On the Side of the Alps:
The Image of a Slovene National European Identity

Master Thesis

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MA International Relations in Historical Perspective

Faculty of Humanities

Utrecht University

Word Count 15,893

12 June 2020

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"From the days of Carantania, Trubar, the spring of nations in the mid-nineteenth century, the antifascist resistance in the mid-twentieth century, and the war of independence at the end of the twentieth century, it is clear that we are at home in the EU, although we never moved." [*Od Karantanije, Trubarja, Pomladi narodov sredi devetnajstega, antifašističnega boja sredi dvajstega in osvobodilne vojne koncem dvajstega stoletja je jasno, da smo doma v EU, ne da bi se kaj pride selili.*]1

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1 Editoral in *Delavska Enotnost,* 20 March 2003, as cited in Andreja Vezovnik, "Krekism and the Construction of Slovene National Identity: Newspaper Commentaries on Slovenia's European Union Integration," in *Contesting Europe's Eastern Rim: Cultural Identities in Public Discourse*, ed. Ljiljana Šarić et al. (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2010): 129.

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Abstract

This master thesis aims to analyze the Slovene 'success' story of becoming independent relatively easily and accessing the European Union as the first former Yugoslav state. Using the Slovene documents of independence, the documents concerning Slovenia's accession to the EU, journal expressions, advertisements and documents of self-determination movements, it applies Benedict Anderson's theory on imagined communities. This analyzes how the idea of a European identity influenced the Slovene intellectual elite that advocated independence and European integration between 1985 and 2004. In this context, the Slovene nation and European community are described through the eyes of the Slovene intellectual elite as an imagined political community. This means that the feelings of national and European identity as experienced by the intellectuals, are historical and cultural artefacts, coming from a deep feeling of belonging. The intellectuals that advocated independence stand in a long tradition of Slovene intellectuals who have meant a great deal for the development of the image of a Slovene political community, and thus Slovene nationalism. The Slovene language has been an important and unifying factor in this. Besides, the Balkanization of the other former Yugoslav republics by the Slovene intellectuals has been important to emphasize the European character of the country.

Finally, this thesis concludes that the idea of a European identity influenced the Slovene intellectual elite that advocated independence and European integration between 1985 and 2004 heavily. As the intellectuals were deeply integrated within society, this had a great impact on the country. The image of a European identity was widely accepted within society and therefore an important legitimation for independence. The arguments for EU accession after 1991 however, were often based on economic and political arguments. Still, the origins of the Slovene goal to achieve EU accession lie within the idea of an imagined European community.

Keywords: Slovenia, European Identity, National Identity, Nationalism, Imagined Communities, Yugoslavia, Balkans, European Union.

Acknowledgements

List of abbreviations

EU European Union

FPRY Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (1946-1963)

JNA Yugoslav People's Army

NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organization

OF Liberation Front (Osvobodilna Fronta)

SFRY Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1963-1992)

TD Territorial Defense

Visualizations

Europe 1985

☐ Member States of the European Community

■ Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

Europe 1992

■ Slovenia
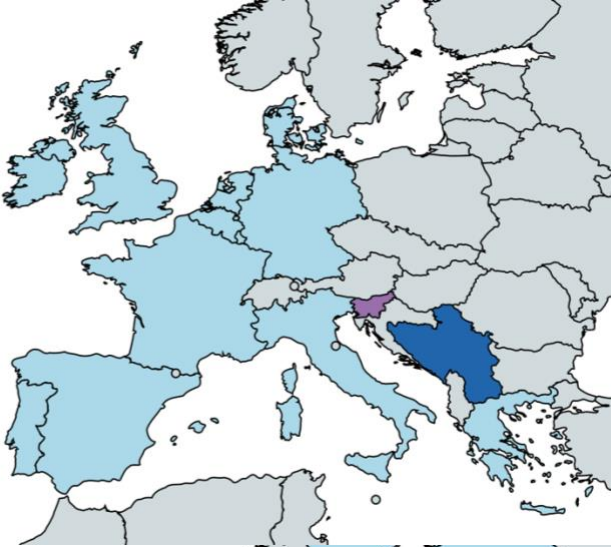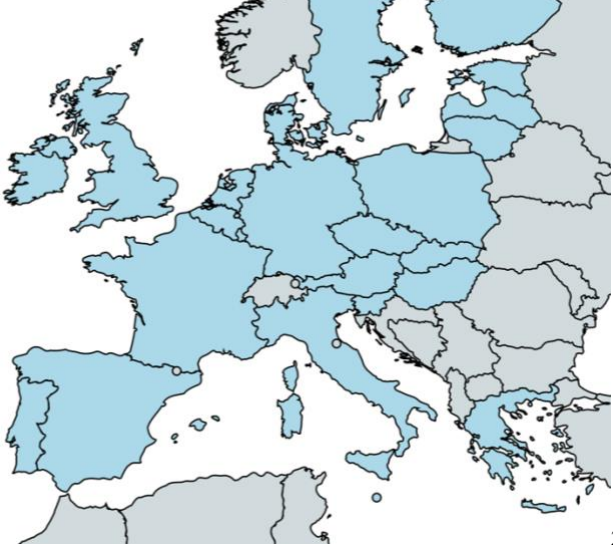
☐ Member States of the European Community

■ Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

Europe 2004

☐ Member States of the European Union

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2 All maps are the author's creation with mapchart.net, based on information from: "The 27 Members Countries of the EU," *European Union*, countries, URL: https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries_en#tab-0-1.

1. Introduction

During the struggle for independence of Yugoslav countries in the 1990s, self-determination movements used the rhetoric of a 'return to Europe'. This epitomized in the Slovene campaign slogan "Europe now!" [*Evropa zdjai!*].[3] The phrase refers to a symbolic return of Slovenia to its rightful cultural sphere and an entry into the European economy.[4] But why did the Slovenes speak of a return rather than an arrival in Europe? Slovenia is often described as a 'bridge' or a 'translator' between the Balkan region and Europe.[5] These comparisons express familiarity with both regions, but also a sense of not fully belonging to either of them. Still, with its relative wealth, stable politics and quality of living, the country is and was often perceived as having a particular European identity.[6] This was emphasized by independence movements and pro-Europe parties. By making use of a European rhetoric they managed to convince the population of the advantages of European integration.[7] Already in its declaration of independence on 23 December 1990, the new-born state expressed European aspirations: "Slovenia as an international, legal entity…seeks associations with other states…membership in the European community and participation in other alliances of states or nations."[8] Eventually, Slovenia became a member of the EU in 2004. The so-called 'return to Europe' was finally achieved. The accession to the EU meant the final confirmation of Slovenia's European identity and its most visible distinction from other former Yugoslav states. This became even more clear when Slovenia became part of the Schengen space, which literally drew a line between what did and did not belong to Europe.[9]

1.1 Historiography on the history and politics of Slovenia

Maria Todorova, a Bulgarian historian, combines the concepts of a European and Balkan identity and shows how they reject each other. According to her, the Balkans are part of Europe,

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[3] Nicole Lindstrom, "Between Europe and the Balkans: Mapping Slovenia and Croatia's 'Return to Europe' in the 1990s," *Dialectical Anthropology* 27, no. 3 (2003): 313.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., 322.

[6] James Gow and Cathie Carmichael, *Slovenia and the Slovenes: A Small State and the New Europe* (London: Hurst & Company, 2001): 2.

[7] Ibid., 203.

[8] "Declaration of Independence," Ljubljana: 23 December 1990, *Government of the Republic of Slovenia Public Relations and Media Office,* Independence Documents, URL: http://www.slovenija2001.gov.si/10years/path/documents/declaration/.

[9] Damjan Mandelc and Tjaša Učakar, "Perforated Democracy: Disintegration, State-building, Europeanisation and the Erased of Slovenia," *Revija za sociologiju* 43, no. 1 (2011): 44.

but also of its periphery. It is therefore 'the other within'.[10] Katherine Fleming agrees with Todorova. She states that it is unclear what 'counts' as Balkan. The word itself is as much a conceptual designator as a geographic one. The area used to be relegated to the East as part of the Orient, but is now placed in the West as the alien yet internal other.[11] What defines the Balkans to the outside observer, is the fact that they can neither be told apart nor put together. Fleming states that the Balkans are the same in the fact that they are all concerned with demonstrating in what way they are different from one another.[12] Todorova states that Balkan identity has come to signify the tribal, the backward, the primitive and the barbarian.[13] According to Ivana Zivancevic-Sekerus, this serves to create the opposite image of Europe, which accordingly becomes the repository of positive values such as civilization, progress and modernization.[14]

The dichotomy of 'us versus them' between Europe and the Balkans took on different shapes throughout history according to Andreja Vezovnik and Ljiljana Saric. They state that the old symbolic geography of the Europe-Balkan opposition was reinforced during Socialism, when Western democracy and capitalism were opposed to the totalitarian, socialist East. Socialism then became the new ideological Other, thereby replacing the Balkans as the cultural Other. After the mostly violent dissolution and disintegration of Yugoslavia, the post-socialist period reintroduced the discourse of the Balkan area as barbaric and primitive. Yet, the region's self-perception has always been more complex and heterogeneous.[15] These are important notions to bear in mind while researching the history of the Slovene nation.

General works on the Slovene state and population focus mostly on the history of the country and its road to independence. Rok Stergar and Tamara Scheer claim that the classification efforts that accompanied the modernization of the Habsburg Empire were key in establishing, promoting and perpetuating a Slovene national awareness.[16] Other authors such as Rudolf Rizman and Sabrina Ramet focus more on the current history of the country and

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[10] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): 3.
[11] Katherine Fleming, "Orientalism: the Balkans and Balkan Historiography," *The American Historical Review* 105, no. 4 (2000): 1230.
[12] Ibid., 1219.
[13] Todorova, *Imagining,* 3.
[14] Ivana Zivancevic-Sekerus, "Balkans" In *Imagology: the Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters,* ed. Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007): 107.
[15] Andreja Vezovnik and Ljiljana Saric, "Introduction: Constructing Balkan Identity in Recent Media Discourses," *Slavic Review* 74, no. 2 (2015): 238-239.
[16] Rok Stergar and Tamara Scheer, "Ethnic Boxes: the Unintended Consequences of Habsburg Bureaucratic Classification*," Nationalities Papers* 46, no. 4 (2018): 576.

describe how its independence in 1991 caused the need for a democratic, economic and social transition.17 This went hand in hand with the desire to quickly join the Western community, thus becoming a member of the European community and NATO.18 The authors claim that there was a strong political consensus in the country on the EU subject. Ever since gaining independence, membership of the EU was considered to be the key national priority by the population at large.19

Lea Prijon states that social movements played a particular role in the 1980s in Yugoslavia. In the area that is now Slovenia, massive engagements and functioning of new social movements started, which brought into light essential topics such as quality of life, individualism, environment, spirituality and tolerance. They advocated for modernization of Slovene society in order to enable political pluralism. This was accompanied by the formation of a Slovene identity, with Western Europe as a 'model of modern society'.20 This cognitive shift in the cultural and symbolic sphere, came with the desire for independence and the Slovene geographical position as a Central European country.21 This was inspired by the renewed debate on Central Europe or 'Mitteleuropa' by the intellectuals of Eastern and Central Europe around 1989.22 The social movements Prijon mentions, are described by Ivan Bernik as being led by the Slovene intellectual elite who expressed their political non-conformism in journals and saw themselves as the custodians of civil society.23

Nicole Lindstrom mentions the specific role of Europe and European identity within the country's history. She describes how the quest to join Europe took on a heightened significance since defining one's state as European differentiated its national identity from a Yugoslav or Balkan one and facilitated transitions to democratic and free market states.24 However, not all academics agree on the fact that Europeanization meant progress towards a more democratic and inclusive state. Damjan Mandelc and Tjaša Učakar mention that the process of

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17 Rudolf Rizman and Sabrina Ramet, *Uncertain Path: Democratic Transition and Consolidation in Slovenia* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000): 4.
18 Janez Potocnik et al, "The Accession of Slovenia to the EU," in *The Accession Story: The EU from 15 to 25 Countries, ed*. George Vassiliou (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007): 344.
19 Ibid*.,* 368.
20 Lea Prijon, "Slovenian Communist Legacy: After 25 Years of Independence of Slovenian Nation," *Slovak Journal of Political Sciences* 17, no. 2 (2017): 156.
21 Ibid.
22 Ksenija Vidmar-Horvat and Gerard Delanty, "Mitteleuropa and the European Heritage," *European Journal of Social Theory* 11, no. 2 (2008): 209-210.
23 Ivan Bernik, "From Imagined to Actually Existing Democracy: Intellectuals in Slovenia," in *Intellectuals and Politics in Central Europe*, ed. András Bozóki (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999): 111.
24 Lindstrom, "Between Europe and the Balkans," 313-314.

democratization was accompanied by a process of re-nationalization, which excluded certain ethnic groups from the new state, such as Bosnian Muslims and Serbian Orthodox Christians.[25] Therefore, they state that both democratization and Europeanization were only empty words, because they did not give political protection to minorities.[26]

Modern Slavic political historians on Slovene independence are engaged in a heated debate about the aspirations that have led the Slovene independence movement. One of the dilemmas they are confronted with, is whether the formation of independent Slovenia has been a consequence of the wish to join the EU, and democratization the necessary condition to achieve this goal, or if democratization was the initial goal that would automatically lead to Europeanization.[27]

1.2. Relevance and research question

This research aims to seek an explanation for the 'Slovene success story'[28] in its perceived Europeanness. This is relevant, since an explanation for a successful European integration could also be applied to the situation of candidate states and eventually explain the errors within an unsuccessful story of European integration. This research will therefore help to enrich the concept of European identity and its value for European integration. The main question asked in this thesis is: *How did the idea of a European identity influence the Slovene intellectual elite that advocated independence and European integration between 1985 and 2004?*

Rudolf Rizman and Sabrina Ramet argue that Eastern and Central Europe in particular hold a long tradition of political engagement by 'men of letters' who feel moral authority over society. They state that when political opposition is oppressed within a state, intellectuals are the only social group with skills and knowledge to articulate the ideas of a free society.[29] However, this might be too much honor for the intellectuals and their writings. In fact, it is the society that reads or hears the intellectual's ideas and acts upon them in their protests. Besides, language and culture are passed on by families to the next generation. Finally, religion is also a very powerful and shaping voice within society. Still, the Slovene intellectual elite did have an important role within society throughout history and they are a visible group, who expressed their opinions and demands in their journals. Therefore, they are the focus of this research.

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[25] Mandelc, "Perforated Democracy," 29.
[26] Ibid., 46.
[27] Ibid., 43.
[28] Rizman, *Uncertain Path,* 15.
[29] Ibid., 118.

The main question will be answered by applying Benedict Anderson's approach on nationalism, in which he describes nations as imagined communities. The theory of imagined communities is applicable to the European community as well. Through the constant production of both visual and textual images, an idea and awareness of Europe exists.[30] This created the image of a Western European community that the Slovene intellectuals wanted to belong to. Anderson's theory is a useful tool to depict the rise of an imagined national and European community, such as Slovenia.[31] This approach will be the main guiding line for this research.

This research on the European identity of Slovenia can be placed within the current debate on the aspirations that have led the Slovene independence movement, for it leads to conclusions on the origin of the country's identity: was this perceived Europeanness taken up in order to create conditions for an easy independence and wealth assurances within the EU? Or is it something which comes from a deeper, historical identity in the country's population and a rejection of the Balkan identity? Since Anderson's approach will be used in order to explain the particular imagined European national identity and feeling of belonging of Slovenia. It is placed in the latter stance within the debate: explaining where the deeper historical feeling of a Slovene community comes from, rather than explaining the state through (economic) interests.

Finally, there are many works on Slovenia's independence, road to European integration and the role of European identity within this. However, this has not been combined yet with theories of nationalism. Rok Stergar and Tamara Scheer shortly combine the rise of Slovene national awareness with the work of Benedict Anderson in an interesting way when they emphasize the importance of a national language for nationalists in order to spread the idea of the nation, but they do not touch upon the existence of a European Slovene identity. The combination of theories of nationalism, the Slovene and European national identity is therefore new. It draws a bridge between the existing literature on the Slovene identity and Slovenia's European integration. It can provide new insights, for it does not only look at the history of Slovenia's European integration and the role of European identity in this, but also at the driving factors behind it. It therefore connects the history of the Slovene nation, and the main ideas that shaped it, to the political present.

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[30] Lotte Jensen, "Imagining Europe," in *Imagining Communities: Historical Reflections on the Process of Community Formation,* ed. Gemma Blok, Vincent Kuitenbrouwer and Claire Weeda (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018): 65.
[31] Ibid., 63.

1.3 Theory: imagined communities by Benedict Anderson

One of the central works in nationalism studies, is 'Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism' by Benedict Anderson.[32] He states that nationality and nationalism are cultural artefacts of a particular kind. In order to understand them, Anderson differentiates three steps: find out how they came up, in what way they changed and why they carry such profound emotional legitimacy.[33] He defines the nation as an 'imagined political community', stating that it is both imagined as well as inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."[34] It is imagined as limited because each nation has boundaries, dividing several nations from each other. It is imagined as sovereign, since the concept of a nation was born in an age of Enlightenment and revolution, which created its dreams for freedom and independence. And finally, it is imagined as a community, because within a nation, there is a deep feeling of comradeship. This is what makes people willing to kill or to die for their imaginings.[35] Anderson explains this national community in terms of the occupation of the place that originally belonged to other imagined communities: religion and the dynastic realm. This makes nationalism more than an ideology, but rather something that goes deeper in shaping human identities.[36] In terms of time, he compares the nation to the idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time. This is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history.[37] Anderson attributes particular importance to the development of book publishing and print-languages for national consciousness. He argues that what made the new communities imaginable was "a half-fortuitous, but explosive, interaction between a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print), and the fatality of human diversity."[38]

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[32] Umut Ozkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism: a Critical Introduction* (London: McMillan Education, 2017): 114.
[33] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006): 4.
[34] Ibid., 6.
[35] Ibid., 7.
[36] Pheng Cheah and Jonathan Culler, *Grounds of Comparison: Around the Work of Benedict Anderson* (London: Routledge, 2003): 22.
[37] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 26.
[38] Ibid., 42-43.

1.4 Methodology and outline of the thesis

This thesis will be divided in three chapters, each answering a sub question. The first, 'Where does the idea of a Slovene identity come from?,' addresses Anderson's first step. It describes the origins and the recurring ideas of national identity. This starts with examining the historical context of the Slovene nation and identity itself, from the beginning towards the middle of the 20th century. Doing this will eventually show to what extent the European aspect is constitutive to the national identity. The question will be answered by making use of primary sources such as writings by intellectuals that express national awareness and demands for independence. Besides, secondary literature on theories of nationalism, the history of the Habsburg Empire, Yugoslavia and Slovenia will be used.

The second sub question, 'What is the historical context surrounding the Slovene independence?' describes the way Slovenia achieved independence and how the country was shaped in its first years of existence. It therefore addresses Anderson's second point: the way the nation of Slovenia changed. Again, it will be examined to what extent the idea of a European identity is constitutive to the process. This will be done by addressing the main arguments for independence of the intellectual elite as expressed in journals and declarations. Did they refer to the European past of the nation, as described in the first chapter? Or did they focus more on an independent future for the country, distancing themselves from the violence in the Balkan area? This chapter is based on primary sources such as the Yugoslav constitutions, the Slovene documents of independence, journal expressions, advertisements, documents of self-determination movements and speeches. The non-governmental documents will be limited however, due to language restrictions. The sources will be selected on containing explanations for the independence, references to national and European identity, writings of the Slovene intellectual elite and expressions on the other (former) Yugoslav republics. This will be combined with secondary literature on the history and politics of Slovenia, the history of the independence movement and the concept of Mitteleuropa.

The third sub question, 'In what ways was the concept of a Slovene European identity expressed by the Slovene intellectual elite between independence and EU accession?,' is posed in order to find out why the national identity of Slovenia carries such profound emotional legitimacy, in particular the part that addresses a European identity. This concerns Anderson's last point. This will be done by addressing the main arguments for the European integration of the new state. Again: did the intellectual elite refer to the European past of the nation? And to what extent did European identity play a role in the process of fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria? This chapter is based on primary sources such as national surveys on European

integration and the official documents concerning Slovenia's accession to the EU in combination with translated expressions and writings of Slovene intellectuals and the government on EU integration. This will be combined with secondary literature on EU integration in general, the history of Slovenia and studies on European identity.

The timeframe chosen for the questions covers the period before Slovenia's independence until its accession to the European Union. This research is focused on Slovenia's relationship with the European Union. Its relations with other international bodies or countries in this timeframe will not be examined. Furthermore, the concepts of a European identity which will be used in this research are often referring to Europeanness as more progressive, developed and wealthy than others. This superiority is not necessarily factual, but rather a powerful image that influences the way countries view each other and therefore shapes international relations.

2. Nationalism and the birth of the Slovene nation

On 23 December 1991, the newborn state of Slovenia adopted its constitution. The preamble mentions "the fundamental and permanent right of the Slovene nation to self-determination; and the historical fact that in a centuries-long struggle for national liberation we Slovenes have established our national identity and asserted our statehood."[39] This emphasizes the existence of a clear historic Slovene national consciousness. But where does the Slovene identity come from and how did it develop?

Nationalism is often seen as the root of problems around the globe.[40] Yet, nations and nationalisms have not been at the center of concern of social and political theory until the 1960s and 1970s. At that time, a lively academic debate on nationalism emerged, accelerated by the experience of decolonization and the grow of new states in Asia and Africa. The debate took on a new level in the 1980s with publications by academics such as John Breuilly, Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm and Anthony D. Smith.[41] Benedict Anderson's theory on imagined communities is thus one of the many ways to explain the awakening and rise of national consciousness and nationalism. A comparison of theories and explanation for the use of Anderson's approach will follow in the next subchapter.

2.1 Theories of nationalism

John Breuilly states that there is a division between those who regard nationalism as the product of an underlying national reality, and those who regard it as a myth; the cause rather than the product of nationality.[42] He defines nationalism narrowly as nationalist politics. He calls it the special expression of ingroup sentiments within a society as well as the projection of feelings of hostility and superiority upon outgroups.[43] For Breuilly, nationalism refers to "political movements, seeking or exercising state power and justifying such action with nationalist arguments."[44] Therefore, nationalism is above all about power and control of the state.

Paul Brass is best known in the field of nationalism studies for his instrumentalist approach. Broadly speaking, 'instrumentalism' explains the origins and continuing support for

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[39] "Constitution," Ljubljana: 23 December 1991, *Republic of Slovenia Constitutional Court*, About the Court, URL: https://www.us-rs.si/en/about-the-court/legal-basis/constitution/.
[40] Ozkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism*, 2.
[41] Ibid., 5.
[42] John Breuilly, "Reflections on Nationalism," In *Nationalism in Europe*, ed. Stuart Woolf (London: Routledge, 1995): 137.
[43] Ibid., 139.
[44] Ozkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism,* 93.

nationalism by the interests it is expected to serve. Hereby, ethnic and national identities become convenient tools for competing elites in order to generate mass support in their struggle for wealth, power and prestige.[45] Instrumentalists therefore argue that ethnic and national identities are continually redefined and reconstructed in response to changing conditions within society and politics.[46] Brass agrees with Breuilly by defining nationalism as a political movement.[47] He claims that it therefore requires political organization and skilled political leadership, combined with resources to gain support.[48] When an ethnic group succeeds by its own efforts in achieving and maintaining group rights through political actions and mobilization, it has established a nationality.[49]

Unlike Breuilly and Brass, Miroslav Hroch states that nationalism exists of more than the interests of a group. He relates nation forming to the larger processes of social transformation. His main conclusion involves the idea that a modern nation is not an age-old phenomenon.[50] Still, he does define a nation as something that has historical roots. It grew out of traditions of European humanism and Enlightenment patriotism. He finds it crucial to understand however, that nations are more than this cultural construct alone.[51] Hroch states that "the origin of the modern nation and the birth of the national movement cannot be explained primarily through patriotic agitation."[52] Rather, the existence of a nation is the outcome of decision-making influenced by frequent similar experiences among large groups of people.[53]

Anthony D. Smith bases his approach on a critique of modernism. He attributes particular importance to the pre-existing ethnic components of a nation. Smith convincingly argues that cases in which there was little ethnic heritage to a nation are rare.[54] His definition of a nation is: "a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and

[45] Ibid., 97.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid., 101.
[48] Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (New Delhi: Sage Publications India, 1991): 48.
[49] Ibid., 22-23.
[50] Ozkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism*, 129-130.
[51] Miroslav Hroch, "The Nation as the Cradle of Nationalism and Patriotism," *Nations and Nationalism* 26, no. 1 (2020): 8-9.
[52] Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000): 178.
[53] Ozkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism*, 129-130.
[54] Ibid., 159.

duties for all members."[55] Smith argues that national aspirations often combine with other non-national economic, social or political issues. However, nationalism is not based on these issues and interests, but rather uses it to fuse their national grievances and aspirations.[56]

Eric Hobsbawm's work agrees with several lines of thought of the authors mentioned before, but combines them in a different way. He is famous for his work on the 'invention of tradition' in which he describes how groups and nations create practices of a ritual or symbolic nature by repeating certain values and norms, which automatically implies continuity with the past.[57] His definition of a nation corresponds to this idea, saying that "any sufficiently large body of people whose members regard themselves as members of a 'nation', will be treated as such."[58] A nation is therefore invented and created: it is not primary nor unchanging. It belongs exclusively to a particular, and historically recent, period.[59] This means that nationalisms make nations instead of the other way around, just like Breuilly and Brass argue.

As stated before, one of the central works in nationalism studies, is 'Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism' by Benedict Anderson.[60] His approach differs from the other authors discussed before. He does not define nationalism as nationalist politics, like Breuilly does. Rather, Anderson convincingly attributes a deeper importance to Breuilly's 'nationalist arguments' by defining them as deeper cultural artefacts. Also, unlike Brass, he does not look at the interests nationalism is expected to serve. However, Brass does describe the particular importance and meaning of symbols of identity, heritage and group culture as a collective experience. This could be translated to the idea of an imagined community. According to Hroch, the modern nation is no age-old phenomenon, but for Anderson, the idea of the nation is timeless for those who imagine it. Smith's perception of an ethnic nation fits the ideas that might be imagined by the members of Anderson's community, but the two authors do not share the same beliefs on the deepness of the cultural artefact that is the nation. Finally, Hobsbawm's idea of invention corresponds with the idea of imagining a nation. However, he claims that in order to understand a nation, one has to look at its needs, rather than a cultural identity. Anderson effectively shows that there is no need to choose between the instrumental and primordial approach. Rather, he explains how certain social

[55] Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991): 14.
[56] Ibid., 145.
[57] Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 1.
[58] Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 8.
[59] Ibid., 9.
[60] Ozkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism,* 114.

structures and consciousness can give a national form to the cultural imagines of a community.[61] Besides, there is a difference between the act of inventing and imagining: invention is more superficial than imagination as those who introduce the invention are aware of it being created. Those who imagine a nation can believe in their imaginings from the start. Still, Anderson does state that nations are characterized by amnesia's: they remember the same things, but also agree on what to forget.[62] This adds to the building of a narrative, tradition or imagination. In the following subchapters, Anderson's theory will be applied to the history of the Slovene nation in order to demonstrate that it is favorable to explain its rise and development.

2.2 The Slovenci and the Habsburg Empire

The Slavs arrived in Southeastern Europe between the 6th and 8th century. They slowly developed separate cultures. From the 6th century onwards, one of these groups called themselves *Slovenci*, 'the people of the word'. They developed their own languages and lived with other linguistic neighbors for centuries.[63] Around 800, Christianization occurred in the region. Over time, German feudal lords moved in and made the Slovene population mostly serfs, which remained the political and cultural pattern for ages.[64]

From the middle of the 14th century onwards, most of what is Slovenia today was included in the Habsburg Empire. The Habsburgs gained more and more land and also became the heads of the Holy Roman Empire which gave them control over Germanic Central Europe.[65] The Habsburg feudal system had laid deep roots in the Slovene provinces and the cities became increasingly Germanized. The Slovene language was not used in written form, let alone for literary creativity. The Reformation changed this for a short moment in time. It caused an age of intellectual awakening since humanism encouraged learning and literacy in the vernacular.[66] A Catholic priest who adopted Protestantism, Primoz Trubar (1508-1586) published the first Slovene printed book by translating religious texts. He is called 'father' of the Slovene literature and founder of the Slovene literary language.[67] Even though Protestantism disappeared from the Slovene lands with the counter-Reformation, its impact and the works of Trubar and those who continued his work gave the Slovene language and national consciousness an injection of

[61] Breuilly, "Reflections on Nationalism," 153.
[62] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 204.
[63] Gow, *Slovenia*, 9-11.
[64] John Cox, *Slovenia: Evolving Loyalties* (London: Routledge, 2005): 2.
[65] Leopoldina Plut-Pregelj and Carole Rogel, *The A to Z of Slovenia (*Lanham: Scrarecrow Press, 2010): 192.
[66] Ibid., 40.
[67] Cox, *Slovenia*, 3-4.

energy and status.[68] Even though Trubar used the word 'Slovene' and 'Slav' interchangeably, he evolved a clear idea of who the Slovenes were and he avoided pan-Slavic borrowings that would have made his writings apprehensible for other Slavic peoples.[69] It is the impact of this Reformation and the birth of print-capitalism that Anderson attributes a great importance to for a nation and nationalism to grow.[70] By emphasizing and valuing the national language, the image of a Slovene community was thus formed and spread for the first time.

The counter-Reformation and the Thirty Year's War quickly extinguished the sparkle of Slovene national consciousness and literacy.[71] It would last until the 19th century for the language to take shape and gain acceptance again. It survived through the centuries as a peasant language. In the following centuries, trade with German and Italian lands caused a higher standard of living in Slovenia than in more remote, predominantly agricultural regions of the inner Balkans. This intense economic activity provided for the emergence of a Slovene bourgeoisie with an overlapping German and Slovene cultural identity.[72]

A map of the Habsburg territories at the end of the 18th century.[73]

[68] Ibid., 4.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 39.
[71] Cox, *Slovenia,* 3.
[72] Ibid., 5-6.
[73] Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: a New History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016): 54.

2.2 The 19th century: classification and modernization

The 19th century began with the ideas of Slovene Enlightenment (1760-1820s), which were primarily cultural and awakened a national awareness among the intellectual elite.[74] European trends merged with national ideas, and libraries, theaters and newspapers were founded.[75] Linguists claimed that the different vernaculars in the region were just dialects of a single South Slavic language. Intellectuals made an effort to establish this standard language in literature and newspapers.[76] This brought what Joep Leerssen calls: 'national thought'. It is "a way of seeing human society primarily as consisting of discrete, different nations, each with an obvious right to exist and to command loyalty, each characterized and set apart unambiguously by its own separate identity and culture."[77] It would soon develop into nationalism, with the coming of the Napoleonic wars in Slovenia. In the meanwhile, the image of a distinct Slovene nation with its own language was born and developed among the intellectual elite.

The Napoleonic period in the area only lasted from 1809 to 1813, but the Slovene region was very important to Napoleon because they deprived the Habsburgs of key coastal territory. Ljubljana became the capital city of the region and many Slovenes gained experience in politics and administration. And most importantly, the Slovene language was in official and educational use.[78] A prominent figure in this time and place was Valentin Vodnik (1758-1819). He was a newspaper editor, scholar, school administrator and writer. One of his works, 'Illyria Resurrected' captures precisely the birth of Slovene nationalism at that time and how the ideas of the French Revolution that came with Napoleon connected Slovenia to the rest of Europe: [79]

Napoleon says,
"Illyria, arise!"
It arises, it breathes:
And who calls you to life?

O beneficent knight,
You who awaken me!
You extend your mighty hand,
and pull me up . . .

Since ancient times
the snow-covered mountains have been our patrimony.

[74] Plut-Pregelj, *The A to Z,* 155.
[75] Cox, *Slovenia,* 8.
[76] Stergar, "Ethnic Boxes," 578.
[77] Joep Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: a Cultural History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006): 22.
[78] Cox, *Slovenia,* 7.
[79] Ibid., 8.

Our honor comes echoing back
to us from there . . .

Over hundreds of suns
moss grew to cover us;
now Napoleon's decrees
clear out the dust.

The Napoleonic spirit
is marching into the Slovenes,
and a generation sprouts
reborn completely new.[80]

Even though this poem captures the sentiments of the time, Vodnik found very few followers among the Slovene intellectuals because of anti-French sentiments within the society. When Napoleon had suffered defeat in Russia, Austrian troops started returning to the area. The Vienna congress (1814-815) brought lasting peace in Europe. The Slovene area now partly belonged to the Illyrian Kingdom, which was of no significance administratively since it was under Habsburg control, but some local authority was governing from Ljubljana.[81] This period is marked by Austroslavism, within the context of Habsburg 'Trialism'. It was the belief that together, the Slavs would be the third great force within the Monarchy, equal to the Austrians and Hungarians. This came from a strong loyalty to the Habsburgs, but also a common belief among Slovene intellectuals that there were too few of them to achieve independence without a pan-Slavic movement.[82] Still, very few Slovene writers seemed prepared to abandon their language and take on the dominant Serbo-Croatian language, when this became debated within the intellectual circles around 1830. This feeling of Slavonic brotherhood, but hesitation towards cultural absorption marked the Slovenes for decades. It was preserved by the influence of the Catholic church, which distrusted the Orthodox Serbs.[83] The Slovenes, and especially the intellectuals, thus kept on preserving the image of a Slovene nation, apart from the other Slaves.

During the first half of the 19th century, the Habsburgs were involved in the standardization process of languages. This culminated in the publication of nine version of the *Reichsgesetzblatt,* in which laws were published, in German, Italian, Hungarian, Czech, Polish, Ruthenian, Slovene, Serbo-Croat and Romanian.[84] In March 1848, Slovene nationalism had

[80] Valentin Vodnik, "Illyria Resurrected," as cited in Cox, *Slovenia,* 8.
[81] Oto Luthar et al., *The Land Between: a History of Slovenia*, ed. Oto Luthar (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008): 260-262.
[82] Gow, *Slovenia, 19-20.*
[83] Ibid., 20-21.
[84] Stergar, "Ethnic Boxes," 579.

come to a new turning point and various groups of intellectuals and elites demanded the establishment of an autonomous 'united Slovenia'.[85] They did so by sending a petition to the Austrian emperor that demanded a new Habsburg Kingdom which would unite all the lands with a Slovene-speaking population and the official use of Slovene language in governance, court and education. Hereby, they emphasized the equality between them and the Austrians and Hungarians, while stating: "We just want for us what the other Austrian people already have." ["Wir wollen für uns nur das Verlangen, was die übrigen österrechischen Völker schon haben."].[86] The demand was not answered and remained the slogan for all Slovene national activities for almost a hundred and fifty years.[87] Despite this disappointment, the Slovenes remained loyal to the Crown during the revolutionary period of 1848-1849.[88] This had to do with the unfavorable circumstances and political tactics within the empire.[89] The 'springtime of nations' in Europe was followed by a harsh regime of Emperor Franz Josef throughout the empire. The Slovenes felt betrayed, as their loyalty was not rewarded.[90]

Meanwhile, ideas of change entered the country. The German Peter Kozler (1824-1879), who came from a family both part of the German and Slovene bourgeoisie, embraced the ideals of a united Slovenia. In 1848, he started working on 'a map of the Slovene land'.[91] Because of repeated delays by the authorities, the map was not published until 1861. He dedicated the map to the Slovene people, stating:

"The Slovene nation! Accept with good will this work dedicated to you and judge it lightly.... I present it to you in the kind wish that soon the Slovene nation, its language, and its territory will be better known."
[Slovenski narod! sprejmi dobrovoljno to delo, ktero je tebi posvečeno, in milo o njem sodi... Izročim ti ga s preserčno željo, da bi se kmali po boljših pozvedbah znanstvo o slovenskem narodu, njegovem jeziku in svetu povikšalo.][92]

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[85] Rok Stergar, "The Evolution of Linguistic Policies and Practices of the Austro-Hungarian Armed Forces in the Era of Ethnic Nationalisms: the Case of Ljubljana-Laibach," in *Language Diversity in the Late Habsburg Empire*, ed. Markian Prokopovych, Carl Bethke, Tamara Scheer (Leiden: Brill, 2019): 55.

[86] "Majarjeva Peticija Za Zedinjeno Slovenijo 1848," 290, ed. Vasilij Melik, *Sistory: History of Slovenia*, URL: https://hdl.handle.net/11686/file2496.

[87] Ivan Kordis, "Peter Kozler and His Map of the Slovene Land and its Provinces (1849-1871)," *The International Journal for the History of* Cartography 68, no. 2 (2016): 215.

[88] Cox, *Slovenia,* 15.

[89] Stergar, "The Evolution," 55-56.

[90] Cox, *Slovenia,* 15.

[91] Kordis, "Peter Kozler," 213-215.

[92] Peter Kozler, "Kratek slovenski zemljopis zemljopis in pregled politične in pravosodne razdelitve ilirskega kraljestva in štajerskega vojvodstva s pridanim slovenskim in nemškim imenikom mest, tergov, krajev," as cited in Kordis, "Peter Kozler," 221.

Kozler's 'Map of the Slovene Land and its Provinces' played an effective role in the history of the Slovene nation state.[93] The opportunity to visualize a nation as a people in a territory, means a great deal for grow of nationalism.[94] This fits Hobsbawm's theory on an invented, unchanging nation that belongs to a particular period. Because when Kozler published his map, those living within the drawn territories were now seen as Slovenes. This would evolve with the change of borders. The creation of the map also suits Anderson's idea of an imagined limited nation, with borders that divide several nations from each other. The depiction of the nation on a map makes it easier to imagine it.

From 1880 on, the inhabitants of the Austrian half of the empire had to declare their *Umgangssprache*: their language of daily use. They could choose one of the nine languages categorized in 1849. Even though this was a pragmatic choice coming from the need to communicate with all subjects of the empire, the official establishment of a language gave the illusion that all language-groups within the empire belonged to one of the nine ethnolinguistic nations.[95] In this way, imperial elites actively participated in nation-building. Thus, upcoming nationalism was not only a challenge for empires but also part of their survival strategy in the new modern setting.[96]

For Slovenes, the modern era brought a revival of national consciousness and the birth of Slovene nationalism.[97] The two deciding actors in this are the state and the intellectual elites.[98] They started the development of national thought in which the national language was crucial. This matches Anderson's ideas on the importance of book publishing and print-languages for the national consciousness. The national consciousness of an existing imagined nation turned into nationalism and motivated the elites to advocate independence and distinguish themselves from other nations.

2.4. The 20th century: from war to war

In the Slovene lands, the 20th century began with lots of unrest. Italian irredentists were a threat on the southern borders and there were many violent clashes between Slovene parliamentarians.

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[93] Ibid., 226.
[94] Michael Wintle, "Emergent Nationalism in European Maps of the Eighteenth Century," In *The Roots of Nationalism: National Identity Formation in Early Modern Europe, 1600-1815,* ed. Lotte Jensen (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016): 274.
[95] Stergar, "Ethnic Boxes," 578-580.
[96] Stefan Berger and Aleksey Miller, "Nation Building and Regional Integration, c.1800-1914: The Role of Empires," *European Review of History* 15, no. 3 (2008): 317.
[97] Cox, *Slovenia*, 7.
[98] Stergar, "Ethnic Boxes," 577-578.

The most dominant party was the Slovene Peoples Party, a conservative, Catholic party with a close relationship to Vienna. They opposed the growth of Serbian power in the Balkans, which is why they withstood the upcoming idea of a pan-Slavic or Yugoslav state.[99] The dominant idea in politics was still Trialism.[100] The Slovene People's Party and the Croatian and Bosnian Party of the Right issued a resolution in 1912 that proclaimed the unity of the Slovene and Croatian nation and called for a union within the empire. This dualism was a dissolution for Slovene members, but was considered the necessary tool to achieve Trialism.[101] However, the Habsburg rule would soon come to an end after more than 600 years.

In June 1914, Archduke Francis Ferdinand was assassinated by the Bosnian-Serb nationalist Gavrilo Princip in Sarajevo. At his trial, Princip stated: "I am a Yugoslav nationalist, aiming for the unification of all Yugoslavs, and I do not care what form of state, but it must be free of Austria."[102] The Austro-Hungarian government decided to make use of this event to deal with Serbian nationalism and eventually start an attack.[103] This caused a chain reaction of events and attacks that turned in to the devastating First World War. During the war, the Slovenes remained largely loyal to the government in Vienna. In 1914, the nation's leading politician, Anton Korosec, published the Diet of Carniola in which he promised loyalty to death and condemned any Yugoslav separatist movement as treason.[104] By 1916, this loyalty began to weaken. Great material shortages, poor leadership and the bloodshed and inconclusiveness of the war went together with the death of Kaiser Franz Joseph. This accumulated in a sense of urgency at home when Habsburg authorities imprisoned and executed hundreds of Slovenes whom they considered security threats. In 1915, severe fighting between the Italians and Austrians started on the Slovene lands. Many Slovenes died in the fighting and about 80,000 were expelled. Eventually almost two-third of Austria-Hungary's casualties in the war occurred on the Slovene lands.[105]

In 1917, Princip's wish came true. The Yugoslav committee and the Serbian government in exile signed the Corfu declaration calling for a kingdom of Serbs, Croats and

[99] Cox, *Slovenia*, 24.
[100] Pavlina Bobic, *War and Faith: the Catholic Church in Slovenia, 1914-1918* (Leiden: BRILL, 2012): 12.
[101] Ibid., 14.
[102] Vladimir Dedijer, *The Road to Sarajevo* (London: Macgibbon and Kee, 1967): 341.
[103] Lorraine Murray, *Austria, Croatia and Slovenia* (Chicago: Britannica Educational Publishing, 2013): 109.
[104] Cox, *Slovenia*, 26.
[105] Ibid., 27.

Slovenes. This meant a constitutional monarchy under the Serbian royal family, which was affirmed on 1 December 1918.[106] It was stated in the declaration that:

"Our nation does not ask for anything which belongs to others, and only claims that which belongs to it. It desires to free itself and establish its unity. That is why it conscientiously and firmly rejects every partial solution of the problem of its freedom from the Austro-Hungarian domination."[107]

These words fitted the Serbian aspirations before the war. Serbia was in a powerful position and as the idea of Trialism had vanished with the Austrian empire, a Yugoslav initiative seemed the best option for the Slovenes as a protection for dangers from Italy and Germany. They pragmatically chose to become South Slavs as the lesser evil.[108] This means that the image of the Slovenian nation still existed within society.

For the Slovenes, one of the major issues during the interwar period was the disposition of their fellow nationals within the borders of the newly shaped Austria and Italy. They were exposed to strong assimilation pressures.[109] Still, most Slovenes were protected, their language was in official use, they continued to live under their old Habsburg law code and Catholicism was given equal rights with Serbian Orthodoxy.[110] But through the years, the peoples of Yugoslavia fundamentally disagreed on how the state should be governed. The Serbs generally supported a centralized rule from Belgrade, which accumulated in the Vidovdan constitution in 1921. It referred to the three main nations as one 'three-named-people' and a 'unitarist' Yugoslav culture. In practice, this meant the influence of a Greater Serbian culture, which grew increasingly threatening and received many oppositions by the other nations within the kingdom.[111] Slovenes understood Yugoslavism both politically and culturally, but more as a matter of solidarity and affinity than as their own identity.[112] The image of the Slovenian nation thus persisted, regardless of the attempts of the Serbian royal family to unite the identity of the country. This argues against an instrumentalist theory on nationalism in this case and for

[106] Kate Hudson, *Breaking the South Slav Dream: the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia* (London: Pluto Press, 2013): 13.
[107] "The Corfu Declaraton," Corfu: 20 July 1917, *Eurodocs: History of Slovenia,* URL: https://eudocs.lib.byu.edu/index.php/History_of_Slovenia:_Primary_Documents.
[108] Bobic, *War and Faith*, 228.
[109] Andrej Bekes, "Slovene Language after the Schengen Agreement: Will the Linguistic Borders Also Disappear?" in *The Palgrave Handbook of Slavic Languages, Identities and Borders*, ed. Tomasz Kamusella, Motoki Nomachi and Catherine Gibson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015): 278.
[110] Cox, *Slovenia*, 30.
[111] Ibid., 31.
[112] Ibid.

Anderson's theory. It thus shows that the Slovene national identity is a persisting, historical and cultural image.

On 6 January, 1929, King Alexander proclaimed a dictatorship and changed the name of the country to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in order to emphasize Yugoslav political unity.[113] In December 1932, Anton Korosec from the Slovene People's Party issued the Slovene Declaration. It called for a unification of all Slovene people within one border, an independent status for the Slovenes and self-rule on a democratic basis. This was strongly rejected by the Belgrade government. A few years later, Korosec and his party took distance from the declaration, while the threat of fascism from Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy was growing more and more.[114]

On 6 April 1941, Yugoslavia was invaded and occupied. The Slovene region was divided between Germany, Italy and Hungary. All three powers claimed the existence of a historic and ethnic bond between their nation and the areas they occupied. [115] There was a strong support for Hitler and his ideas in the regions with a high percentage of German-speakers. Likewise, the Hungarians were warmly welcomed by some middle-class and older inhabitants with nostalgia to the 'good old days' of the Austria-Hungarian empire. These reactions argue for Breuilly's approach to nationalism, based on power and control of the state. However, when put differently, the feelings of connection to the Germans and Hungarians could also come from the imagining of a deeper belonging to a German nation, a shared history, or the idea of Trialism. Most Slovenes at first obeyed the new order and refrained from resistance as the memory of the First World War was still there.[116] In the following years, a brutal Germanization process took place in the Slovene region.[117]

The Slovene communists are often linked with the Yugoslav Communist Partisan Army, but did not become part of it until relatively late in the war. The autonomy of Slovene activity gives an entirely different character to resistance in Slovenia.[118] One of the main opposition groups in Slovenia was known as the Liberation Front (Osvobodilna Fronta or OF). It was led by communists but also included national youth movements and members of the church.[119] OF

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[113] Plut-Pregelj, *The A to Z,* 427.
[114] Gow, *Slovenia, 39-40.*
[115] Gregor Joseph Kranjc, *To Walk with the Devil: Slovene Collaboration and Axis Occupation, 1941-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013): 53-54.
[116] Ibid., 55.
[117] Kranjc, *To Walk,* 59.
[118] Gow, *Slovenia,* 43.
[119] Cox, *Slovenia*, 41.

failed to gain members for the Partisan forces.[120] This had to do with the fact that many conservatives, especially the Slovene People's Party, decided to form an alternative organization in the spring of 1942: the Slovenska Zaveza. This group found resistance to the Axis too dangerous and was determined to wait for the Allied victory to liberate them. Besides, they were so inherently anticommunist that they were willing to collaborate with the fascist occupiers.[121] This split within the country turned into a violent civil war in 1943. The OF eventually won in cooperation with The Partisan Liberation Front and help from the Soviet army. The members of the Slovenska Zaveza and other anti-leftist nationalist groups fled to Austria. Many were sent back by the British and most of them, treated as traitors, were executed. Thousands of collaborators were shot in Slovenia, or forced on 'death marches' to organized concentration camps in other republics.[122] On 29 November 1945, the Popular Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was announced, after an election won by Tito's Popular Front party in which all opposition was banned.[123]

Finally, the idea of Slovene identity was born during the rule of the Habsburg Empire. It was spread and developed by the intellectual elite, but also by the different governments through language policies and repressing national identity once it existed. The Slovene language has been a very important uniting factor that, in combination with other factors such as changing political leaders and borders, has enabled the people in the Slovene area to imagine itself as a national community, even after the dividing war. While politically, Trialism and pan-Slavism were the most rewarding options, the image of a distinct Slovene nation and identity still remained. Therefore, Anderson's approach to nationalism can be used to explain the history of the Slovene nation from its existence towards the middle of the 20th century.

[120] Gow, *Slovenia*, 45.
[121] Ibid., 40-41.
[122] Joze Pirjevec and Emily Greble, *Tito and his Comrades* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2018): 151.
[123] Pirjevec, *Tito*, 158-159.

3. Independence and state formation

It has now become clear that the idea of a distinct Slovene nation is a centuries-old phenomenon. However, the independent Slovene state is only 29 years old today. This chapter will describe the historical context surrounding the Slovene independence. Anderson states that in order to understand a nation, it is important to understand the ways it has changed. Therefore, this chapter addresses how the national awareness, that had changed into national identity, turned into a nationalist ideology strong enough to fight for independence. Slovenia's independence is often regarded a success story.[124] But what is the component that made this particular nationalism so powerful? While examining this, the role of the idea of a European identity in the process towards Slovene independence will be discussed.

3.1 Constitutional changes and self-determination

In July 1946, the Paris Peace conference set the postwar borders of the new socialist state of Yugoslavia and the country was renamed Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY). It consisted of the six republics of Slovenia, Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Hercegovina. Although some lands now considered Austrian were lost, Slovenia acquired most territories that had belonged to Italy in between the wars. Tito's leadership was widely accepted due to the rapid stabilization and economic recovery of the new state after the war. In order to survive in the circumstances of the time, Tito exploited the Cold War antagonism and sustained political independence in his socialist-oriented society with economic support from the West.[125]

The first years of Tito's rule were marked by political persecutions. Even though the FPRY was a federal state and union of equitable nations, the federation was politically, socially and economically more centralized than the centralist Kingdom of Yugoslavia had been.[126] As stated in Article 44, the Federal Constitution did not take into account for example: the rights of all Republics to its own defense forces, the right to the forging of direct diplomatic contacts and the right to legislation and the organization of law-courts.[127] This seemed to change when a new constitution was adopted in 1963, based on the principle of economic self-management.

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[124] Mandelc, "Perforated Democracy," 39.
[125] Hudson, *Breaking*, 39.
[126] Ibid., 51.
[127] "Constitution of the Federal Peoples Republic of Yugoslavia," Washington D.C.: 1946, *Embassy of the Federal Peoples Republic of Yugoslavia*, Information Officer, URL: https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.cow/cyugo0001&i=5.

In the spirit of the time of decolonization, the constitution even mentions: "the right of peoples to self-determination and national independence and for their right to wage liberation struggle to attain these just aims."[128] However, the state remained fundamentally centralist and only minor changes were made concerning the self-management of the republics. The country was renamed the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY).[129] In February 1969, the Federal Assembly adopted a new law on national defense, granting the republics the authority to form local territorial militias.[130]

Slovenia was always in the forefront of arguments for greater freedom of the republics. The dynamic of autonomy and centralism between Slovenia and royal Yugoslavia was repeated through the course of communist Yugoslavia. During the 1960s, relative financial and economic liberalization were achieved. This came with an improvement of relations with Western European countries and, simultaneously, the opening of borders for goods and travels. This impacted Slovenia completely differently than the other republics of Yugoslavia, as it was positioned at the border of the federation. It caused the circulation of ideas and publications, which created the Slovene desire to achieve similar standards of living and ways of governing as their neighbors. This quickly became part of the political agenda.[131] An important event herein, was the 'Road Affair' in 1969. Slovenia sought to improve its road network significantly as part of its improved links with Western Europe. The funding for this project came from the World Bank, but when it arrived, the federal authorities decided to redistribute the funds to road projects in other republics. In Slovenia, this was seen as offending federal abuse. This was answered with charges of nationalism from Belgrade and Tito changed the Slovene representation in the federal government. From then on, the issue of relations with the federation became a prominent theme within the republic.[132] The opening of the borders and the Road Affair show that the Slovene affection for the Western or European way of living was not only based on cultural grounds. Rather, economic development and growth were important factors in the road to independence, as emphasized in the theories of nationalism by Miroslav Hroch and Paul Brass.

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[128] "Constitution of Yugoslavia," 17 April 1963, in *Constitutions of Nations*, ed. Dorothy Peaslee Xydis (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1966): 1243.
[129] Ibid., 1271-1276.
[130] Sabrina Petra Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milosevic* (Boulder: Taylor & Francis Group, 2002): 6.
[131] Gow, *Slovenia*, 55.
[132] Ibid., 56.

At the beginning of the 70s, Slovenes lived on the edge of development of Western countries. The emergence of progressive and liberal flows of ideas seemed to promise reforms, which would improve the disastrous economic situation in the other already malfunctioning republics of Yugoslavia. But these attempts only resulted in changes of local constitutions, which hindered individual Slovene development.[133] In 1974, a new federal constitution was adopted again. This accelerated the changing relationship between the independent republics into a balance of power rather than one integrated state. The last remains of the traditional parliamentary system were replaced by a system of delegations.[134] This was emphasized by Article 249 which stated:

> "Yugoslav citizens shall have a single citizenship – that of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.
> Every citizen of a republic shall simultaneously be a citizen of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.
> Citizens of a Republic shall on the territory of another republic have the same rights and duties as the citizens of that republic."[135]

These lines created confusion among lawyers and historians over the question of primacy between two citizenships as the word 'simultaneously' contradicts 'a single citizenship'. Federal citizenship now became single and dual by its nature. Some authors find primacy of Yugoslav citizenship over those of different republics in the equality of rights and duties of a citizen of one republic living in the other. However, others convincingly argue that federal citizenship had the primacy over citizenship of the SFRY. This is based on Article 281 on the rights and duties of the Federation which shows that the federal institutions were increasingly dependent on constitutive republics.[136] The existence of a dual citizenship emphasized the still present distinct Slovene nation and voice. Therefore, Article 249 proves to be important for the imagining and eventual awakening of the Slovene nation. By referring to the political existence of the separate republics, the image of the nation of Slovenia was accentuated again. It shows Anderson's explanation of a nation as an imagined community.

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[133] Prijon, "Slovenian Communist Legacy," 154.

[134] Igor Štiks, "Nationality and Citizenship in the Former Yugoslavia: From Disintegration to European Integration," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 6, no. 4 (2006): 484.

[135] "The Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia," transl. by Marko Pavacic and Dr. Jur, The Secretariat of the Federal Assembly Information Service (Ljubljana: DELO, 1974).

[136] Štiks, "Nationality and Citizenship," 485.

3.2 Slovene intellectuals and the return to Europe

For Slovenes, an important development occurred on 11 November 1975, when the Treaty of Osimo was signed. It guaranteed political and linguistic rights to the Slovenes living in Italy and provided for a fairly free and open border that would come to be of great economic importance. Even though it did not change anything to the exclusion of many Slovene nationals from their land since 1918, it did keep the hopes up for an eventual reunification, as Slovene culture would now be protected in Italy.[137] In 1980, the undisputed political leader of the Communist Party, Josip Broz Tito, died. His death changed the political landscape and the whole political system destabilized. At the same time, the federation found itself in the situation of a worsening economic crisis.[138]

At different moments in history, the intellectual elites of Slovenia have played an important role for the awakening and development of their nation. As stated before, they were of utmost importance in the age of intellectual awakening after the Reformation, during the Slovene Enlightenment, for the idea of Trialism and they eventually called for a united Slovenia several times throughout the 19th and 20th century. The group consisted of the German bourgeoisie, those who had studied in Vienna, poets, political thinkers and writers. Despite their different background, they were unified by their concerns and ideas on topics such as the Slovene language and the unification of the Slovene people. By speaking and writing about their concerns, they have added to the growing image and imagination of the nation.

The political and economic instability that came with the death of Tito opened up possibilities for intellectual movements.[139] In Slovenia, the internal division of the political elite led to increasing activism and a gradual transformation into deep disenchantment with Socialism. Independent journals emerged, spreading ideas that had previously only been available to close intellectual circles.[140] Two journals and groups marked the scene. Once was 'Mladina' [The Youth], consisting of mostly younger intellectuals who were strictly anti-political and wanted to facilitate the emergence of a civil society. The dissent of the other group, 'Nova revija' [New Review], existing mostly of middle-aged intellectuals, was the notion that political democratization would be inseparably linked with the solution of the Slovene 'national-question'. The definition of Slovenia's position in the Yugoslav federal state gradually changed. While the political elite at first unsuccessfully tried to suppress the activities

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[137] Cox, *Slovenia*, 56.
[138] Ramet, *Balkan Babel,* 6.
[139] Bernik, "From Imagined to Actually Existing," 106-107.
[140] Ibid., 109-110.

and ideas of mostly Nova revija, a growing consensus appeared between the political and intellectual elite concerning the 'national question'. The political elite felt like they had to accept the demands to retain public support.[141]

During the late 1980s, the tensions between Slovenia and Serbia were rising. Slovenia's orientation towards greater autonomy within Yugoslavia was in sharp contrast with Serbia's greater centralization goals. From the mid-80s onwards, there had been a demand for liberal democratic freedoms and eventually even for a multi-party democracy in Slovenia. Meanwhile, the youth groups surrounding the journal Mladina refused to participate in a traditional annual youth assembly. It symbolized the rejection of the continuation of Titoite rule of Yugoslavia. When the editor of Mladina was prosecuted by federal army officials without the knowledge of the Slovene political leadership, the republic became increasingly unified against the federal authorities. As a result, a Committee for the Defense of Human Rights was set up which rapidly attracted over 100.000 members. This was the first mass organization in Yugoslavia outside the control of the Communist League.[142]

The discontent with federal Yugoslavia among the intellectuals, artists and broader public now also began to take shape in references to the distinctiveness of Slovenia and its national identity. Either the Slovenes rediscovered their identity, or they tried to fill the emotional void left by moribund Yugoslavia.[143] But the image of a Slovene nation, belonging to a sovereign political community, became loudly voiced. This was also shown in the defense of the Slovene language. This historically recurring issue, was raised again by the Slovene linguist Joze Toporisic, who stated that Slovene was endangered by the political predominance of Serbo-Croatian and the low birthrate within the Slovene republic. The rebirth of Slovene nationalism was furthermore presented in bumper stickers, magazine ads and billboards proclaiming "Slovenija – moja dez ̆ela" [Slovenia is my country] and "Na sonc ̆ni strani Alp" [On the side of the Alps].[144] It was also expressed in the Slovene opposition campaign slogan "Evropa zdaj!" [Europe Now!].[145] The last two refer to the connectedness of the Slovene nation to Europe and call for the symbolic return of the state to its rightful cultural sphere as well as entry into the European economic and political institutions.[146]

[141] Bernik, "From Imagined to Actually Existing," 109-110.
[142] Hudson, *Breaking*, 76.
[143] Cox, *Slovenia*, 70.
[144] Ibid., 71.
[145] Lindstrom, "Between Europe and the Balkans," 313.
[146] Ibid.

The image of a European identity was recurring within the intellectual circles during the 1980s. The Slovenes affirmed an identity grounded in traditions understood to be Western, and particularly not Balkan (or Eastern European). Rather, they claimed to be a member of central Europe as they shared intellectual, artistic, political and social affinities with the former members of the Habsburg empire.[147] The idea of Slovenia's belonging to Europe was usually legitimized with spatial, historical, religious and cultural arguments.[148] Contrasted to the image of a stable, orderly, civil and democratic Central Europe, the Slovene opinion had portrayed its counterpart, the Balkans, as disorderly, violent and authoritarian.[149] This fits Breuilly's theory which states that nationalism is the expression of ingroup sentiments within a society as well as the projection of feelings of hostility and superiority upon outgroups.[150] In this situation however, the Slovenes tried to depart from the 'Balkan ingroup' themselves by expressing feelings of superiority and hostility. This is shown by the intellectuals of Nova revija who presented the desires for Slovene independence in their now famous 57th issue, entitled Prispevki za slovenski nacionalni program [Contributions to a Slovene National Program].[151] One of them was Taras Kermauner who claimed that the formation of the Yugoslav state had unnaturally bound Slovenia to the Balkans.[152] In 1988 he wrote:

"Today Slovenes are discovering their own history [and discovering] … that, as regards their type of culture and civilization, they belong much more to central Europe and Western Europe than to the Balkans and the Near East, that is, to the lands of the former Ottoman empire. (The former center of the Ottoman empire - today's Turkey - is moving away from that Near Eastern spirit most successfully. Balkan Yugoslavia is closer to revolutions of the Libyan, Palestinian, and Iraqi type than Turkey; sympathizing with that type is, for Yugoslavia, a civilizational tragedy.)"[153]

The existential questions on the core of Slovenia's national identity fit within the renewed debate on Central Europe or 'Mitteleuropa' of the intellectuals of Eastern and Central Europe around 1989. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union afterwards, the debate was more than academic and had a global influence. Writes such as Havel, Konrád, Milosz and Kundera described Mitteleuropa as defense line for the West, a zone of internal

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[147] Patrick Hyder Patterson, "On the Edge of Reason: The Boundaries of Balkanism in Slovene, Austrian and Italian Discourse," *Slavic Review* 62, no. 1 (2003): 114-115.
[148] Vezovnik, "Krekism," 129.
[149] Ibid., 116-117.
[150] Breuilly, "Reflections on Nationalism," 139.
[151] Cox, *Slovenia*, 60.
[152] Patterson, "On the Edge of Reason," 116-117.
[153] Taras Kermauner, "Slovenija med Srednjo Evropo in Balkanom" (10 March 1988)" as cited in Patterson, "On the Edge of Reason," 117.

exile but also as a safe haven which turned to both consumerist individualism and totalitarian collectivism. It influenced the Slovene intellectuals who took up the discourse of the 'return to Europe' and began to write on belonging to Mitteleuropa. In contrast to the Western narrative of the end of history in 1989, the year was seen as the 'rebirth of history'.[154] Kundera, who was very influential to the Slovene intellectual elite, referred to the Slovene Central-European past himself in Nova revija a few years later: "I hear voices who in relation to the Slovenes speak of the "danger of Balkanization". But what does Slovenia have to do with the Balkans? This is a Western country."[155] This kind of expressions placed the republic of Slovenia within the imagined community of Europe as something they inherently belonged to.

In May 1989, an informal political coalition presented a clear formulation of national interests during a people's assembly, known as Majniska deklaracija [May declaration]. It highlighted firstly the wish of the Slovenes to live in a sovereign Slovene country. Secondly, the new country should be able to decide on its relationship with Yugoslavia and other nations in the context of the renewed Europe. Thirdly, on the basis of all historical efforts of the Slovene nation for political independence, the new state could only be based on respect for human rights and freedoms and on social organization that provides spiritual and material well-being.[156] In December of 1989, the parliament approved new electoral legislation, which legalized other political parties. More and more political organizations were formed, which despite their diversity in political perspective all supported the Slovene leadership against the governments of the other Yugoslav republics.[157]

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[154] Vidmar-Horvat, "Mitteleuropa," 209-210.
[155] Milan Kundera, "Treba je resiti Slovenijo [Slovenia Has to Be Saved]," as cited in Vidmar-Horvat, "Mitteleuropa," 210.
[156] Prijon, "Slovenian Communist Legacy," 156.
[157] Hudson, *Breaking*, 76.
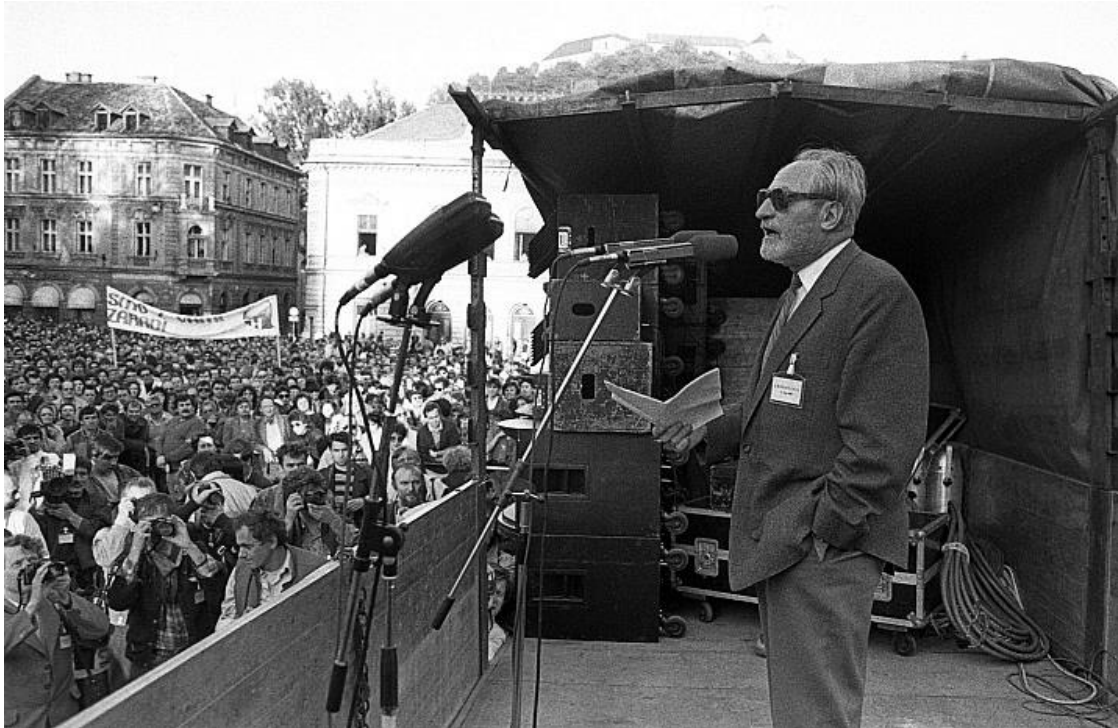
The poet Tone Pavček reads the May Declaration at a public protest meeting in Kongresni Trg square in Ljubljana. Photo taken by Tone Stojko. [158]

3.3. The war, independence and state transition

In August 1989, Slovenia ratified amendments to its republican constitution which gave itself the right to secede from Yugoslavia. In May 1990, the Congress dissolved the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, thereby officially ending Tito's vision of brotherhood and unity under the leadership of the communist movement.[159] In the meantime, the Serbian Republic broke their economic and commercial ties with the Republic of Slovenia. Even though Slovene politicians presented the hope of some remaining connection with the other Yugoslav republics, independence was now their first choice. Slovene President Milan Kucan outed a widely shared opinion by saying "that the interests, and even the survival of the Slovene people, have been jeopardized by the insupportable relations in Yugoslavia."[160] On 23 December 1990, over 93% of the Slovene population voted for independence in a referendum held by Slovenia's freely elected parliament. While there was still discussion at the federal level on how to 'save' the country, Slovenia was preparing for an armed confrontation. When the Serbian leadership announced the unconstitutional blocking of the rotation of state presidency to the Croatia

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[158] Tone Stojko, National Museum of Contemporary History, 20 Years of Independence, URL: http://www.twenty.si/first-20-years/89/.
[159] Hudson, *Breaking*, 77-78.
[160] Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, 177.

candidate, both Croatia and Slovenia declared their independence on 25 June, 1991.[161] In its Declaration of Independence, the state claimed that:

"The Republic of Slovenia has proclaimed its sovereignty and independence and has thereby assumed actual jurisdiction over its territory. Consequently, Slovenia as an international, legal entity, in the full sense of the term, and in conformity with the principles of the unification of sovereign states in Europe, seeks association with other states, membership in the United Nations Organization, membership in the European community and participation in other alliances of states or nations. The sovereignty and the independence of the Republic of Slovenia must be understood as a condition for entering into new integrational processes within the framework of the former Yugoslavia and within the European framework."[162]

The references to a European identity of the intellectuals had now come to life by aiming for membership in the European community from the first day of existence of the new state.

Benedict Anderson states that within an imagined political community there is such a deep feeling of comradeship that people are willing to kill and die for their imaginings.[163] This is shown in the case of Slovenia, as the Slovenes were willing to take up arms in order to gain independence. Two days after the Declaration for Independence, a war started. Tanks of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) were moving into the republic. Slovenia fought through the Territorial defense (TD), national guard and police. The TD outmatched the JNA and forced them outside their borders. The Yugoslav federal government then soon softened its stand. They had expected that a mere show of force would have been enough to stop the Slovenes, and that the international public would back their efforts to prevent the collapse of Yugoslavia. However, they were no match for the well-organized Slovene TD and the war alarmed European states who attempted to mediate the crisis before fighting would also spread to Croatia. On 7 July, the Brioni Declaration between the Yugoslav, Slovene and Croatian governments, set up by the European Community, effectively ended the 'Ten-Day War' for Slovenia. Croatia however remained in war for four more years.[164]

On 23 December 1991, the new Republic of Slovenia approved its constitution, in which the state disassociated itself from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia by not mentioning it at all. Rather, it emphasizes "the fundamental and permanent right of the Slovene nation to self- determination; and … the historical fact that in a centuries-long struggle for national liberation we Slovenes have established our national identity and asserted our

[161] Cox, *Slovenia*, 78-79.
[162] "Declaration of Independence," Ljubljana: 23 December 1990.
[163] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.
[164] Plut-Pregelj, *The A to Z,* 390.

statehood."[165] This matches the concept of a national imagined community, based on a shared history and culture. The constitution emphasizes the national identity by specifying the national anthem, coat-of-arms and flag.[166] The flag for example, shows the national coat-of-arms with the image of Mount Triglav, the country's highest peak which lies in the Julian Alps. It also depicts the Adriatic sea, together with three stars which refer to the Slovene dynastic house of the Counts of Celje, from the 14th and 15th centuries. The three colors on the flag, white, blue and red, come from the medieval coat of arms of the Duchy of Carniola which was used for the first time during the Revolution of 1848.[167] These are powerful national symbols, as Mount Triglav had once been symbol of the unity of Yugoslavia and the reference to the Counts of Celje and the Duchy of Carniola emphasize the historical existence of a distinct Slovene state.

Slovenia was soon recognized by Lithuania, Georgia and Latvia, who were newly established states themselves. Most West-European states extended recognition between December 1991 and January 1992, except for Serbophile France, which waited until April. When diplomatic recognition was achieved, together with trading agreements with Russia, economic contact quickly rebounded. The ties between Slovenia and northern Italy revived, Austrian banks invested in the country and economic relations were soon established with the Benelux, Iran and China. The main challenges for the new state in the first years were the reprivatizing and reviving of the economy, demonopolizing the political system, reorienting trade flows, developing relations with foreign powers and staying out of the Yugoslav war. [168]

After the recognition of the state, Slovenia started the process of transition from a communist to a democratic political system. The Slovene Democratic Alliance, the party founded by many members of Nova revija, was the second strongest member of the new ruling coalition after the first election. The intellectuals thus turned into the political-elite instead of the non-conformists. However, the party was 'surrounded' in the coalition by mostly rightist parties who had joined the democratization process rather late. And after a brief, heroic period in which political activities were concentrated on state building and the establishment of democratic institutions, tensions began to grow between the political parties. The Democratic Alliance felt that the coalition was dominated by forces that might endanger democracy. This was expressed in a dramatic tone in newspapers with lines such as 'Stop the Right!'.[169] It was

[165] "Constitution," Ljubljana: 23 December 1991.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Plut-Pregelj, *The A to Z,* 165.
[168] Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, 177-179.
[169] Bernik, "From Imagined to Actually Existing," 111.

argued that increasingly aggressive rightist parties were endangering the achievements of 'the intellectual movement'. Eventually, the Democratic Alliance lost all its seats in 1996. [170]

On the one hand, the behavior of these new rightist parties can be seen as proof for the theory on nationalism by John Breuilly and Paul Brass. They state that nationalism refers to political movements who seek power, wealth and prestige and use nationalistic arguments to achieve it. It is possible that these parties did not join the fight for independence in order to gain a democratic nation state but to reach power. On the other hand, the history of Slovenia does not end with independence. Rather, the rhetoric of the intellectual movements calling for the 'return to Europe' before independence, continued to be reflected in the goals of the new state in the following years. This does not only show how power and wealth were no driving factors for the intellectual movements, but also how the Slovene society at large kept the image of the Slovene community, created by the intellectuals, in mind.

Finally, it is questionable whether the intellectuals who lost their political power are the 'losers' of independence. Their thoughts were presented in the pro-EU discourse that marked the following decade. Besides, their articles in journals such as Nova revija were of crucial importance to the spread of notions of national identity which enabled the Slovene population to imagine itself a Slovene political community. Again, the role of language and publishing that Anderson values for a nation to develop, was important in the case of Slovenia. Brass' and Hroch's approach mention the importance of economic interests and development. Accordingly, the economic unevenness within the Yugoslav state and the opportunities for Slovenia in European economic cooperation need to be recognized. Still, the growing imagining of a sovereign political community with a shared language and history is what describes the history of Slovene independence best. It is a combination of all the factors mentioned above, held together by the strong concept of an imagined community. The image of a European character in the Slovene national identity is thereby important as it is intertwined with the idea of a shared history and culture. Besides, it provided a 'way out' for the Slovenes, a way to distinguish themselves from the rest of Yugoslavia. Therefore, it was a constitutive element to Slovene nationalism. In the decade after gaining independence, this would take on the next step when integration into the European Union became a new goal to achieve for the new state.

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[170] Ibid., 111-112.

4. Orientation towards Europe and EU membership

In 1992, the Slovene Ministry of Foreign Affairs outlined the key strategic orientations for the coming years. The first was "Orientation towards Europe, and the related intensive integration into the European and Euro-Atlantic political security and economic structures (particularly EU and NATO)."[171] The independent Slovene state was born from years of growing national consciousness and struggle. But when independence was achieved, the leading figures of the new state immediately started aiming for the next strategic step in their orientation towards Europe. At first glance, it may seem a heavy loss for a country that had just gained independence to give up sovereignty to a supranational organization so rapidly. This did also raise concerns on politics and economics in Slovenia, but the partial loss of sovereignty was considered to be compensated by gains of belonging to a larger Europe.[172] In this chapter, the role of the concept of a Slovene European identity will be examined within the context of the EU integration of the country. Again, the focus will lie on the intellectual elite, who brought up the discourse of a return to Europe in the years before independence. It will be shown in what way the theory of Anderson is not only applicable to a national but also European community. However, it needs to be emphasized that this concerns the European community as imagined by the Slovenes. Thus, the image of Europe will be described within the cadres of Slovene nationalism.

4.1 Transition and integration

Between September and October 2002, the Eurobarometer on 'Public Opinion in the Countries applying for European Union Membership' showed that the average feeling among candidate states was one of enthusiasm to Europeanization. In Slovenia for example, 52% of the population said to be trusting the EU.[173] Furthermore, the candidate countries expressed a high

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[171] Quoted in Oruc Ivos, "Hoce li politicke stranke potpisati svojevrstan pakt za europu, sto predlaze ministar Jakovic?" [Will Political Parties Sign a Kind of Pact for Europe as Suggested by Minister Jakovic?], 3 August 2000, as cited in Lindstrom, "Between Europe and the Balkans," 321.

[172] András Inotai, "The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, the Slovak Republic, and Slovenia," in *Winners and Losers in EU Integration: Policy Issues for Central and Eastern Europe,* ed. Prabhat Jha, Frank Chaloupka and Helena Tang (Herndon: World Bank, 2000): 22.

[173] "Candidate Countries Eurobarometer 2002: First Results," *European Commission: Directorate General Press and Communication*, Public Opinion Analysis, URL: https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/cceb/2002/cceb_2002_highlights_en.pdf.

percentage of European pride and identification with the EU (79%), despite the fear of losing (part of) their national identity and culture as a consequence of EU membership.[174]

In Slovenia, becoming part of the European Union was considered the most logical next step in the history of the nation. This was expressed by Slovene President Milan Kucan a day after the country declared independence: "As a nation which for more than one thousand years has been integrally involved in the development of Europe, we should like to be reintegrated into the best of the European tradition."[175] A strong political consensus existed on the EU subject in the country, shared by the population at large. Besides part of a cultural recognition, EU integration was also considered an extremely important vehicle necessary for implementing needed structural economic changes in order to strengthen Slovenia's economy and its ability to compete on the enlarged EU market.[176] Like many small countries, Slovenia was convinced of not being able to defend and implement its interests with individual effort, let alone to get relevant protection from external threats.[177]

On the 1st of February 1999, the Europe Agreement on the Association between the European Union and Slovenia, that had been signed already in 1996, entered into force. In the preamble of the Association Agreement, it is stated clearly that one of the aims is to: "provide an appropriate framework for Slovenia's gradual integration into the European Union."[178] Accession negotiations were already going on since 1998 and soon Slovenia would turn out to be one of the most promising candidate states. By pursuing its national interest, but also taking account of the interests of other member states, Slovenia presented itself as a reliable future member state. This combination of national and international aspirations and interests is reflected in the whole Slovene integration process. A large majority of the tasks presented in the course towards the EU, in for example the political, economic and social spheres, were already necessary for the new state. The accession process of Slovenia was therefore like an insurance policy for effective completion of the general transition process.[179]

It is now clear that the Slovene accession process existed from an internal-external linkage between the country itself and the European Union. As a first step, Slovenia needed to

[174] Judit Tóth, "The Impact of EU Enlargement on Nation Building and Citizenship Law," in *Illiberal Liberal States: Immigration, Citizenship and Integration in the EU,* ed. Elspeth Guild, Kees Groenendijk and Sergio Carrera (Farnham: Ashgate Limited, 2009): 102.
[175] Milan Kucan, quoted in Nicole Lindstrom, *The Politics of Europeanization and Post-Socialist Transformations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015): 27.
[176] Potocnik, "The Accession of Slovenia," 345.
[177] Inotai, "The Czech Republic," 22.
[178] "Europe Agreement," 1999, *Official Journal of the European Communities*, 5, Eur-Lex, URL: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22014A0830(02).
[179] Potocnik, "The Accession of Slovenia," 367-370.

be considered for admission according to the criteria of that moment. The so-called 'Copenhagen Criteria' are the three essential conditions a candidate member state had to satisfy in order to access the European Union. At the time, these were: the political criteria of stability of institutions and guaranteeing democracy, rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities; the economic criteria of a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competition and market forces and finally the administrative and institutional capacity to effectively implement the Acquis Communautaire (all EU-laws) and ability to fulfill the obligations of membership.[180] Since gaining independence, Slovene political life has been characterized by and praised for its relative stability. Already in 1997, the European Commission delivered its opinion on Slovenia's application for EU membership and gave credit to the country by describing it as a stable democracy and declared that the first two Copenhagen criteria were fulfilled. Still, considerable efforts needed to be made to adopt and implement the acquis.[181]

Another priority for the young country was the normalization of relations with its most powerful neighbors. Both Austria and Italy hold a significant Slovene minority population and were hindering the country's gradual move towards EU membership.[182] The rightist Italian government slowed down Slovenia's admission and threatened to abolish the 1975 Treaty of Osimo. Italy claimed that the issue of property of the Slovene territories that had belonged to Italian citizens before the second World War had not been resolved. In the mid-1990s, two laws were passed between Slovenia and Italy as a compromise in which Slovenia agreed that citizens of the EU living in Slovenia for more than three years would have the right to buy property in the country. Italy then lifted its objections to Slovene accession.[183] When in February 2004 a final section of fence was taken down along the Slovene-Italian border, it was widely reported in the media to be the fall of the last bit of the Iron Curtain.[184] The problems raised by Italy and the attitudes within Slovenia towards its neighbor were a significant test for the Slovenes of their preparedness to meet the European integration they desired.[185]

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[180] "Accession Criteria," *European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations*, European Commission, URL: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/policy/glossary/terms/accession-criteria_en.
[181] Christina Dallara, "Smoother Judicial Reforms in Slovenia and Croatia: Does the Legacy of the Past Matter?" in *Democracy and Judicial Reforms in South-East Europe* (Cham: Springer, 2014): 35.
[182] Cox, *Slovenia*, 153.
[183] Potocnik, "The Accession of Slovenia," 345.
[184] Cox, *Slovenia*, 171-172.
[185] Gow, *Slovenia*, 203.

While the relations between Slovenia and the EU improved during the 1990s, there were still challenges that had to be faced. Many of those were domestic, such as the decline of civil society. After gaining independence, the Slovenes increasingly focused on economic well-being and many intellectuals from the 1980s had become politicians. As stated before, these former intellectuals were disappointed by their political influence. Even though the democracy appeared stable, there was a lot of mistrust towards the government within society. In 1998, several Slovene academics, among whom also some that had written in Nova revija and Mladina, published 'The Hour of European Truth for Slovenia'. Herein they stated:

"We have a formal democracy, it is true. But almost all positions of power are held by people whose thinking and approaches to governing were shaped during the time of the one-party system which, be it during the totalitarian era or during its outwardly more liberal phase, was ultimately an undemocratic period."[186]

Meanwhile, there were regional disputes and civil right issues on fundamental freedoms including the independence of the press and the protection of minorities. Finally, there were and still are large unresolved controversies on something that had not been spoken about for decades: the collaboration with the Axis during World War II and the communist violence in the 1940s and 1950s.[187]

Janez Potocnik, Fedor Cerne and Emil Erjavec convincingly argue that EU accession in general is in fact a matter of adjustment as the initiative to join the EU came from the candidate countries and not from the EU itself. A large part of the negotiations within the process should therefore more appropriately be called adjustments of the candidate countries to the acquis.[188] This means, among others, that in order to fully belong to the EU, Slovenia had to complete the goal that was already presented during the struggle for independence: leaving behind the Balkan or Yugoslav identity for good and become European.

4.2 Balkan stereotypes and Mitteleuropa

In a sense, one could say that Slovenia's basic cultural and social loyalties, based on the country's Central European identity, did not change much over the 20th century. However, its political loyalties changed from belonging to the Habsburg empire, through two devastating wars into two Yugoslav states and eventually to its own independent nation state.[189] Slovenia

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[186] Angelos Bas et al. "The Hour of European Truth for Slovenia," in *Smiling Slovenia: Political Dissent Papers*, ed. Vladislav Bevc (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2008): 8.
[187] Cox, *Slovenia*, 138-139.
[188] Potocnik, "The Accession of Slovenia," 368.
[189] Cox, *Slovenia*, 186.

thus needed to prove its Europeanness for the first time to the international public during the process of integration. The country needed to show that it was not a problem child belonging to the 'chaotic' and 'backwards' Balkans, but rather an 'orderly' and 'civil' European country. This image of perceived and presented Europeanness is very important for the acceptance of Slovenia as an EU country. It shows that the existing stereotypes on Balkan and European identity play a role in politics.

The Balkan peninsula carries the old and persistent stereotype of being primitive, backward and barbarian as opposed to a civilized, progressive and modern Europe.[190] The fact that Slovenia gained independence rather quickly and without a devastating war, such as happened in most of the other former-Yugoslav countries, was a useful argument to place itself on the 'Europe' side of the dichotomy. Slovenia's politicians and other public figures thus started to 'Balkanize' other former Yugoslav republics in order to distance themselves from their Balkan roots and socialist history.[191] An example of this, is the following quote by then Slovene Foreign Minister and former writer for Nova revija, Dimitrij Rupel, in 2003:

"Just a few more days and everything will be over: successful referendums will push us Slovenes into another world, where we will breathe freely among other (equal) European nations and where our Balkan adventures will be just a recollection of memories (of extortions, wars, murders, assassinations, etc.) This will be an exceptional historical leap."[192]

The Slovene discourse affirmed an identity grounded in traditions understood to be Western, and not Balkan, not even Eastern-European. The images of the West that Slovenes recalled as reflections of their own identity and values, frequently overlap with the vision of Mitteleuropa that revived in the last decades of state socialism by Milan Kundera, Gyorgy Konrad, Czeslaw Milosz and other members of the East European intellectual elite.[193] These concepts had also played a role in the intellectual debate on the Slovene 'return to Europe'. The country placed itself in a particular cultural and geographic area: that of Central Europe.

The concept of Mitteleuropa has always been contested. In the narratives of the 20th century, it had a strong Western European orientation, which suggested Catholicism and democracy, and its reference points were the cultural centers of the Dual monarchy: Prague, Bratislava, Vienna, Budapest and Trieste.[194] Kundera states that "its borders are imaginary and

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[190] Zivancevic-Sekerus, "Balkans," 107.
[191] Vezovnik, "Introduction," 240.
[192] Dimitrij Rupel, *Mag*, 19 March 2003, as cited in Vezovnik, "Krekism," 130.
[193] Patterson, "On the Edge of Reason," 114.
[194] Vidmar-Horvat, "Mitteleuropa," 204.

must be drawn and redrawn with each new historical situation."[195] The EU expansion from Western to Central and Eastern Europe could be seen as such an historical change, just as the year 1989 had been. The Central European region is usually defined as Austria, Germany, and Switzerland to the West and the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, and Slovenia to the East.[196] The similarities between the countries of Central Europe are described in Czeslaw Milosz's famous essay on 'Central European Attitudes'. Even though this essay was written before Slovenia gained independence, it specifies the cultural and historical features that are similar to those of that country. Milosz dismisses a strictly geographic definition, but rather focusses on shared activities and attitudes: "the ways of feeling and thinking."[197] These are for example a deep awareness of history and a feeling of the weight of their past. Slovenia's struggle with their Second World War past for example fits this idea. More similarities lie in high and popular culture.[198] This is reflected in 'The Hour of European Truth for Slovenia', wherein its writers state: "Indeed, one of the leading motives for the creation of an independent state was the preservation of Slovene culture which, in its origins, has been European from the inception."[199] Furthermore, Central European countries share a sense of a common future and they have been denied their sovereignty for long periods by foreign empires (Romanov, Habsburg, Hohenzollern, Ottoman).[200]

Finally, Milosz emphasizes a particular type of Central European intellectual movement which is ironic of the faiths and ideological movements of their time, such as Marxism, but also feels committed to civic projects and tends to be highly respected by and deeply integrated in society at large.[201] As described in the chapters before, the intellectuals within Slovenia have played a very important role in the country's struggle for independence and introduced the idea of a return to Europe in their writings. As they stand at the birth of the Slovene independent state, their influence is visible in the documents of independence of the new country that mention its aims to become part of the European Union. And so, their rhetoric continued in the demand for EU integration. Besides the 'Orientation towards Europe', the Slovene Ministry of Foreign Affairs outlined another key strategic orientation for the coming years: "Final exit from

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[195] Ibid., 212.
[196] Gabriela Kiliánová, "Mitteleuropean Ethnology in Transition," in *A Companion to the Anthropology of Europe*, ed. Ullrich Kockel, Máiréad Nic Craith and Jonas Frykman (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2012): 104.
[197] Czeslaw Milosz, "Central European Attitudes," *Cross Currents* 5 (1986): 101.
[198] Cox, *Slovenia*, 191-192.
[199] Bas, "The Hour of European Truth," 13.
[200] Cox, *Slovenia*, 191-192.
[201] Milosz, "Central European," 103-104.

the Balkans and adaptation to the new political role (and thus the new challenges and tasks) within the framework of the Southeast European countries, particularly those emerging from the ashes of the former Yugoslavia."[202] This idea of the 'final exit from the Balkans' matches the rhetoric of the intellectual movements before the country gained independence. And similar to Taras Kermauner in 1988 who claimed that the formation of the Yugoslav state had unnaturally bound Slovenia to the Balkans, Dmitrij Rupel wrote in 1993 that:

"Slovenes must establish ourselves in the company of the civilized nations… 'The Balkans' is, to be sure, a geographic concept, but even more so the mark of a corrupt and primitive society. With our attainment of independence, we ought to rid ourselves of the Balkan in this sense, too."[203]

Hereby distinguishing the Slovene nature once again from the Balkan area and therefore placing itself on the opposite: the traditional, democratic, orderly Europe. With their nonconformism towards the Yugoslav state and deep integration within Slovene national society, the academics who demanded independence fit the description of the Central European intellectuals. Even after gaining independence.

Slovenia thus fits the definition of a Central European country. However, the country is often considered to be somewhere in between Mitteleuropa and the Balkans.[204] Many Slovenes still value their cultural and historical ties with the Balkans as positive aspects of Slovene identity. This is combined with political and economic ties within the region, which came up again after stability returned in the region at the end of the 1990s.[205] Besides, Tito for example, is still seen as one of the most important persons in Slovene history.[206] Thus, even though a European identity has been a way to uplift Slovenia's separate identity, and Balkanization of the other republics had been a large part of politics and writings by Slovene intellectuals from the 1980s onwards, the bonds with the former Yugoslav federation were still there. Politically, the country has committed itself to the EU, with historical and cultural arguments which distances it from its neighbors. Yet, the intimate familiarities with the customs

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[202] Quoted in Oruc Ivos, "Hoce li politicke stranke potpisati svojevrstan pakt za europu, sto predlaze ministar Jakovic?" [Will Political Parties Sign a Kind of Pact for Europe as Suggested by Minister Jakovic?], 3 August 2000, as cited in Lindstrom, "Between Europe and the Balkans," 321.

[203] Dimitrij Rupel, "Mojstri, vendar ne nasi, *Republika*, 24 April 1993, as cited in Patterson, "On the Edge of Reason," 116.

[204] Gerard Delanty, "Peripheries and Borders in a Post-Western Europe," in *Democracy, State and Society: European Integration in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Magdalena Góra and Katarzyna Zielińska (Krakow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2011): 116.

[205] Lindstrom, *The Politics of Europeanization,* 30.

[206] Cox, *Slovenia*, 139.

of the Balkans, argue for a somewhat different identity from 'the rest' of Europe. In 1999, the 'Declaration on the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Slovenia' stated:

"Political, security, economic, and other interests and reasons require Slovenia's active involvement in Southeast Europe. Slovenia, therefore, supports all endeavors and initiatives by the international community towards stabilization and development of this area… Through its active role and support to democratic processes in this area, Slovenia is establishing itself as an important and reliable partner of the international community in settling this situation in this part of Europe."[207]

This declaration highlights the new role that Slovenia had appointed to itself within the European community: that of a 'bridge' or 'translator' between (Central) Europe and the Balkans. Within this context, Slovenia clearly distances itself from the Balkans and places itself in a superior position, but still makes use of its knowledge and bonds with the area.[208]

4.3 The new EU member state

Shortly before joining the EU, in 2003, Slovenia held a referendum on its EU membership. The outcome revealed a high level of public support for joining the EU: 86% of the votes was in favor of accession.[209] On 16 April 2003, the Treaty on the Accession of, among others, the Republic of Slovenia, was signed. It entered into force on 1 May 2004.[210] The demanded 'return to Europe' was finally achieved. Slovenia entered the euro monetary zone on the 1st of January 2007. In 2008, the two Euro coin depicted the national cultural icon Primoz Trubar as a celebration for his 500th birthday.[211] This is a strong symbol of the merge of national and European identity. It emphasizes how Europeanness is imagined as inherently part of Slovene identity and culture, rather than as an addition to it. The remembrance of figures such as Trubar in order to emphasize national identity, can be seen as a form of invention of tradition. This concept by Hobsbawm shows how cultural artefacts serve the goal of nationalism. However, when placed within Anderson's theory, the depiction of Trubar on the Euro can be seen as a

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[207] "Declaration of Foreign Policy," Ljubljana: 17 December 1999, as cited in Lindstrom, "Between Europe and the Balkans," 321-322.
[208] Lindstrom, "Between Europe and the Balkans," 322.
[209] Dallara, "Smoother Judicial Reforms," 36.
[210] "Treaty between the Member States of the European Union and the Czech Republic, the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Cyprus, the Republic of Latvia, the Republic of Lithuania, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Malta, the Republic of Poland, the Republic of Slovenia, the Slovak Republic," Athens: 16 April 2003, *Official Journal of the European Union,* URL: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:JOL_2003_236_R_0017_01.
[211] Plut-Pregelj, *The A to Z,* 121.

true expression of European and Slovene identity. Even though both approaches emphasize the image of national and European identity, the initial motivation to do so is different.

Slovenia is often characterized as an example of human rights protection because of its well-functioning state apparatus, its respect for the rule of law and successful adoption of EU legislation.[212] This fits the image of a European state: progressive, civilized and orderly. However, for close to 25,000 people, the Slovene independence was no success story. They were 'erased' from the permanent resident registers of the new country around 1992. These were people who, for the most part, are not ethnically Slovene. Despite the emerging democratic structures, minority groups were thus exposed to discrimination, especially those belonging to other Yugoslav republics. They had been living and working in Slovenia for years, but were now seen as remnants of 'Yugoslavisation', in a time where the new country was distancing itself as much as possible from its Balkan neighborhood.[213] Even though the faith of the Erased was pointed out by other European countries more and more, it did not present an obstacle for Slovenia's EU accession. In February 2004, after ongoing political discussion on the subject within the country, the right-wing parties within the parliament decided to hold a public referendum on the issue. Even though the turnout was only 31%, the outcome was overwhelming with a 94% majority to deny citizenship rights to former Yugoslav citizens.[214] Still, the referendum was in no way binding for the government and the political quarrels on the topic went on while the situation of the Erased did not improve. In contradiction with the Copenhagen Criteria that demand human rights, Slovenia's accession to the EU did not lead to a correction of the erasure. It would last until 2012 for the European Court for Human Rights to rule in favor of the Erased, which led to a final Act in 2014 on the Compensation for Damage to the Persons Erased from the Permanent Population Register.[215]

On the one hand, the case of the Erased contradicts the image of a European, democratic Slovenia which values the protection of human rights. It therefore shows that the 'European' standards in Slovenia were still a goal yet to achieve, instead of the political reality.[216] This corresponds with the act of imagining a European identity. An image is a simplified

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[212] Štiks, "Nationality and Citizenship," 490.
[213] Mandelc, "Perforated Democracy," 29-30.
[214] André Liebich, "How Different is the "New Europe"? Perspectives on States and Minorities," in *Democracy, State and Society: European Integration in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Magdalena Góra and Katarzyna Zielińska (Krakow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2011): 163.
[215] Sara Pistotnik and David Alexander Brown, "Race in the Balkans: The Case of Erased Residents of Slovenia," *Interventions* 20, no. 6 (2018): 846.
[216] Andreja Vezovnik, "Representational Discourses on the Erased of Slovenia: From Human Rights to Humanitarian Victimization," *Journal of Languages and Politics* 12, no. 4 (2013): 613.

representation; it does not necessarily reflect the political situation. Besides, according to Anderson, imaging includes forgetting or ignoring parts of a national narrative.[217] On the other hand, the erasure of former Yugoslav citizens is legitimized by the idea of leaving behind the Yugoslav past and thus fully belonging to Europe. Within this narrative, the Erased were even presented as the 'aggressors', the uncivilized Balkan people.[218] The erasure thus fits the image of Europeanness and leaving behind all associations with the Yugoslav identity for good.

At first, Anderson's ideas on imagined political communities do not seem to be applicable to the European Union. The EU lacks the connectedness of a community and Slovene EU integration was motivated in terms of economic interests and the fast transition to an independent state. Still, the European aspect of the national identity of Slovenia is a constitutive one. Once the Copenhagen Criteria were fulfilled, the country would fit within the existing image of a 'European country' as the model of modern society. This is contradicted by the Erased of Slovenia. Their existence proves that 'Europeanness' is just an image and not necessarily the true definition of a country's culture or identity. Regardless of the Erased, the Slovenian population saw itself as part of the bigger historical and cultural European community and became part of the political community (the EU) as well. This fits Anderson's idea of an imagined political community. Thus, through the eyes of the Slovene population and politicians, this imagined political community of Europe exists. The intellectual elite played a major role in this by creating and spreading the images of a (Central) European community, albeit implicitly and less on the foreground than during the struggle for independence.

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[217] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 204.
[218] Barbara Gornik, "The Politics of Victimhood in Human Rights Violations: The Case of the Erased Residents of Slovenia," *Nordicum-Mediterraneum* 12, no. 2 (2017): 9, URL: https://nome.unak.is/wordpress/volume-12-no-2-2017/conference-procceding/politics-victimhood-human-rights-violations-case-erased-residents-slovenia/.

5. Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to contribute to the academic debate considering the intentions of the Slovene nation to become independent and access the European Union. Within the debate, this research has focused on the origins and role of the country's identity, questioning whether its perceived Europeanness was taken up in order to create conditions for an easy independence and EU accession or if it is something which comes from a deeper, historical identity. Accordingly, the main question analyzed in this thesis was: *How did the idea of a European identity influence the Slovene intellectual elite that advocated independence and European integration between 1985 and 2004?*

5.1 An imagined European Slovene state

As an outcome of comparing the theories of nationalism from John Breuilly, Paul Brass, Miroslav Hroch, Anthony D. Smith, Eric Hobsbawm and Benedict Anderson and applying them to the case study of Slovenia, Anderson's theory on imagined communities has been the point of departure to analyze the European identity of the Slovene nation. This research has thus been done within the cadres of Anderson's theory. This does not mean that its outcome is solely relevant in combination with this theory. Rather, the aproach has been used as a tool to answer the main question. This means that the outcome is framed within the terms of Anderson's imagined community theory and can also be placed within historical research on the birth and politics of Slovenia.

The idea of a distinct Slovene identity was born during the rule of the Habsburg Empire over the Slovene lands. It was developed through a combination of the work of intellectuals and policies of different governments. Throughout the 19th and 20th century, the Slovene elites created a tradition of being in the forefront of arguments for greater freedom of their nation. During the development of Slovene nationalism, the idea emerged that there was an important feature that distinguished the Slovenes from their neighbor countries: their European character. This went hand in hand with a renewed debate on the concept of Central Europe of the intellectuals of Central and Eastern Europe.[219] The Slovene intellectuals identified with the similarities of that region. Their ideas were published in popular journals such as Mladina and Nova revija and were very influential for the public opinion of the country. It emphasized that Slovenia was a nation, different from the rest of Yugoslavia, and that the Slovenes formed a

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[219] Vidmar-Horvat, "Mitteleuropa," 209-210.

community. In the 1980s, they started to demand for Slovene independence. Therein, the imagined community turned into an imagined political community: a nation state. This went together with the emphasis on the Slovene European identity and its belonging to the European cultural and political sphere. Together with the death of Tito that disbalanced the organization of the Yugoslav federation, this created the historical context in which the Slovene independence occurred. After gaining independence in 1991, the new country oriented towards EU integration. The ideas presented in the demands for membership heavily corresponded with the ideas on a Slovene European identity as from the 1980s by the intellectuals. And what also echoed from this time, was the superior tone in which Slovenia distinguished itself from the Balkan area. However, economic interests did play a major role in the decision to become an EU member state after independence.

Finally, the idea of a European identity influenced the Slovene intellectual elite that advocated independence and European integration between 1985 and 2004 heavily and because of the deep integration of the intellectuals within society, it had a great impact on the country itself. It is therefore an explanation for the 'Slovenian success story'. The idea of a European identity was an important argument for the legitimation of independence and the integration into the EU. The intellectuals that advocated independence stand in a long tradition of Slovene intellectuals who have meant a great deal for the development of the image of a Slovene political community, and thus Slovene nationalism. An important binding factor for the *Slovenci*, the 'people of the word', was their language.[220] It has unified the nation, starting with the first Slovene poet Trubar, the language policies in the Habsburg empire, nationalist poems and the articles in journals of the 1980s. The German scholar Wilhelm von Humboldt stated in the early 19th century that "Language is actually one's true home" [Die wahre Heimat ist eigentlich die Sprache].[221] This idea corresponds with the importance of language for the Slovene nation and the particular important role of those who write and speak it.

Of course, ethnic bounds, a shared history and economic prospects all add to the strength and attraction of the image of a Slovene European nation. It is a mixture of components and therein lies the complexity of a national identity. Anderson's theory composes all these complexities when describing a nation state as an imagined political community. Imaginings are strong enough to write articles about, demand independence and eventually even go to war for. Anderson's theory however does not fully explain what happened in Slovenia between

220 Gow, *Slovenia*, 10.
221 Alexander von Humboldt, as cited in Cox, *Slovenia*, 195.

independence and EU accession. During this period, the European identity of Slovenia becomes more of a 'nationalist argument', as Breuilly would say, instead of a deeper historical, cultural image. Yet, the origins of the idea of a European Slovenian state lie in the decades before independence. Therefore, these 'nationalist arguments' are still rooted in a national imagined community.

The nation as an imagined political community does not describe a nation's true character, as is shown by the case of the Erased of Slovenia. It does however describe what a nation imagines and aspires to be. This thesis has therefore aimed to describe the image of a European Slovene identity, rather than the factual 'European' character of the country, if this is even possible to describe. It did not explain whether Slovenia has truly 'returned' to Europe, but what the impact of this idea has been. This is where the added value of this particular research lies for the academic debate about Slovenia's intentions of becoming independent and access the EU. It concludes that the intentions of the Slovene intellectuals, who had a great impact on the development and politics of the country, were formed by their imaginings of a Slovene European nation state. Therefore, their driving factor has deeper, cultural and historical roots than solely wealth and power gains.

5.2 Final Remarks

This thesis is a first step to combine the academic literature on the Slovene identity, Slovenia's European integration and nationalism studies. It has shown the importance of an imagined European identity within the EU integration process of Slovenia. It has focused on the period between 1985 and 2004. In order to reflect on the political situation within Europe and Slovenia today, it would be useful to extend this timeframe. Rightwing, anti-immigrant and Eurosceptic parties are gaining more and more power throughout (Central) Europe. Further research could therefore be done on the role of the image of a European Slovene identity today. Is this still deeply rooted within the Slovene culture and is the historical awareness of the European past still present? Or are other imaginings on the identity of Slovenia slowly taking over?

The focus of this research has been the intellectual elites of Slovenia. Due to language limitations, the only accessible works, speeches and quotes for this thesis have been translated. When literary research on the essays and other works of the Slovene intellectuals would be completed, their ideas can be presented and studied more thoroughly. They could for example be compared with the ideas of the other Central European intellectuals and be presented in a more nuanced way. Finally, as the intellectuals were deeply rooted and largely influential within

society, they have been chosen as representative actors in this thesis. Further research can be done on the rest of the population of Slovenia, for example those living on the countryside, and their thoughts about independence, EU integration and the Slovene European identity.

Finally, the national flag of Slovenia portrays Mount Triglav, the country's highest peak in the Julian Alps. This image could be seen as symbolizing both former Yugoslavia, since the Mountain had been one of its symbols of pride, as Slovenia's connection to Europe, referring to one of the slogans of the independence movements: "Na sonc ̌ni strani Alp" [On the side of the Alps].[222] These Alps are what connects Slovenia to Europe as they are a symbolic and iconic natural phenomenon, but in a way also what separates it from the rest of Europe geographically. Therefore, the Alps also represent Slovenia's position within the EU: as a bridge, or rather a tunnel, between Europe and the Balkans. Anderson states that a nation is imagined as a solid homogenous community, moving down or up in history, as if the Slovenes living near the Alps under the Habsburg rule were part of the same community of those living in that area nowadays. He shows that an image like that can shape international relations, just as Slovenia gained independence from Yugoslavia and eventually, became part of the European Union.

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[222] Cox, *Slovenia*, 71.

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