Abstract
This article explores how the notion of being besieged has been linked to the construction of the racialized and gendered cultures of othering the displaced people. It argues that the North-South migration divide, structured by race, class and gender, echoes coloniality of global power relations, reflected in racialized and gendered notions of “border security”, “national security”, securitization of migration, and related politics of fear. It further asserts that the production of fear from being besieged is gendered, as well as racialized. Media play an important role in these processes by partaking in the cultural reproduction of images of “dangerous men” tied to fantasies of sexist violence linked to masculinist aggression, and depicting idealised victims, those who are feminised and feel fear. This politics of production of fear, it is argued, breeds racialized and gendered cultures of othering people who are displaced and creates an idealised “fearing subject” – the nation-state, people/nation, and its values, and renders the economic, social and political sources of insecurity, invisible.

Key words
othering, displaced people, coloniality of power, securitization of migration, production of fear

The so-called Western world is overwhelmed by fear of being besieged by the arrival of migrants who are often compared to a tidal wave (as in Britain) or a barbarian invasion (as in France) (Bigo 2002: 69), justifying heated political debates about “national security” and related policies to curb immigration. This also validates moves to curtail the right of forced migrants to protection. This right has been pointedly undermined in the past years, by labelling the

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ongoing mass displacement of people from Syria and other war-torn countries of the Middle East and beyond, as “irregular migration”. This further justifies approaches to security that echo Agamben’s (2005) conceptualisation of the “permanent state of exception”, the mode of governmentality that characterises our times.

In the following sections, I examine the dynamics involved in constructing the current migration from the so-called Global South in “risk”, “crisis” and “fear” terms that translate into xenophobic, racialised and gendered cultures of othering the displaced people. I do so within the framework of a “coloniality of power” (Quijano 2000) perspective, understood as the “colonial power matrix” that affects all dimensions of social existence and continues to structure the world (Grosfoguel 2011; Quijano 2000). I argue that this is how the location from which the current racialized and gendered politics and related cultures of fear is being constructed, can be unsettled. My analysis of the racialized and gendered processes of securitization of migration considers specifically their power in national settlement contexts. In doing so, I examine a case of the New Year’s Eve events in Cologne, Germany, in 2015. By analysing some of the reports and news/media coverage predominantly from Germany, I argue that gendering fear of migrants is a potent tool in producing the culture of racialized “politics of fear” (Ahmed 2004) that is central to racialized processes of securitization of migration in the Global North. As such, it helps produce a powerful social script of victimization of the besieged, and facilitates marginalization of the economic, social, and political sources of insecurity.

Media play an important role in these processes by partaking in the cultural reproduction of images of “dangerous men” tied to fantasies of sexist violence linked to masculinist aggression, and depicting idealised victims, those who are feminised and feel fear. Hence, the process of gendering fear in the contemporary racialized security climate helps create an idealised “fearing subject” – the nation-state and its territory, people/nation, and its values.

Global processes and racialized constructions of refugees as “Threat”

‘Global coloniality”, as Grosfoguel (2011) reminds us, has been imposed by international financial institutions keeping the Global South in a colonial situation, although colonial administrations have been long removed. Indeed, as Sassen’s (2014) analysis shows, over 20 years of restructuring programmes
imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank from the late 1980s onwards, have produced a far greater burden of debt than before international financial intervention was introduced. One of the features of this neoliberal model of development is that many governments of the Global South are currently paying more to their international lenders than they are investing in basic components of development such as education and health (Sassen 2014: 27; 80-116). Not surprisingly, these gross injustices created by the sharp rise in inequality is challenged by affected populations and often lead to a proliferation in armed conflict by violent means. According to the UNHCR data, in 2017, there were 2.9 million newly displaced people, meaning that over the course of the year there were 31 people fleeing conflict every minute (compared to 20 in 2016) (UNHCR 2018).²

Data on global displacement demonstrate the existence of the “global apartheid order” (Hage 2016) between the so-called Global North and the Global South, structured by race and class, “dividing the world into two realities” (ibid.). It directly links the existing global structures of power to human security and determines “who enjoys the entitlement to security and who does not.” (Thomas, 2001:160). In 2017, countries of the Global South hosted 85 per cent of the world’s refugees (UNHCR 2018). Additionally, and central to the argument here presented is that out of 68.5 million displaced people in the world, according to data for 2017, as many as 40 million are internally displaced by conflict, violence, and environmental disasters, meaning that well over 60 per cent of the world’s displaced populations remain in their countries as de facto although not de jure refugees (UNHCR 2018). Clearly, the global neoliberal restructuring is characterised by “expulsion” as its key dynamics, to use Sassen’s (2014) term, which is structured by the global coloniality of power. The Global North’s response to these developments was to ensure the security of its (national) borders, by imposing new “technologies of control” (Nyers 2003) often resulting in humanitarian crisis in border zones.

Racialized security

Migration constructed as a threat has been central to the EU immigration policies since the 1990s, increasingly turning (forced) migration into a “border security” issue. Since 2001, and the events of 9/11 in the US, followed by the “war on terror”, (forced) migration has become fundamentally linked to

² I refer in this article to UNHCR 2018 report on global displacement, as that was the latest available report at the time of writing.
the concept of securitization, because of the construction of security threats linking (forced) migrants to terrorism. They have become the securitized group threatening “our vulnerable nation-states”. This process mirrors “orientalist” binaries of “civilised ’West’” versus “barbaric ’East’.” (Khalid 2014a). They induce images of Arabs/Muslims as backward yet strong enough to pose a threat to “us” that are juxtaposed to the notion of “our” superiority that legitimises the need to police them (ibid.). The racialized process of securitization has also led to more arbitrary decision-making processes. They became justified by the notion of permanent state of exception, mentioned earlier, because racialized securitization issues or groups tend to be placed outside democratic procedures of public political debate and decision-making processes in the name of “state-security”.

Recent militarized border security actions in the Global North help construct racialized fear of being besieged and encircled. The feeling that is reinforced by government actions, such as the Hungarian barbed-wire wall along its border with the “non-EU world”, or the much talked about US wall along its militarized border with Mexico. Hage (2016: 39) reminds us that these fears have a long history linked to colonialism and related “narratives of reversed colonization”, which represent the “civilized” world as being on the verge of being overrun by “primitive” forces.

Framed as a state security matter, migrants are perceived as racialized “public enemy” (Bigo, 2002), feeding into the siege mentality. In turn, this justifies legally, ethically and politically the emphasis on combating irregular migration over protecting lives of the people who have been smuggled illegally (Spijkerboer, 2017). Spijkerboer shows that the right of states to exclude aliens from their territories leads to exclusion of illegal passengers/migrants from their main positive obligations under the right to life (2017). States, consequently, do not have any reporting system of deaths of people who attempt to cross borders illegally, and act as if they do not have any responsibility for their deaths, because they rely on non-state actors, that is – smugglers, and die outside their territory (Spijkerboer 2017). This type of border security approach to life of people labelled as illegal travellers, constructs them as subaltern who do not have the right to life.

The Mediterranean “liquid border” is one of the devastating examples of racialized politics of insecurity as a frame for approaching the displacement from the Global South. Analyses point out (e.g. Fargues 2015) that security measures implemented in response to the sharp increase of illegal crossings
since 2014, have not solved the border problem. Rather, more controls in one area push people towards riskier crossings (Fargues 2015; Spijkerboer 2017), increasing human insecurity of migrants. This well documented consequence of restrictive immigration policies is embedded in the fact that agency “is central to forcible displacement”, hence, forced migrants as people who have agency, “search actively for options” to their predicament (Korac 2009:45). In doing so, many opt for dangerous opportunities, decisions that are hard, if not impossible to understand without reading “the world through “illegal” eyes” (Khosravi 2010: 6). That can help understand how and why the Mediterranean has become the most lethal “liquid” border crossing of the 21st century.

Figures show that between 2000 and 2015 every time an “illegal migrant” took a decision to pay a smuggler to cross the Mediterranean, s/he was also taking the risk of a 2 percent probability of death during the journey (Fargues 2015). Thus, this so-called strategic security transformation that targets (illegal) migrants as a threat to state-security accompanied by the proliferation of walls, military presence and action is not a “by-product of impersonal global processes”, as Spijkerboer suggests (2017). Rather, it is based on the bifurcated view of global order and the right to life, within which some are perceived as “masters” and others as “slaves” (Hage 2016).

These racialized processes of securitization of migration that create the “global apartheid regime” of migration are affecting settlement in national contexts, as well. They are also linked to the processes of gendering fear of (forced) migrants, thus becoming a potent tool for furthering the securitization mode of governmentality.

**Racialized masculinity of the “Other”**

Migrants, refugees, and migration have always been seen through the lens of the nation and the state, the link that has proven useful for the politicisation of migration, when constructed as a danger to the “homogeneity of the state”. The metaphors of the “state as a body endangered by migrants” (Bigo 2002: 68), depicts nations and state territories as vulnerable female bodies in danger and in need of protection. Gender is a potent tool in politicization and group mobilisation. Links between gender, nation, nationalism, militarization and war, have been well documented and theorised in (feminist) scholarship over the past decades (e.g. Brah 1993; Enloe 1989; 2014; Moghadam
While acknowledging very different types of nationalism linked to specific geographic locations and their specific histories, these and other studies have shown extraordinary similarities in their construction of the nation as female (Pettman 1996: 48). Depiction of nation-state as spatial, embodied femaleness, Peterson (1996: 7) points out, is linked to the notion of nature-as-female and is readily transformed into the metaphor linked to the land’s fertility upon which the nation/people depends. As such, it must be protected by defending the body/nation’s boundaries against invasion of foreign males (ibid.). Such constructions help stereotype migrants in terms of racialized, aggressive masculinity that calls upon strong, protective, muscular, male bodies for protection. Militarized masculinities, as Khalid (2014b) points out, need “Other” masculinities linked to “subordinate” identities against which the superior masculine Self can be constructed. In this sense, she argues, race and gender are mutually constructed and hence contingent on each other (ibid.).

These competing forms of masculinity are linked to “muscular thinking” of “manly security experts” involved in “national security thinking” (Enloe 2007:40). It is embodied in law enforcement, masculinist procedures of migration controls, including use of military force. Not surprisingly, such gender constructions are often linked to militarised language and warrior attitudes that can be found in the media, feeding into a security-oriented, racialized behaviour towards foreigners. Militarised attitudes towards immigrants and migration are becoming dominant in many receiving states, such as the 2017 call of the Austrian Government to deploy army forces on its border with Italy to halt any “irregular” migrants crossing from Italy (Rettman 2017).

The gendered and racialized production of fear is the key to the current type of political and public discourse towards immigrants. Because at the symbolic level, most of our ideas about fear, vulnerability and aggression are bound up with how we learn compulsory social norms of gender and sexuality, the notion of the immigrant as a racialized male invader carries a symbolic, gendered message that is central to the viral spread of intolerance and racist prejudice over large groups of people and entire cultures. Studies show that in Europe and other immigrant receiving countries of the Global North, dominant discourses of fear and security are modelled on racist and white

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3 One of many examples is the following US news coverage of the migration related issues in Europe, by InfoWars, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=of4pXlgYUZw. It was made in relation to and in support of the no restriction on possessing weapons campaign in the US.
masculinist constructions of fear of crime and street criminality (e.g. Stable & Reutschler 2005). At the intersection with contemporary processes of politicisation of migration, these helped construct particularly dehumanised depictions of male migrants from North Africa and the Middle East. This is also why sexual violence, including rape, committed by some immigrants on the streets of some European cities, notably in Germany and Sweden, has become *religious and racial marker*, while immigrants have been framed as “racialized predators”.

This type of gendered discourse produces fear and hatred as depicted on the cover page of a Polish magazine featuring a screaming white woman being grabbed and torn apart by black/coloured male arms and hands, that states: “Islamic rape of Europe”.

The following section focuses on the processes that construct sexual assaults and rape as racial markers by briefly examining some of the political and public responses to the events during the New Year Eve in Cologne, Germany, in 2015. It examines how the politics of fear of immigrants and migration becomes gendered, as well as racialized.

**Sexual assault and rape as a racial marker: The case of Cologne**

According to a report (Brenner and Ohlendorf 2016), during the New Year’s Eve street celebrations in Cologne, several dozen young men, many of North African origin, have been suspected of sexually assaulting and robbing hundreds of women in the crowd. The crimes were made possible by the crowded New Year’s Eve conditions in and around Cologne’s main train station. They appear to have been further facilitated by poor coordination among the different police forces responsible for responding to the situation (ibid.). Public prosecutor Bremer endorsed this interpretation of events and added that the full truth will likely never come to light, in spite of the authorities’ best efforts, owing to a lack of evidence (ibid.).

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5 The authors note that this report is based on the analysis of: 1) hundreds of media reports, comprising all major regional, national, and international news about the events in Cologne published from New Year’s Eve until the second week of April 2016; 2) 20 reports and other official documents; 3) interviews of 13 representatives of the authorities; 4) interviews of 14 witnesses; 5) interviews of six victims; and 6) interviews of 24 additional sources, including experts on refugees and immigration law, asylum seekers themselves, members of the media, and representatives of refugee organizations.
The description above mirrors the first official statements by German federal police. They had identified 32 people who were suspected of taking part in the violent attacks on New Year’s Eve in Cologne, 22 of whom were in the process of seeking asylum in Germany. Of the 32 suspects, nine were Algerian, eight Moroccan, five Iranian, and four Syrian. Three German citizens, an Iraqi, a Serb and a U.S. citizen were also identified. The federal police documented 76 criminal acts, most of them involving some form of theft, and seven linked to sexual molestation (Barkin and Carrel 2016; emphasis added).

This official account was, however, accompanied by other claims made by officials and politicians. One such statement was made on January 4, when Cologne police chief Wolfgang Alberts announced that crimes of “a completely new dimension” had taken place in the city on New Year’s Eve and that the suspected perpetrators appeared to be Arab or North African. (emphasis added). This was followed by the statement from German Justice Minister Heiko Maas who told the Bild newspaper: “If such a horde gathers in order to commit crimes, that appear in some form to be planned,” he said, “nobody can tell me that this was not co-ordinated or prepared.” (Brenner and Ohlendorf 2016, emphasis added). Although his press representative, Stephanie Krüger, said later that the minister did not mean organised crime “in the classical sense of the word” (Brenner and Ohlendorf 2016), official statements of this type have transformed sexual violence against women into a potent tool in gendering the notion of vulnerability of “our nation”, “our state”, “our culture”, and “our values”. These, and similar political narratives frame sexual violence against “our” women as a racialized or ethnicised attack on the sovereignty of the state, as women bodies come to be constructed as vulnerable state territories in need of protection.

By constructing this type of political and public discourse about the events in Cologne, officials and politicians helped to boost the process of data manipu-
lation, often linked to conspiracy theories and sensationalism in reporting on the instances of sexual violence against women in Germany and beyond, in the wake of street violence in Cologne. In doing so, this type of official declarations, as well as much of the media coverage, have contributed to the construction of fear of the “racialised and ethnicised male immigrant enemy”. These types of pronouncements and reporting further fed into the spread of the notion that these violent crimes were committed by refugee/asylum seeking men. This in turn led to public demands for a radical change in the immigration policies of the country.

While there were German politicians conscious of the importance of emphasizing the dangers of linking these events with immigration policies, there were those who did exactly that. Steffen Bilger, a member of parliament for Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union, for example, stated that the reports of sexual assaults and other violent crimes committed by foreign nationals, and specifically those who were admitted in the country to seek protection as refugees, demonstrate the urgent need for Germany to reduce its migrant intake, secure its borders, intensify deportations and uphold “consistent justice.” (Shubert et al. 2016).

Upholding consistent justice is indeed an important element of any democratic and just society. The question is, however, why reoccurring instances of sexual assaults, including rape of women during Oktoberfest (Stöckle and Wegscheider 2016), for example, have not been viewed as “intolerable” crime committed by hordes of German men, and have not sparked national and international political and public debates about the seriousness of sexual violence against women in Europe in the 21st century. Indeed, why there was no mention of these sexual assaults that according to reports are so widespread that sanctuaries for women had to be set up (Connolly 2003)? This would have helped to counteract any pronouncements about a “rape culture” of specific societies and parts of the “backward”, “uncivilized” world.

The question is, thus, what brings “a totally new dimension” to the sexual assaults that took place on the New Year’s Eve in Cologne, and what characterizes them as “organized crime”, as opposed to those regularly committed during Oktoberfest or indeed, in women’s homes?⁹ The focus on the race/eth-

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⁹ According to a study commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, one in seven women in Germany experiences sexual violence. One in four women – irrespective of education level or socio-economic status – is exposed to domestic violence. The perpetrators are almost always men, among whom there is no significant distinction based on religion, back-
nicity of the perpetrator and his culture, situated within the current racialized processes of securitization of migration, constructs the sexual assault of “our” women as the public security concern. As such, racially marked rape becomes an important part of the state security agenda linked to national territory and border controls.

In such a political climate, it is not surprising that any attempt to communicate the issue of sexual and other violence against women in non-racialized terms, and to bring it onto the public agenda is not problem free. Such attempts are perceived as acts of “political correctness”. Voices of the assaulted women, as interviews with some of them demonstrate (Richards 2016), were mirroring the calls for refocusing the debate from the one on racialized state security to the one on the security of women in which the race and culture of the perpetrator are not central points of concern. However, such calls have been dismissed in much of the media and among the far-right groups as a “cover up” and an attempt to present the problem as “the issue of men” and masculinity, not the issues of a “particular culture” (e.g. Arpi 2016). Anti-immigrant groups have been particularly active in adopting sexualized and racialized discourse created around immigrants in general, and the recent arrivals from the Middle East, in particular. Their security concerns have been expressed as their dismay at letting in “millions of male sexually starved, asocial illegals from the Middle East and Africa to come to Germany.”

The assault of German women by “sexually starved foreigners” encoded as Middle Eastern and North African Muslims, helps to “remind” German men of their role as protectors of “their” women, nation, and the state. In doing so, they reclaim elements of “warrior like” masculinity, linked to violence against “the enemy”. Not surprisingly, in the aftermath of the events in Cologne, Germany and other European countries have become dangerous places for refugees, as there has been a rise in violent attacks against them. Reports show

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that there were 970 recorded attacks on asylum accommodation centers and 2,396 crimes against refugees outside of the residences, in 2016, the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) reports. During the first quarter of the same year, there were about 460 recorded attacks on homes of people seeking asylum. The last three months of 2016, saw a decrease in such attacks. Nonetheless, there was still an average of roughly four attacks per day or 116, in total.\(^\text{11}\)

**Concluding remarks**

The discussion in this article, pointed to the coloniality of power causing the North-South migration divide, structured by race, gender, and class. It showed how this divide leads to suffering, violence and death in border zones, as well as how it is linked to a racialized as well as gendered notion of “border security”, “national security”, securitization of migration, and related politics of fear that produce racialized and gendered cultures of othering people who are displaced.

Despite the increase in violent crimes against people who are seeking protection in the receiving states, as in Germany for example, as well as immigrants in general, the governments of the receiving states have been constructing a discourse within which the citizens of the receiving states are under threat of the rising levels of violent crime committed by immigrants and particularly refugees.\(^\text{12}\) Sexualisation of violence committed by refugees and other immigrants, discussed in this article, is central to these processes. It helps to create a notion of “the nation under threat” and to mobilise a “natural” protector, one who can act for “the good” of the protected and who is, hence, “manly”


\(^{12}\) The rise in terrorist threats in Europe and globally is undeniable. Its increase in the past few years is pushing up the crime rates committed by foreigners in many states, including Germany. As terrorist violence in the Global North targets specifically the majority, non-Muslim, populations, it has serious negative consequences for minority-majority relationships in the receiving societies. However, German Federal Office (BKA) data demonstrate, for example, that much of the violence committed by foreigners in Germany is targeting so-called minority communities, such as clashes between Turks and Kurds or among Turks themselves, particularly in the aftermath of recent political developments in Turkey (*Deutsche Welle*. April 24, 2017. Available at: http://www.dw.com/en/german-crime-statistics-reveal-steep-rise-in-violent-and-political-crimes/a-38567261).
implying rationality and responsibility for the security of “women and children” (Enloe 2007: 61).

The discussion of the events in Cologne and their aftermath, presented in this article, shows that the construction of those who seek protection under the 1954 Geneva Convention as (potential) terrorists and “racialized predators” is integral to the ongoing process of politicization and racialization of migration. As such, it has been central to the type of the security response to the systemic global crisis of our time which has produced disturbing levels of structural violence, as well as related forms of direct violence, particularly in the Global South. This has effectively created the “global apartheid order” at the centre of which is a construction of refugees as the racialized and gendered “Other”.

The latter helps produce a powerful social script of victimisation of the besieged that constructs racialised and gendered cultures of fear, as pointed out in this article. This also leads to walled or fenced off, militarised borders that create the “global apartheid order” (Hage 2016) presented as security “solution” to protect the norms and values characterising “our culture” and “our way of life”. By the same token, it helps marginalise real economic, social, and political sources of insecurity and the articulation of related collective experiences of fear that can directly challenge dominant neoliberal economic policies, as well as the related rule of law.

References


RASNI I RODNI KULTURNI PROCESI
KONSTRUKCIJE „DRUGOSTI“:
RASELJENI U ERI NEOLIBERALIZMA

Apstrakt
U članku se razmatra na koji način je ideja o opkoljenosti povezana sa stvaranjem kultura koje su zasnovane na rasnim i rodnim predrasudama o raseljenim ljudima, koji kroz tako definisane razlike postaju „oni drugi“. Kritička analiza pokazuje da je podela migracionih sfera na Sever i Jug strukturisana rasom, klasom i rodom, i da odšlikava kolonijalnost globalnih odnosa moći, koja se reflektuje u rasnim i rodnim idejama o „sigurnosti granica“, „nacionalnoj sigurnosti“, sekuritizaciji migracija, kao i na njima povezanim politikama straha. Članak takođe ukazuje da je produkcija straha od opkoljenosti nacije definisana i rodno i rasno. Mediji igraju važnu ulogu u ovom procesu kroz učesće u kulturnoj produkciji imidža o „opasnim muškarcima imigranata“, koji je zasnovan na vidjenju seksualnog nasilja kao agresivne muškosti „onih drugih“. Na taj način formira se ideja o idealizovanim žrtvama koje karakteriše ženskost, a takođe i strah. Ova politika proizvodnje straha, kako analiza u ovom članku ukazuje, podupire i strukturiše kulture svakodnevnog koje kroz rasna i rodna obeležja definišu raseljene ljude kao „one druge“. Ovi procesi stvaraju idealizovani „subjekt koji strahuje“ – nacionalnu državu, narod/naciju i njihove vrednosti, i istovremeno čine nevidljivim ekonomski, socijalne i političke izvore nesigurnosti pojedinca, naroda i nacije.

Ključne reči
rasno i rodno „drugo“, raseljeni ljudi, kolonijalnost moći, sekuritizacija migracija, politike proizvodnje straha