THESIS SHEET

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Nationalism and Identity Policy in Slovenia towards the Second Generation of Migrants from Former Yugoslav States

1. Introduction

The idea of Yugoslavia, conceived as a solid community of all South Slavic nations under the auspices of a common supranational identity, proved to be unattainable in the long run. A federation of relatively small nations, whose identification rests primarily on ethnic citizenship (Kohn 1944) or historical, territorial and linguistic elements, and much less on the theory of civic citizenship which represents a rational and liberal way of thinking founded on respect for human rights and personal freedoms, showed how important national identity is. The rise of nationalism in the late 1980s and early 1990s affected all the states of the former Yugoslavia. While in some there were bloody wars for independence, others were "lucky" to be able to achieve their independence relatively quickly and successfully. One of them is Slovenia.

Slovenia, as the most developed and thus the richest country in the former federation, has been an immigration country for decades for many people from less developed parts of former Yugoslavia. The largest immigration flows occurred especially during the 1960s and 1970s when many members of different nations of former Yugoslavia came to Slovenia in search of a better life. Immigrants mostly settled in the capital of Ljubljana and in smaller towns, where there were mines or large iron factories. Although the nature of their migrations was primarily economic and should have been short-lived, because of the better living standard and developed economy of Slovenia, many migrants stayed. In addition, the war in former Yugoslavia, and especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, also led to large-scale immigration, which changed the demographic picture of Slovenia. Currently, citizens from former Yugoslavia form the numerically largest ethnic groups in Slovenia, but based on the criteria of autochthony, they cannot obtain the status of national minorities.

It was these large migrations that greatly changed the demographic picture of Slovenia, which until then had been a very homogeneous community of the Slovene people, and consequently caused the growth of nationalism and xenophobia towards certain groups of people living within Slovenian state borders. But, unlike other Yugoslav states in which nationalism was more than

visible and was primarily manifested by wars and many victims, in Slovenia, nationalism somehow perfidiously slipped through the loop, not causing violence and remaining relatively unnoticed. This nationalism was so mundane and invisible that it was not actually perceived as nationalism. Involving borders and language, ranging from letters that are pronounced differently to last names ending in a different suffix, from coins and postcards to TV shows and graffiti, nationalism spreads invisibly in everyday life. Disguised in routine and everyday happenings, people accept this nationalism unconsciously.

2. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Guided by a constructivist understanding of nationalism and national identity, the dissertation explains why everyday nationalism, as a relatively new direction in the study of nationalism, is so interesting. Following the theory and arguments of different scholars (Goode 2020, Goode & Stroup 2015, Vucetic & Hopf 2020, Skey 2011, Edensor 2002, and more), the dissertation in the theoretical part explains the problems of the constructivist approach itself, clarifying why the study of nationalism and identity policies is much more comprehensive using the concept of everyday nationalism.

Unlike other schools of nationalism, which primarily focus on the study of nationality through the prism of ethnicity, theory and top-down approach, i.e., the role of the state and its institutions in creating and spreading nationalism, everyday nationalism offers a more modern and comprehensive approach to studying nationalism. Since it studies both the top-down and bottom-up approaches, it does not neglect the role of the masses or ordinary people, who are themselves unconscious creators of nationalism on a daily basis.

The doctoral dissertation is divided into two parts: one theoretical, and one empirical. The theoretical part of the dissertation follows Michael Skey's (2011) five dimensions of everyday nationalism: *spatial, temporal, cultural, political* and *self/other*. The spatial and temporal dimension are primarily observed through the lens of migrations to Slovenia, while the political

dimension of Slovenian domestic and foreign policy regarding the migrants from FYR is mostly observed through the minority issues and the case of Erased people[1]. In the cultural dimension, the relationship between Slovenian / European culture and the "non-Slovenian / Balkan" culture is demarcated, as well as how FYR[2] migrants are treated in Slovenian popular culture and media. The last dimension focuses on everyday situations and discrimination encountered by members of the second generation of migrants. The emphasis is put on 'name and surname' issues, the 'čefur' subculture in Slovenia and further negative stereotypes about members of other former Yugoslav nations.

The **political dimension** of everyday nationalism examines the role of the state and political institutions in creating Slovenian national identity, in particular through the media and various laws and acts passed by the state apparatus. It is the state that can legitimize the national discourse through the system of education, language, culture, territoriality, and finance, and thus the nation becomes a political community with deeply held beliefs and dominant narratives embedded in national institutions (Kymlicka 1995, Billig 1995, Bonikowksi 2016). This dimension is later researched through the prism of political myths and national minorities in Slovenia, as well as with the Erasure that happened in Slovenia in 1992. In addition, regarding the examples of minorities and the Erased people, the research probes the dichotomization of "us" and "them", considering the construction of national identity. Based on these examples, an evaluation of the role that the state played not only in creating national identity but also in the potential segregation of certain ethnic groups is carried out.

The next examined dimension is the **cultural dimension** of Slovenian nationalism and its application in everyday life. To begin, the primary theories of cultural nationalism are explained, while in next chapters these theories are studied on the example of the relationship between "European" and "Balkan" culture in Slovene context. The research aims to determine and explain the discourses of European and Balkan culture and how they are applied in the everyday life of Slovenes. It is in this example that I will research the interconnection between cultural and political dimensions of everyday nationalism in Slovenia and the meaning of central European

[1] Erased is the name for the inhabitants of Slovenia, who were illegally deleted from the register of permanent residents on 26 February 1992 by the Ministry of the Interior. Most of Erased people came from some other former Yugoslav state.
[2] Former Yugoslav Republics

identity for Slovenes. The research will be interested in the extent to which and in what ways post-1991 Slovene politics accepted independence and revived its Central European identity, and how this reflected on the notion of the Balkans in Slovene society. For this dissertation, the cultural dimension is important because the Slovenian national identity has survived for the last thousand years precisely through its culture, and not through political, military, or economic power (Južnič 1993, 21). This dimension is also studied through the prism of civic and ethnic citizenship, respectively, with the distinction between ethnic and civic citizenship questioned as a "Western" or "Eastern" idea, as each of the two constructs a different relationship between state and nation. (Hansen 1996, 475). The opinions of different scholars about Slovenia are gathered and critically compared, ranging from the idea of Slovenia as a more "Western-civic" nation or more inclined to Eastern-style cultural citizenship, and the reasons for this. (see Hafner- Fink 1997, Velikonja 2002, Bajt 2015)

The third examined dimension is the **Self/Other dimension** of everyday nationalism, respectively, the critical role that people, and the different traits and values they are seen to embody, have in realizing and concretizing the image of a nation in a world of nations (Wodak 2006, 105). The relationship of the majority, dominant group with respect to minority groups and how the discourse of domination is presented in everyday life is examined, with emphasis on the study of "Internal positive and Internal negative Others" (Petersoo, 2007). Having elucidated these mechanisms, the construction of the Other on the example of Non-Slovenes (immigrants from the former Yugoslav states) living in Slovenia is described. This primary framework shapes the study of the construction of the other through the prism of language, media, and subcultures throughout the text. The focus remains on the primary elements of the construction of the Other through the last names, pronunciations of certain words, types of music, and other elements of everyday nationalism.

The research connects the last two dimensions, **the temporal and spatial.** These dimensions are important because the relationship between space and national identity can produce complex geography that is constituted by borders, symbolic areas and sites, constellations, pathways, dwelling places, and everyday fixtures (Edensor 2002, 37). The dissertation puts the emphasis on the role of territories, borders, and symbols in the creation and understanding of national identity.

Since the Slovenian national identity relies primarily on its history and culture, the focus will be on the role of Slovenian national heroes, poets, and historical myths as symbols of Slovenian nationality. Also, because the territory is described as the fundamental element on which the state is formed, the focal point will be on the role of the small Slovenian territorial area, as well as the Triglav mountain as the primary geographical symbol for the creation of national identity. Through the theory of spatial dimension, the role of Slovenian history and the reasons and motives that led to Slovenian independence will be explained.

In the empirical part of the dissertation, the research uses a combination of methods. I opted for semi-structured interviews because they seek to understand complex patterns of society members (Fontana and Frey, 2000). These methods and the choice of participants are harmonized with the concept of everyday nationalism. By dividing participants into two groups, namely the group of ethnic Slovenes and the group of descendants of migrants from the countries of the former Yugoslavia, I will see the differentiation, i.e. in what way and through which elements each group understands the Slovenian national identity, eliciting answers to the questions of potential discrimination and self-perception of members of the second generation in Slovenia. The aim is to try to find out how important elements of the Slovenian national discourse are for those who have been living in Slovenia for years and have Slovenian citizenship. The research is interested in how they interpret nationality and belonging to certain cultures, and whether they consider politics and state institutions as primary artifacts in creating a general national consciousness. Through the theory discussed in the previous chapters, I will take the research as a starting point and then illuminate it with the help of critical discourse analysis.

3. Research Question

With the main hypothesis that, to move away from the connotation and discourse of backwardness of Yugoslavia and the Balkans, post-1991 Slovene politics had to present Slovenes as a people of Central Europe, the dissertation will also explore the elements of (popular) culture in creating common national identity, as well as the role of the state and state institutions.

By carrying out semi-structured interviews with two groups of respondents with different ethnic background, the research will try to capture a picture of the general climate in Slovenia towards immigrants from the FYR, and the processes of integration and assimilation of members of the second generation of migrants in Slovenia. In order to get answers to the above questions more easily and clearly, besides the original hypothesis, there are also additional hypotheses which are closely connected with five dimensions of everyday nationalism:

H1: To move away from the connotation and discourse of backwardness of Yugoslavia and the Balkans, post-1991 Slovene politics had to present Slovenes as a people of Central Europe.
H2: Slovene national identity is primarily defined through ethnicity and territory.

H3: Slovene myths and symbols are important in the self-identification of the respondents from the group of ethnic Slovenes, but not important to the group of second generation of migrants from FYR.

H4: The state and state institutions are the prime culprits for the Erasure.

H5.1.: Slovenia is seen as belonging to (Central) European culture, due to similar traditions and customs.

H5.2.: Music is the primary element of self-identification of the respondents.

H6: Members of the second generation of immigrants from the FYR are discriminated against because of their ethnicity.

H7: Identification with the Slovene (cultural) space is much stronger in the group of ethnic Slovenes, but in the group of second generation of nations from FYR.

Using following hypothesis, the main goal of the research is to explore the perceptions of perceived differences between and different treatment of Slovens and Non-Slovenes, as well as to explore their perception of each other.

4. Results and Conclusion

If we look at the primary hypothesis set out in the introductory part of the dissertation – that Slovene politics after 1991, in order to move away from the connotation and discourse of backwardness of Yugoslavia and the Balkans, had to present Slovenes as a people of Central Europe, through insurmountable differences setting them apart from other nations of the former Yugoslavia – we find that the theoretical part of the dissertation showed this hypothesis is correct. After 1991, Slovene politics tried to reaffirm Slovene national identity through the discourse of belonging to the European cultural circle. By reviving old national and literary heroes, changing the dates of national holidays and emphasizing the subalpine space and Mount Triglav as the primary geographical symbol of Slovenian national identity, the Slovenian state leadership wanted to separate itself from stereotypes and negative connotations associated with the Balkans.

In order to succeed in this, it was also important to find the Others, who would serve to further confirm Slovene nationality, and Slovenia's belonging to Europe. In Slovenia, these Others were identified in the group of members of former Yugoslav nations. Following Petersoo's definition of Others (2007), we can divide them into two groups: the Balkan external other, and Balkan internal other, i.e. members of other nations of the former Yugoslavia living in Slovenia. While the Balkan external others served the purpose of distinguishing the Slovene national identity and culture from the identity and culture of other peoples of the former Yugoslavia, the Balkan internal others served as an additional reaffirmation of the establishment of the Slovene identity within state borders. Also, in order to more visibly separate the Slovene Central European culture from the Balkan one, the nations of the former Yugoslavia were reduced to one denominator: Non-Slovenes. Regardless of the fact that these are different ethnic groups, which have different religions, languages and scripts, which are considered the primary features, in Slovenian case, of creating the national identity of a particular community. The theoretical part of the dissertation showed that state policy through the historiographical awakening and reaffirmation of the Central European identity, and through the Balkan others, successfully confirmed its own Slovenian identity.

However, on the other hand, the empirical part of the dissertation showed that the hypotheses set out in the introductory part of the dissertation are not entirely correct.

The first hypothesis, that Slovene national identity is primarily defined through ethnicity and territory, proved to be incorrect. Most respondents explained Slovene national identity through personal characteristics, using comparisons with other nations. In most of the answers, one can notice a comparison with the nations of the former Yugoslavia and Austria, which again speaks in favor of the duality of Slovenia as a meeting point between two diametrically opposed cultures. The second hypothesis, that Slovene myths and symbols are important in the self-identification of the respondents, turned out to be half correct because the opinions were different. While none of the respondents from the group of the second generation of migrants considered myths and symbols to be particularly important in their self-identification, in the first group of respondents, i.e. in the group of ethnic Slovenes, opinions diverged. While for some myths and symbols are very important in self-identification, for others they play no role.

The third hypothesis, that the state and state institutions are the main culprits for the Erasure, proved to be correct. Although all respondents emphasized that they knew little about these topics, they agreed that state policy and the media were the main ones responsible for the erasure in Slovenia. The next hypothesis claimed that Slovenia is seen as (Central) European culture, due to similar traditions and customs, while music is the primary element of self-identification. The hypothesis proved to be correct, confirming the importance of music as the primary identifier of the cultural component of everyday nationalism. The sixth hypothesis tested whether members of the second generation of migrants from FYR are discriminated due to their ethnicity. From the answers obtained, it can be concluded that migrants from FYR used to be discriminated against, especially on the basis of their surnames and pronunciations of certain letters and words, but today this discrimination is no longer visible. The last hypothesis tested whether the identification with the Slovene (cultural) space is much stronger in the group of ethnic Slovenes than in the group of second generation of nations from FYR. From the answers obtained, it can be concluded that the hypothesis set is correct, because the obtained answers show that in most members of the second group of respondents, despite being born and having spent their entire lives in Slovenia, identification with the Slovenian (cultural) space is not complete, that is, there are elements of parental cultures that intertwine with the Slovenian ones and make it difficult for

them to self-identify. As a relatively new concept, everyday nationalism has proved successful in both the theoretical and empirical parts of the dissertation because it uses both bottom-up and top-down approaches. Although on a relatively small representative sample, through its five dimensions, it managed to show the similarities and differences in the opinions of scholars and 'ordinary people'. And that is exactly what makes everyday nationalism particularly interesting in research on nationalism and national identity. It also respects the opinions of other or wider masses, so this dissertation hopes to be a guide to other researches of everyday nationalism in Slovenia and other countries of the former Yugoslavia, which will later expand its representative sample.

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