Europe has reinforced the debate on the mass migrations-security nexus. Several hypotheses were developed in order to explain that nexus; however it appears that different theoretical attempts emphasised different aspects of the problem. Our brief overview of the various approaches to the migration-security nexus reveals a number of different approaches: some analysts emphasise the security concerns of the transition/host states, their citizens and regions; some are preoccupied with the threats posed to the migrants themselves; while others take into account both aspects. If we continue to 'reconcile' the various approaches, this time using the case of migrants primarily coming from the MENA region to the EU, we could form a *dynamic migrations-related security continuum* that begins with the violence or other coercive factors causing the insecurity of people who are forced to leave their home country. Next, there are the potential 'human security' issues in the refugee camps in the neighbouring countries (countries of first resort), which often suffer from poor hygiene and medical conditions, malnutrition, excess temperatures of heat and cold, and psychological pressure. This is followed by migrants often coming into contact with organised crime groups (smugglers, people traffickers) who provide illegal and extremely dangerous transportation across the Mediterranean[15]. Again they face migrant camps or continue their dangerous and uncertain journey through the Balkans and Central Europe. A great many migrants have the potential to destabilise some countries along their way, for example in Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia. There are also several border control and sovereignty-related issues to be taken into account. In their destination countries, migrants may experience social marginalisation; some of them may be easy prey for

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[15] *As reported by Reuters using data from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), around 3,700 migrants died trying to cross the Mediterranean in 2015. In April 2015 alone, there were 1,250 deaths. 4,636 victims were reported by the IOM from 1 January 2016 to mid-November of 2016 (Nebehay, 2016). This is a major security problem.*

organised crime groups; and they may also become radicalised in terms of ideology and/or religion, and in some individual cases become susceptible to recruitment by terrorist groups. The continuum strives to achieve a balanced view of the migration-security nexus, taking into account the legitimate security concerns of all key actors: The transit and host countries and their populations, and the migrants themselves. The balanced view is *a conditio sine qua non* of objectivistic approach to the migrant crisis.

We took the theoretical considerations as the basis for an empirical analysis of the securitisation using framing of mass migrations in Slovenia during the period 2015–16. To answer the initial research questions, we took a holistic view of the subject. Our analysis reveals that the editorial policies of two Slovenian dailies, *Slovenske novice* and *Delo*, did not manipulate the securitisation issue by using framing. Arguably, *Slovenske novice* indirectly influenced it by reporting on the various incidents and accidents related to migrants. The newspaper was at times sensationalist but not intentionally biased. On the other hand, *Delo* attempted to de-securitise migrations, arguing for a legal, humanistic, human rights and liberal-values approach to reporting on and commenting on the migrant crisis.

The Slovenian government was balanced in terms of taking into account the legal rights of migrants, especially of refugees, and the legitimate security concerns of its own citizens at least at the declaratory level. In practice however, several restrictive measures were applied: the erecting of razor-wire fence along the border with Croatia; limitations set on the daily incoming numbers; harsh border control; and the 'militarisation' of the national border. These extraordinary measures contributed to the securitisation of migrations, despite the government's migrant-friendly rhetoric. Some opposition parties, especially SDS, were the frontrunners in the migrations securitisation process using framing. They advocated closing the borders in order to increase the security of citizens; they exaggerated reports of terrorists being among the migration flows; they called for the protection of Slovenian culture and freedom against the invasion of radical Islam; and they warned of the imminent destruction of Europe if the migration flows did not cease. The SDS employed selectivity, simplification and exaggeration in order to securitise the migration crisis. Many of their 'concerns' have since proved groundless.

It seems that the Slovenian public at least to a certain degree bought into the SDS's framing (attitude and ideas) of migrants, as evidenced by the fact that the public perception of migrants as a security threat increased while the SDS gained significantly greater public support during the migrant crisis compared to other political parties. Moreover, we could identify no other significant events during the period of time analysed that could have caused this shift in public opinion.

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