

Creating the Exotic “Other” in Europe: the Representation of the Western Balkans in Mass Media Discourse

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Abstract

The aim of the research is to answer the question of how the Western Balkans is represented in foreign media discourse. The topic is discussed in the context of the EU integration of the region and more specifically its “mental” integration in the European community. The design of the research is based on a theoretical framework which discusses media effects, national identities and the most typical regional perceptions that exist within Europe. The study is based on an analysis of print media content. The article sample is extracted from the international magazine “The Economist”. For the purposes of the study, the data was analyzed through both quantitative and qualitative methods. In terms of topic thematization, the study does not identify any directional bias. The qualitative analysis reveals that the region is represented as having problems with the state of democracy, and that some countries are dealing with it more efficiently than others. Furthermore, the discourse of the coverage indicates that the Western Balkans is not perceived as originally belonging to Europe and has to be reformed in order to “get away from its past and head to its future” which is the European Union.

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Introduction

Throughout its history Europe has always been inventing the image of the “other” in order to formulate and manifest its own identity. The colonial, the Semitic and the communist “others” are all examples of the discursive constructs through which Europe has identified itself during the 20th century. In that context the image of the Balkans, has been established as the culturally “internal other”. In the perception of Western Europeans, the Balkans are traditionally represented as a European periphery and as “European non-Europe” that stands in explicit contrast to “European Europe”. Dating back to the 19th century, the traditional image of the Balkans emerged through texts of Western European travel writers, administrators and scientists who had direct experience with the people from the region. This image was explicitly rearticulated in the 1990, when the war and violence that resulted from the disintegration of Yugoslavia, were characterized as a typical for the “Balkan character” of the people from this part of Europe.

The western perception of the Balkans has been a subject of examination for many scholars from the fields of history and political science. In her book “Imagining the Balkans”, Maria Todorova (1997) implies that in the mind of the “established” Europeans, the image of the region has mostly appeared as a crossroad between the western “Occident” and the eastern “Orient”. In the specific case of the Western Balkans, the violent events of the 1990 invoked intense negative perceptions which predisposed the European community to distance itself from the problematic region. The images of violence and poverty that had dominated the Western media landscape created lasting perceptions of hostility, barbarity and intolerance which are incompatible with the “European” values of mutual respect, cooperation and democracy. In his

political essay, Michael Buchovski (2006) discusses how these “European” values have been established as a criterion of social acceptance which is currently applied on both domestic and international level. The author infers that patterns of “Orientalism” can also be observed within European societies which tend to stigmatize parts of the community that cannot adapt to the liberal values of the modern world.

Regarding the current political aspirations of the Western Balkans, these patterns of “othering” are worth examining because of the implications they hold for the development of the region. After the conflicts of the 1990s and the final establishment of all the national entities, EU accession has become the strongest political drive throughout the region. Events such as the establishment of the Stabilization and Association Pact, indicates that the EU integration of the region is on the political agenda of both the European Union and the Western Balkans.

During the last 10 years, the countries of the region have achieved a considerable progress in the internationally led peace building processes and managed to establish and maintain political stability. Despite the normalization of the region and its EU integration ambitions, some aspects of the western political discourse suggest that it is still perceived as distant and not belonging to the European community (Petrovic, 2009). This is problematic not only for the political but also for the “mental” integration process of the region. In terms of political integration, a discourse which identifies the Western Balkans as “backward” and “distant” from the European values may result in negative public opinion and support for anti enlargement agenda. The other potential implication of such a rhetoric is the perception of “otherness” that is widely implied towards the region (Todorova, 1997), which besides the political accession of the countries, may affect their actual social acceptance in the European community.

The EU integration of the Western Balkans has been reviewed from various perspectives such as policy implementation, institutional reform, democratic development and economic output. However, the meeting of none of these criteria can identify if the region is actually progressing towards a social inclusion. In the specific case, the term “social inclusion” would refer to the degree to which the Western Balkans is perceived as belonging to the European community based on common values, culture and social reality.

The research question that this paper is trying to answer is how is the Western Balkans represented in European political discourse ? The aim of the study is to identify what are the geopolitical regions and topics that the Western Balkans is most frequently associated with and furthermore if certain patterns of “othering” are present in the most current political rhetoric in Europe. The research is relevant in the context to the European integration of the region. The results will indicate what is the framework within which the countries from the Western Balkans are usually discussed and if they are perceived as belonging to the European community or as distant to its values. The subject is related to the integration process of the Western Balkans, because its representation in the western media discourse can identify how both the public and the officials perceive the region, which is strongly related to the decision making process of the EU.

The European Union was initiated as a political project uniting some of the most influential nations on the continent on the basis of common economic interest and regulation. Its ideological founders envisioned it as political entity uniting the European nations for the establishment of long lasting peace, security, social and economic welfare. With its ultimate goal being the formation of a supranational community, the Union had to grow into something more than a common market place. In the wake of its development, it became clear that the

establishment of institutions and common market is not sufficient for the achievement of the desired unity. What could be defined as the hardest to achieve and perhaps most important factor for the existence of such an entity, is the formation of a homogeneous identity.

A study on how the Western Balkans is represented in the European political discourse can reveal how this identity is defined and what are the cleavages that exist within it. Furthermore, an analysis of the media discourse within the EU can reveal aspects of its agenda towards the Western Balkans, since “a discursive structure is not only a `cognitive` or `contemplative` entity but an articulation practice that establishes and organizes social relations”(Laclau and Mouffe 1987, p. 81). The paper will try to identify if the Western Balkans is perceived as belonging to Europe or as a region that is originally not part of the European community and needs to be integrated into it, in order to be “civilized” and “modernized”. Considering the aspirations of the Western Balkans for joining the European Union, it is worth discussing how the region is perceived by the Europeans and how it is positioned in the agenda of the EU. The accession of the Western Balkans is undoubtedly an important step for its development, however it would not necessarily mean that it will automatically become a European country in terms of social inclusion. If it is currently regarded as distant to the European community, this would imply that its actual social integration needs to go beyond its political accession in order to be achieved.

The most primary object of examination of this study is the image of the Western Balkans as it is constructed in the European political rhetoric. In the research the term “political rhetoric” is not defined merely as the discourse produced by politicians, but rather as a public discursive practice (Reisigl, 2008, p. 97). The reason why the study focuses on media discourse is that it is highly indicative of the perceptions that exist in the different societies. Therefore, the research is

based on Fairclough`s concepts of discourse as social practice capable of creating, sustaining and reproducing meaning and identity (Fairclough, 1992, p. 65).

Since public rhetoric is most intensively reproduced in linguistic mediums such as text, the study is based on analysis of print media content (Reisigl, 2008). The paper will examine the coverage of one of the widely circulated magazines in Europe, in order to reveal how it represents the image of the Western Balkans. Furthermore, the study will identify if and how the notions of “Balkanism” and “Orientalism” as defined by Todorova and Said, are applied in the vast European political rhetoric. From a more practical perspective, this is relevant for establishing the potential implications held by these concepts for the EU integration process of the region.

The structure of the paper is developed in the following way. Chapter 1 provides the theoretical framework on which the study is based. It consists of four sections which explain and justify the logic of the analysis and the meaning of results that are produced. Chapter 2 focuses on the methodological structure of the analysis. It elaborates on the exact methods that were applied and the potential shortcomings of the analysis. Chapter 3 presents the actual results of the study. It is divided into two parts, each describing respectively the quantitative and qualitative findings. The conclusion of the research provides a discussion and interpretation of the results

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this section is to provide a theoretical background which to explain and justify the analysis and the goals of the research. In order to understand why it is important to study the image of the Western Balkans in foreign mainstream media and how it is related to the EU integration of the region, we should refer to some theories and research in political science. The first part of the theoretical framework is discussing how national identity is projected and mediated in media space. This is relevant for the study because it will explain the relation between mass media and the formation of social identity perceptions. The second part is presenting an overview of the traditional general perceptions of eastern societies in the West, and more specifically the traditional image of the Balkans. It implies on the differences between myth and reality and where common stereotypes emerge from. The third part is discussing the relation between mass media, public opinion formation and EU integration. It is going to elaborate how the media representation of the Western Balkans is related to its EU integration. The fourth section overviews some specific features of the European political and media discourse and focuses on how they are applied to the case of the Western Balkans.

1.1 Constructing collective identities in the media

Benedict Anderson defines the nation as an “imagined community”. In his theory he implies that individuals are not capable to tangibly experience the larger communities they are part of, since they are not capable of meeting and communicating with all the members of their society. Therefore, Anderson argues that nations exist primarily in the imagination of the people

(Anderson, 1983, p. 6). In his book he relates the emergence of nations with the advent of the print technology. He implies that since its emergence mass publishing has significantly determined and shifted power relations in modern societies. As the main reason for this he points the fact that book publishing allowed the spread of ideas and drawing imaginative boundaries through linguistic means, which resulted in the emergence of and new imagined community that is the modern nation (Anderson, 1983, p. 46).

The concept of Anderson is foundational for understanding the general essence of social communities. Addressing his theory is relevant for the study because it implies on the significance of media outlets for drawing imaginative social boundaries and determining power relations. The concept of the “imagined communities” can be applied for analyzing the integration processes of political entities such as the European Union.

In his book “Banal Nationalism”, Michael Billig builds on the theory of the “imagined communities” and discusses the significance of the “everyday reminders” of national belonging (Billig, 1995, p. 93). He emphasizes on how national identity is “flagged” in domestic media and how details such as the topics, the ordering and the semantics of news coverage play an important role in constantly “reminding” the audiences of the community they belong to. Furthermore, the theory holds that besides reminding the people who “we” are, media content also has the potential of defining who “they” are. Thus, the concept of Banal Nationalism explains how identity perceptions are maintained and how the notion of “otherness” is constructed.

Billig`s concepts are valuable for understanding the importance of studying media discourse, and how it could identify collective mindsets and perceptions of different communities and social events. Studying how identities are “flagged” can also reveal patterns of

social exclusion, stereotyping and discrimination. Besides reminding about national belonging, media coverage has also the potential of shaping social identity which goes further than the concept of “Banal Nationalism”.

In her discussion on nation building, Sabina Mihelj distinguishes “banal” and “hot” forms of nationalism, with the latter being more substantial in terms of perception formation (Mihelj, 2011, p. 96). In her book “Media Nations”, Mihelj examines the implications of communicating national identity through mass media. She discusses the role of different media channels and the major topics that are mostly communicated, for drawing mental boundaries and formation of common identities. Mihelj claims that mass communication is able to accommodate a range of different kinds of imagined communities but can also facilitate a reverse process: “It can serve as instrument of integration, while also being used as a tool of exclusion and fragmentation and often simultaneously so” (Mihelj, 2011, p.25). In her discussion, she does not stress on particular media platforms as uniquely predisposed to serve as purveyors of national imagination. Her analysis suggests that what matters most is the content of the mediated messages rather than the means through which they are distributed.

Mihelj’s discussion on identity mediation through mass media, is relevant as a theoretical basis for media content analysis. It justifies that studying media content could identify how perceptions of belonging and otherness are constructed in media space and if they have a potential for forming common social identity.

The concept of mass media as a mediator of national identities can be attributed to the particular case of the European Union. Scholarship on EU integration emphasizes the significance of homogeneous media space for the formation of “European” identity. In his text Mogens Schmit, claims that member states’ media covers EU affairs scarcely and inefficiently

which is problematic for the equal mediation of European identity (Schmidt, 2001, p.207). In his work he argues that a multicultural social entity that aims at political and economic homogeneity requires a common media space that conducts the image of its national members from a more general perspective. In the case of the European Union, Schmit regards its media space as too fragmented and dominated by coverage presented from mainly national point of view.

Therefore, in order to identify and analyze general perceptions mediated in international environments, the most relevant object of examination is international media outlets. Despite being also often affected by domestic perspectives, these outlets communicate same messages to international audiences. This predisposes the formation of general national perceptions, consequently affecting senses of social belonging or exclusion respectively.

1.2 Historical overview of the perceptions of Eastern Europe in the West, and the case of the Balkans

The most dominant boundary that has characterized Europe in the last centuries has been the one between the East and the West. In his historical analysis of how Eastern Europe was “invented” in western perceptions, Larry Wolff traces the origins of that division to the period of the enlightenment. Voltaire was the intellectual who defined the notions of the civilized and modern West, culturally dominated by France, Britain and Netherlands and the poor and underdeveloped East (Wolf, 1994). During the 20th century that division became more precisely articulated by the split of Europe into the Democratic and prosperous West and the Communist and repressive East. The end of the Cold War initiated the “returning” of Eastern Europe to where it was considered to originally belong. However, the cultural and social differences

remained for a long time in the perceptions of both sides of the continent. Since the accession of most East European countries into the EU, those perceptions of “otherness” have posed some implications to the integration process of the community. After the fall of the Iron Curtain the bipolar division of East and West was no longer sufficient for defining the precise cultural borders of the continent. Consequently terms like Central Europe, Baltic States and The Balkans emerged in the public discourse. These categorizations proved to be highly significant for the EU integration of the region previously known as Eastern Europe. The acceptance of the states constituting Central Europe was tolerated significantly more by the western leaders and societies. As reason for this we can refer to Kundera’s notion of the perception of Central Europe as “the kidnapped West” (Ash, 1999, p. 387). In that sense the accession of Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland was widely regarded as bringing these countries to where they initially belonged. The fact that practically Slovakia was economically and politically lagging far behind the rest of the region, demonstrates how important is the role of public and elite perceptions for certain foreign policy decisions.

One of the major implications of the regional fragmentation of Eastern Europe was the redefinition of the eastern geopolitical boundaries of Europe. There is a widely accepted notion, formulated by the famous American scholar Samuel Huntington, according to which “the eastern and southern boundary of Central Europe is simultaneously the frontier of Europe and Western Civilization” (Ash, 1999, p 388). After the end of the Cold War such concepts gave rise to the widely perceived differentiation between the Balkans and the rest of Eastern Europe. After the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia, it became very tempting for the rest of post-communist Europe to differentiate itself from the region of the Balkans. As Timothy Garton Ash puts it in one of his essays: “For politicians everywhere, and especially for Polish, Hungarian and Czech

politicians, the Manichean contrast between “Central Europe”, bathed in light and the “Balkans”, drenched in blood, was irresistible” (Ash, 1999, p 388). Therefore, the “Visegrad Group” countries` political initiative was aimed at pushing the so called European Orient out onto the Balkans and the former Soviet Union, distinguishing themselves from the Eastern archetypes (Buchowski, 2006).

The concept of “Orientalism” was introduced by Edward Said, who defines it as “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and (most of the time) “the Occident”” (Said, 1978, p. 2). The term refers to the ways of how the image of the Orient was constructed in the perceptions of European societies. Said implies that the notion of the Orient played a significant role in the formation of an European collective identity by defining “us” the Europeans against all “those” non-Europeans. To a significant degree it also shaped the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all non-European peoples and cultures (Said, 1978, p7). Thus, the perceptions of the Orient were largely associated with mystery, backwardness and degeneracy in contrast with the European “West” which was considered as socially advanced, superior and civilized. The concept of “Orientalism” is relevant for the study on the western perceptions of the Balkans. Despite not geographically belonging to the Orient, the patterns through which the image of the Balkans is constructed in European perceptions are similar.

In her book “Imagining the Balkans”, Maria Todorova focuses more specifically on how the perceptions of the Balkans have been formed and sustained in the imagination of the Western European societies. In her historical analysis she tries to define the boundaries between the myths and realities associated with the region and the way in which they have affected its historical and social development. She implies that the image of the Balkans appears to be

“frozen” in the perceptions of Western Europe, and predominantly absent from the Western’s public discourse. Widely regarded as primitive, barbaric and economically underdeveloped, the Balkan societies appear to be stigmatized and neglected by the rest of the European community. Todorova explains the causes for this lack of interest and stigmatization, relating it with the non colonial status of the region and its widely spread associations with Orientalism and Ottoman influence. She implies that the notions of Orientalism as defined by Edward Said (1979) are not applicable to the Balkan region because it does not fall into the geopolitical area the term applies to. She argues that the term “Balkan”, despite overlapping with “Oriental”, holds additional characteristics such as “cruelty, boorishness, violence, instability, and unpredictability”. What the two terms have in common is that they are both used against the concept of Europe symbolizing cleanliness, order, self-control, strengths of character, sense of law, justice and efficient administration (Todorova, 1997, p. 119).

There is hardly a better example that illustrates Todorova’s concepts, than Robert Kaplan’s book “Balkan Ghosts”. Being a travel writer and a journalist, Kaplan presents a narrative describing his personal experience in the Balkans. What is most distinctive about his book is the explicit emphasis it puts on the “primitiveness” and the “brutality”, which he defines as “rooted” in the region since ancient times. In the prologue of the book, the author often describes the Balkans as “a time-capsule world: a dim stage, upon which people raged, spilled blood, experienced visions and ecstasies” (Kaplan, 1993, p. xxi). Considering it as the “original third world, long before the Western Media coined that term” (Kaplan, 1993, p. xxiii), he often draws a parallel between the Balkans and the Middle East. He compares the “century’s first terrorists” that the Balkans “produced” with the Palestine Liberation Organization of the 1920 and 1930s. In another paragraph it is stated that “like present-day Shiites of Beirut’s southern

suburbs, the IMRO`s killers, who swore allegiance over a gun and an Orthodox Bible, came from the rootles, peasant proletariat of Skopje, Belgrade, and Sofa slums” (Kaplan, 1993, p xxiii). Besides the explicit “demonization” of the region, it is also worth commenting on how the narrative tends to imply that some of the most dramatic events in 20th century European history can be associated and traced to the Balkans. After discussing how the World War I was triggered in Sarajevo the author also infers that “Nazism for instance, can claim Balkan origins. Among the flophouses of Vienna, breeding ground of ethnic resentments close to the southern Slavic world, Hitler learned to hate so infectiously”(Kaplan, 1993, p. xxiii). The cited examples illustrate how features of “primitivism, barbarity and hostility” are explicitly attributed to the “uncivilized” Balkans. Furthermore, the reality of the region is often presented as highly contrasting the one of the “civilized” Europe, which corresponds to Said`s notions of “Orientalism”.

Regarding the concept of “Orientalism”, Michael Buchowski discusses its implications in the contemporary European context. He further develops and redefines some its concepts in order to provide a more postmodern, postindustrial and post socialist meaning of the term. He implies that the mental map of “Orientalism” has transgressed its geopolitical boundaries and morphed into the social space (Buchowski, 2006). As he puts it, he argues that in contemporary Europe the “spatially exotic other” has been resurrected as the “socially stigmatized” brother. His view holds that in post-socialist Europe the practices of inventing the “other” have shifted to that part of society which fails to adopt the principles of the hegemonic liberal ideology. The author largely regards this development as a result of postmodern phenomena such as globalization, transnational governance and migration processes. This notion holds significant implications, since it presupposes the emergence of inferior categories of people and also could provide basis

for the legitimization of political practices of exploitation and more importantly social exclusion. In the case of the Western Balkans, taking into account the traditional perceptions of the region as “semi-oriental, not fully European, semi-developed, and semi-civilized” (Todorova, 1997 p.17), it could be expected that people from the region are especially prone to falling into such inferior categorizations. Such practices may hold significant implications for the European integration of the region, since its belonging to the European community is considered as ambiguous.

1.3 Public opinion and EU integration

Scholars content that since European citizens have little chance to directly communicate with the different nationalities of Europe, they form their perceptions on them based on the information they receive from the mass media. Since it is strongly related to opinion formation, this suggests that the way candidate member states are portrayed in the media has a strong effect on the European public opinion about them. This holds certain implications, since EU citizens can affect the enlargement process of the Union, either indirectly through policy support, or directly through referendum voting. Therefore, it could be inferred that the image of candidate member states in mass media has an effect on the enlargement and integration processes of the EU.

Recent academic research on EU integration focuses on the relation between mass media, public opinion and support for enlargement. Studies comparing media content and frames with EU barometer polls and focus group opinions, identify significant correlations (Maier, Rittberger, 2008; De Vreese, Lecheler, 2010; Jones, Van der Biljl, 2004; Hooghe, Marks, 2004).

Maier and Rittberger study how perceptions of economic performance, state of democracy and cultural “match” with EU affect public support for enlargement. Their results identify that positive information about candidate member states generally causes an increase in support for accession, while negative information leads to a decline in for EU enlargement support. More particularly, the study demonstrates that perceptions about levels of democracy have the highest priming effect on support for enlargement. The authors infer that this can be attributed to prior knowledge on EU accession criteria such as stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect and protection of minorities (Maier, Rittberger, 2008, p. 261).

Academic research has further elaborated on the degrees to which positive and negative coverage impact public support for EU enlargement. De Vreese and Lecheler examine the conditions of EU opinion formation. Their results imply that people with less political background knowledge tend to be more vulnerable to news coverage with negative rhetoric (De Vreese, Lecheler, 2010). This suggests that mass publics who rarely have chance to elaborate their political knowledge in their daily routines, are highly susceptible to media content for building political preferences. Media studies are often focusing on different aspects of coverage in order to establish more precisely the conditions, under which people formulate their opinions. In her research Pippa Norris examines the degree to which extensive coverage, directional bias and presence of news cues affects support for EU integration. The results of her study imply that when there is a balance between negative and positive coverage, media has low impact on opinion formation. However, in the presence of more sustained negative coverage which Norris formulates as “directional bias”, results show that media has the potential of enhancing negative opinions of the EU (Norris, 2003, p 206).

The research on the relation between news coverage and public support for the EU is relevant for studying the case of the media image of the Western Balkans in the context of its EU integration. An examination of how the region is covered in western media could identify if there is a tendency of directional bias and emphasis on negative coverage. Furthermore, a qualitative analysis on the coverage could establish how factors such as level of democracy, stability of institutions and rule of law in the region are presented. Thus, an evaluation of the coverage of the Western Balkans can identify if the region is represented as politically and economically undeveloped and backward looking, or as a part of Europe that strives for improvement and EU integration.

1.4 The Western Balkans in European political and media discourses

In order to analyze qualitatively the media coverage of the Western Balkans, we should review some aspects of the western rhetoric on the region. In her book “A Long Way Home”, Tanja Petrovic profoundly analyses the representation of the Western Balkans in political and media discourses. She discusses the origins of the terminology applied to the region and the contexts in which it is used.

The term “Western Balkans” was first used as a neutral geographical name in 19th and early 20th century literature (Petrovic, 2009, p. 28). It has been used mostly in travel chronicles and scholarly works on biology, geography and archeology dealing with phenomena in the western part of the Balkan peninsula. However, today the term is mostly used in political context. It was founded by EU in 1998 at the European council in Vienna, and denotes the Balkan countries that are not members of the European Union (Bojinovic, 2005, p. 15). Since

then it has mostly been used in reference to processes related to the accession of Southeast European countries and the foreign policy of the EU and its member states. In political discourse, the term “Western Balkans” has to a certain degree replaced the term “Southeastern Europe”, which was used during the 1990s to denote the countries where ethnic conflicts occurred (Bojinovic, 2005, p. 15). Therefore, the term differentiates the region from associations with the violent disintegration of former Yugoslavia, and relates it more with its relations with the European Union. It is used to denote a region which is characterized by common socio-political features and therefore requires common policy implementation by the international community. The term “Southeastern Europe” still exists in the western political discourse but carries a rather geographical connotation, while “The Western Balkans” is applied mostly in purely political context.

In her review on the political discourse within the European Union, Petrovich discusses how the continent is divided into “Europe” and “non-Europe”, and how the images of the EU and the Western Balkans are created. She focuses on the most common metaphors used in the EU discourse and implies how they are applied to the Western Balkans. As the most frequently used ones she defines those of EU as a family, a path/journey and regarding non-member states - a future (Bojinovich, 2005, p. 34). In her discussion she implies that these metaphors are used differently for the internal affairs of the EU and for the Western Balkans.

The metaphor of a family is most frequently used to illustrate the relations between the EU and its member states (Musolff, 2004, 14). It indicates a hierarchization of European states and displays different levels paternalism of certain states in relation to others. In the case of the Western Balkans, countries of the region are referred to as “children” that have to “qualify” for membership in order to prove their “maturity” (Petrovic, 2005, p.40). In her discussion, Petrovic

infers that the image of the membership candidates as “children” reproduces and legitimizes EU’s paternalistic attitude by implying that children cannot be fully responsible for their own behavior and therefore are irrational and urgently need assistance, supervision and education (Petrovic, 2005, p.41).

The other commonly used metaphor is the EU as path or journey. It implies movement towards a specific goal/political end. In the case of member states, they travel towards their goals at different speeds and using various means of transport. In the context of the Western Balkans, the EU has static image of a fortress providing security and protection. In that case the EU accession is the ultimate goal and candidates may travel at different speeds and use different kind of transportation such as a “train” or a “ship” (Petrovic, 2005, p.43). Petrovich implies that the journey metaphor has another aspect which is that “the aspiring EU members, starting the journey as “non-European” countries, must learn, transform and mature along the way, eventually reaching their target destination as fully revamped, European countries (2005, p. 43)”. She also identifies a specific particularity of the usage of the metaphor regarding the Western Balkans, which is that the countries` accession to the EU may be the end of the journey but does not necessarily imply the attainment of the goal: “The entry into the common house at the end of this journey/process is not guaranteed, but the very Europeanness with which the candidate countries become impregnated along the way should be enough to ensure their sense of fulfillment” (Petrovic, 2005, p.43).

The third metaphor of EU as the “future” is more time oriented than the previous ones. It involves the concept of progress in the sense that whatever belongs to the past is backward and underdeveloped and, while progress is associated with what comes in the future. In the case of the Western Balkans the progress in the future is defined as the EU accession, which is also the

final break with its past associated with the violent ethnic conflicts in the 1990`s. The notions linked to this metaphor imply that for the Western Balkans, the EU is “the future, progress, stability, and health, and conversely, non inclusion in the EU is related to the past marked by instability, chaos, nationalism and disease (Petrovich, 2005, p.50)”. This type of discourse has an additional implication which is that EU`s “present” appears as the Western Balkans future, meaning that the latter is now living in the past. Consequently, this distinction highlights the differences between the European Union and the Western Balkans by implying that they do not even belong to a same time space. In that sense the usage of this metaphor signifies for a phenomenon identified by Maria Todorova, who states that from western perspective, “the non-westerner is always living in another time, even when he is our contemporary” (Todorova, 2005, p. 155).

The common feature of the three metaphors is that they all emphasize on the distinction between EU member and non-member states, by classifying them as part of the family/not part of the family, close to the final destination/away from it and belonging to the past/present. The third one even resembles the widespread representation of the Balkans as a special region with inherent traits explicitly related to myths and obsession with the past (Todorova, 1997, p.38). The concept of the metaphors in western political discourse is valuable for the study because their presence in the coverage of the Western Balkans would signify for a process of “othering” in the media. Therefore, the usage of these metaphors in the context of the Western Balkans would imply that the region is perceived as distant and not belonging to the European community.

Chapter 2: Data and Methodological justification of the research

The platform that was selected for the study is print media. From a practical point of view this selection is based on the data accessibility and the lack of requirements for time consuming transcriptions before the actual process of analysis. From a more substantial perspective, it was chosen because it is considered to be one the most representative platforms in terms of reflecting dominant discourses rather than “dissident idiosyncratic voices” (Mautner, 2008, p. 32). Regarding the constructive functions of language as defined by Fairclough (1995), the study of widely circulated print outlets can identify shared constructions of reality which makes them a key data source for social inquiry. Therefore, the study identified articles in widely circulated press outlets to be the most relevant object of examination.

The overall data body of the analysis consists of 107 print articles from the London based magazine “The Economist”. For the purposes of the research the articles were extracted from two time periods, the first one covering the years of 2000 and 2001 and the second those of 2010 and 2011. The data sample consists of all the articles issued in those periods, which report on the countries of the Western Balkans. The articles from the first and the second periods amount to 65 and 42 respectively. The selection of the first period is based on its proximity to the latest events of armed conflict in the region. The second period was selected as most representative of the current discourse on the region. Due to the scope of the research, each period consists of two years providing the amount of articles that can be analyzed within the limited time frame of the study. All the articles were extracted from the digital archive of the magazine which can be accessed online. The links to all of them are provided in the data body section of the paper.

The selection of *The Economist* as an outlet of examination is primarily based on the international perspective of the magazine. Since the study aims at analyzing the wider European discourse, it was considered that it should focus on an international media platform. The shortcoming of it is that *The Economist* represents a broader western perspective advocating free markets and globalization, which is not entirely representative of the European discourse. However, due to time and language limitations, as well as the lack of a representative press outlet that can be defined as “European”, *The Economist* was considered to be the most relevant data source for the study. Regarding the diverse audience it reaches, and the fact that the “western” rhetoric of the magazine significantly overlaps with the European, its content significantly corresponds to the purposes of the research.

The coverage of the magazine is analyzed both in terms of content and discourse. The results are grouped into two separate categories. The articles from both the periods are quantitatively analyzed. The qualitative analysis is conducted on an article sample from the second period that contains more explicit language use that is indicative of a specific rhetoric. The implementation of two types of analysis is defined by the aim of the research, which is to study the data in terms of both thematization and discourse.

For the first part of the study, the data is examined through content analysis which is defined to be the most relevant method for quantifying content in terms of predetermined categories in systematic and replicable manner (Bryman, 2008, p. 274). The quantitative part of the research is based on comparative analysis for two reasons. On first place, since the first period is in close proximity to a major military conflict that is the Kosovo crisis, it could be expected that the coverage will be more intense and focused on ethnic violence, crime and nationalistic stirrings. A comparison of the structure of the coverage between the two periods

will identify to what extent regional conflict affects the topics reported in the coverage. Secondly, an analysis on the shifts of the percentages will infer if there is a tendency for a directional bias in the coverage. No statistical analysis is applied to the data, which is a shortcoming. Due to time limitation and the small N sample the data is analyzed only through personal interpretation.

The data sample is coded into three tables identifying the covered country or region, the topic of the articles and the cited international actors. For the sorting of the first table, the covered regions were identified by the title, the subtitle or the content of the articles. Since the majority of the articles are discussing several topics at a time, the second table is filled according to the topic identified as the major one. The third table, identifying the amount of references to international agents is filled according to the percentages of articles that refer to the different actors. Since not all of the articles are making a reference to international actors and some are referring to more than one, the sum of the percentages is not 100. Considering the disproportion in the number of the articles, this caused certain difficulties in comparing the data, for which an explanation is provided in the results section.

The qualitative part of the analysis is carried on the basis of some of the key concepts identified in theoretical framework and more specifically those of Petrovic and Todorova. Since it is more analytical it is applied on a limited number of the articles. The sample for it consists of 20 articles extracted from the second period covering the years of 2010 and 2011. Since the goal of this part of the analysis is to examine the most current rhetoric of the magazine, only articles from the second period were reviewed. The study focuses on the political discourse on the Western Balkans and therefore the sample consists predominantly of the pieces which cover the entire region plus some containing more explicit use of language.

The first part of the qualitative analysis provides a descriptive account on some of the topics discussed in the sample. It elaborates the results from the content analysis, in order to identify if the coverage tends to be positive, negative or neutral. The discussion is focused on how the levels of democracy are represented, which was identified in the theoretical framework as strongly related for the formation of public opinion. The goal of the descriptive analysis is to infer which are the topics mostly associated with the region and what is the connotation they carry.

The second part of the qualitative analysis focuses more specifically on the rhetoric of the coverage. Its aim is to examine how the image of the Western Balkans is constructed in the coverage and more specifically how it is represented in relation to that of Europe. The examination is based on the presence of the metaphors identified by Petrovic, namely those of EU as family, road and future. In order to assess if patterns of “othering” are present, the analysis focuses on how the metaphors are applied in the context of the coverage. Furthermore, based on Said’s and Todorova’s notions of and “Orientalism” and “Balkanism”, the articles are analyzed for the presence of explicit statements defining the region as “distant, primitive and uncivilized”.

The analysis examines the use of metaphors for two major reasons. First, the metaphor is considered to be a highly penetrative linguistic tool when used in political discourse. As Petrovich infers: “metaphor helps make the central concepts of politics, such as ideology, influence, power etc., more tangible and concrete for the people involved in politics, but also for those directly influenced by it.”(Petrovic, 2009, p. 34). Therefore, the usage of metaphors has the potential to linguistically create new meanings and define public interpretations. Secondly, metaphors often reveal the ideology and the political agenda behind the text. Thus, the use of metaphorical expressions often reflects implicit beliefs, attitudes and ideological presuppositions

(Petrovic, 2009, p. 34). Basing on those two assumptions, the study includes an analysis on metaphors in order to better exemplify how the Western Balkans is situated in the foreign political discourse and more specifically, how its relation with the EU is defined.

The major limitations of the study are the small data sample and the outlet of examination. In order to achieve more representative results, the study should be based on comparative analysis on the most circulated national newspapers issued in the countries considered as the decision makers of the European Union (Germany, France, Britain, Netherlands etc.). A cross national analysis covering a longer period of time would be able to more precisely identify if directional biases are present. Furthermore a more extensive discourse analysis could be applied in order to provide a more detailed discussion on how the image of the Western Balkans is constructed in the European political and media discourse. However, due to language limitations and the time constrains of the study, this option was not considered as possible.

Chapter 3: Results

3.1 Results from quantitative analysis

For the first period covering the years of 2000 and 2001, the assembled number of articles amounts to 65 and for the second period covering the years of 2010 and 2011 the number of articles is 42. Given the fact that *The Economist* is a weekly magazine, the average frequency with which the region appeared during the first period is approximately once in two weeks and for the second period once in three weeks. The decline in the second period could be explained with the decrease of the ethnic tensions and the end of the armed conflicts during the decade. The years of 2000 and 2001 were the first ones after the NATO bombing operations and were also marked by several instances of high level interethnic violence. Due to the higher intensity of political tensions and the recent foreign military intervention, the higher international coverage during the first period is understandable. What is important for the purpose of the research are the frequencies with which the countries, topics and international actors are thematized in the articles.

The first part of the content analysis examines the frequencies with which the region and its countries appeared during the studied periods. It identifies which are the most referred geopolitical regions. The results are presented in *Table 1* below.

Table 1: The frequency with which the countries of the region are thematized during the two periods (in percent)

Country/Region	2000-2001	2010-2011
Serbia	18.5	33.3
Croatia	9.5	9.2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3.1	2.3
Montenegro	6.1	2.3
Macedonia	15.4	7.1
Kosovo	10.8	9.5
Albania	6.1	7.2
Yugoslavia	18.5	0
The Balkans	12.3	16.9
The Western Balkans	0	11.9
	100% (N=65)	100% (N=42)

The results show that the most thematized countries are Serbia, Croatia, Kosovo and Macedonia. Being one of the most influential states of Yugoslavia and a central actor in the disintegration wars, Serbia is increasingly present in the reporting of the outlet. The amount and the increase of its coverage suggest that it is represented as the most significant and dynamic country in the region. In comparison to it, Croatia is far less present in the focus of the magazine. Despite its active participation in the ethnic conflicts in Bosnia and Hercegovina, the country managed to distance itself from the following violent events and achieve significant economic development, which is likely to be the reason why it is less present in the data sample. Despite officially declaring independence in 2008, Kosovo is mentioned as a separate entity in both of the studied periods. Considering the small territory and political influence of the country, its coverage could be defined as disproportionate. Its frequency of appearance could be related to the fact that it was the major conflict zone during the end of the 1990s and is currently

undergoing a process of intense reforms and state building. The results of this part of the content analysis by itself suggest that there is a relation between the intensity of the coverage and the conflict dynamics of the region. The appearance of Macedonia also supports this claim. Its twice more intense coverage in the first period of examination could be largely associated with the instances of violent clashes with Albanian minorities that took place during 2001. Being fairly distant from the Kosovo conflict Albania, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina received a low attention by the outlet in comparison with the rest of the region.

What is also worth commenting is the shift in the terminology applied for the regional references. The mentioning of Yugoslavia in the first period is mostly related to the interactions between Serbia and Montenegro, which until 2006 were considered as the last remaining part of the Yugoslav federation. However, the articles in that category often appear under the title of “ex-Yugoslavia” and discuss the entire region of the former political entity. Due to the independence of Montenegro, the term is not used at all in the articles issued in 2010 and 2011, which indicates that it has disappeared from the rhetoric of the magazine.

The other important shift in the results is the emergence of the term “Western Balkans” and the decrease in the usage of “The Balkans” as a reference to the region. Considering the political connotation of the former, it could be inferred that the region is increasingly discussed in the context of its relations with the European Union. This also indicates a decrease in the negative rhetoric in the coverage which is usually denoted by the usage of “The Balkans”.

The second part of the content analysis examines the frequencies of the topics that are covered in the data sample. Since most of the articles are referring to various issues, the data was grouped into five categories according to the most general thematization of the coverage. The results are presented in the table below.

Table 2: The frequencies of the topics thematized in the coverage of the Western Balkans in “The Economist”(in percent)

Topic	2000-2001	2010-2011
Economic affairs	6.1	11.9
Domestic affairs	30.7	22.4
Ethnic violence, crime and nationalistic stirrings	32.4	22.4
International Relations (within the Western Balkans)	20	14.7
International Relations (outside the Western Balkans)	6.2	9.5
EU integration	4.6	19.1
	100% (N=65)	100% (N=42)

The articles in the first category are focused on the economic developments of the region. They are discussing the economic growth of the countries and particular industries in services and manufacturing. Given the fact that *The Economist* is a magazine with economic orientation it is important to establish what part of the coverage is concerned with the economic development of the Western Balkans. The second category includes the coverage focusing on domestic political affairs. The articles in that section are discussing internal affairs such as elections, party leadership changes, opposition movements and public attitudes. The category is important for identifying how much attention the outlet pays to the internal political dynamic of the countries in comparison to the other topics. The third category measures the percentage of articles that are covering issues of ethnic violence, crime and nationalistic stirrings. This section is highly significant for the purposes of the research since it presents the degree to which the region is associated with illegal practices and acts of violence. The articles in that category cover instances of ethnic conflicts, illegal trade

activities, murder and assault on national minorities. The next two sections consist of the articles which discuss the interaction between the countries in the region and their international relations with other non Balkan states. These sections are important for establishing the international context in which the countries are discussed. The fifth category includes the articles which cover the EU integration developments of the region. It is valuable for the uses of the study because it exemplifies the degree to which the region is discussed in the context of the European Union.

Despite still dominating the coverage, the reporting on Ethnic violence, crime and nationalistic stirrings is significantly decreasing. This part of the results indicates that there is a lack of a negative directional bias. The decrease in this coverage also implies that the region is less referred to as a dangerous place associated with violent conflicts. The increase in the coverage on EU integration and economic affairs is important, because it could be related to a more positive representation. During the first period of examination the countries are described as being “on the edge of economic collapse” because of the wars of disintegration (The Economist, Jan 6th 2000; Feb 17th 2000). In contrast, the economic coverage in the second period discusses the increase in foreign investment, the economic recovery of the region and the development of industries such as wine production, tourism and national defense (The Economist, Jan 6th 2011; Jan 13th 2011). The results in the third and the fourth sections indicate that the region is increasingly discussed in the context of a wider international community. The coverage of the regional dynamics is still higher, but has significantly decreased during the second period. The fifth section indicates a four times increase in the coverage focused on the EU Integration processes, which is indicative of the growing interest and discussion on the pro Western development of the region.

The third part of the quantitative analysis elaborates on the international context of the coverage. It measures the percentage of articles making a reference to specific countries and international organizations. Identifying the international actors that are most frequently related with the Western Balkans is important for the analysis because it can imply which are the spheres of influence the region is associated with.

Table 3: The percentage of articles making reference to particular international actors.

Referred International actors	2000-2001	2010-2011
European Union	23.1	66.6
NATO	56.9	14.3
UN	13.8	16.6
USA	3.1	0
Western European countries	6.1	2.4
Russia	6.1	9.5
China	3.1	4.7
Turkey	0	4.7
	100% (N=65)	100% (N=42)

Note 1: The category of Western European Countries includes Germany, Britain, Italy, Netherlands and France

Note 2: Since most of the articles are referring to more than one international actor, the percentages in the table are overlapping.

It is evident that the coverage is mostly referring to International Organization rather than countries. This could be explained by the fact that the peace making and peace building operations on the region are largely conducted by the international security and human rights agents led mostly by the United States. What is important is that there is significant increase in the references to the European Union. Similarly to the *Table 2*, the results suggest that the region of the Western Balkans is significantly discussed in terms of its EU relation and integration. Another important part of the results is that there is an increase in the references to countries such as Russia, China and Turkey and a decrease in the references to Western European Countries. The presence of the International Actors in the studied coverage is important for the research and will be further elaborated in the discourse analysis part of the results section.

The quantitative analysis also compared the coverage in the two periods in terms of its generality. For the first period, 43% of the articles were issue specific, meaning that they we

discussing particular events. For the second period the issue specific articles decrease to 31%. The surge in the general coverage indicates that the outlet increasingly focuses on the overall development of region rather than on the particular events that take place in it. Considering the studied time periods, this implies that with the decrease in the ethnic violence more attention is paid to the general economic and political developments of countries of the Western Balkans.

The results of the content analysis identify several general tendencies. On first place, during the second period consisting of the years of 2010 and 2011, the term “Western Balkans” emerges with a considerable frequency in the coverage. This indicates that it is increasingly discussed in the context of the European Union. However, considering the connotation of the term discussed in the theoretical framework (Petrovic, 2009) it also can be inferred that it is present in the public discourse as region which is not originally part of the EU community. Secondly, the decrease in the topics of domestic affairs and crime, violence and nationalism combined with the change in the issue specific reporting, suggest that the coverage is related to the political dynamics of the region. This observation is important because it indicates a lack of directional bias. However, for the better interpretation of the data the qualitative description of the content should be also taken into consideration.

3.2 Results from qualitative analysis

The aim of the qualitative analysis is to examine the coverage through the concepts identified in the theoretical framework. On first place the analysis is focusing on how the state of democracy is represented in the articles. The results will imply how the coverage presents the

reality of the region in terms of political and economic development, which are the topics most highly related to public support for EU enlargement (Maier, Rittberger, 2008, p. 261).

Regarding Petrovic`s discussion on the EU political discourse, the analysis is also examining if the metaphors of EU as a “family, road and future” are present in the coverage and how they are applied to the region. Furthermore, it will imply if the articles contain the notions of “Balkanism”, as defined by Todorova, and more specifically those of violence, instability and unpredictability. Patterns of explicit differentiation between the Western Balkans and Europe are also included as object of examination. The evaluation of the metaphors and characterizations in the coverage is valuable because it would indicate if there is a presence of rhetoric, referring the region as socially and politically distant from the European community.

The analysis is based on 20 articles, which are all gathered from the second part of the data sample, in order to examine the most current representation of the region. The number of the analyzed articles is limited because of time constrains and low levels of coverage on the region in the outlet. However, the results can identify certain patterns and tendencies worth consideration. The article selection is based on the regional scope of their coverage and the presence of more explicit discourse.

3.2.1 Representation of state of democracy

The first part of the qualitative analysis discusses the coverage that reports on the internal political affairs of the countries. Its aim is to identify how the region is represented in foreign media in terms of levels of democracy and domestic affairs.

As the content analysis identifies, the most covered countries are Serbia and Croatia, which are defined as “the two countries that matter most in the region” because “if the big two make progress, the effect will be positive for all” (The Economist, Dec 30th 2009). Both of the countries are mostly discussed in the context of their European integration and their current progress in reform implementation (The Economist, Dec 20th 2009; Jan 14th 2010; Oct 28th 2010; Nov 25th 2010; Jun 2nd 2011, Jun 16th 2011, Oct 15th 2011; Dec 3rd 2011). As the titles of the articles suggest, the most discussed issue is high-level corruption. In one of the articles it is implied that unlike past periods when the political agenda was resolving around ethnic conflicts and nationalistic stirrings, the current political discussion is mostly focused on fighting against corruption: “Today anti-corruption is the new nationalism and everyone outdoes everyone else with promises to clean up the country. Organized crime, corruption and a judiciary buried under a backlog of thousands of cases are only the most urgent tasks” (The economist, Dec 30th 2009). It is also stated that the voters` agenda is also “less nationalistic and more focused on the condition of the economy and the levels of employment” (The Economist, Jun 2nd 2011). Regarding the efficiency with which the countries are dealing with the issue, it is inferred that “In the Balkans progress tends to be painfully slow. But is progress all the same” (The economist, Dec 30th 2009). Corruption is also present in the coverage of Kosovo with the difference that officials are not defined as efficient in fighting it. The government is referred to as “a joint criminal enterprise” and “under unprecedented foreign attack for tolerating high-level corruption” (The Economist, Mar 18th 2010).

The topic of organized crime is defined to be a “common image problem for the Western Balkans” (The Economist, Jun 24th 2010). In the case of Serbia and Croatia, it is discussed in the context of shared responsibility and regional cooperation: “The western Balkans suffer from an

image problem when it comes to organized crime. Yet some countries are starting to make efforts to take on the criminals, and to work together in doing so” (The Economist, Jun 24th 2010). It is implied that the crime organizations operating in the two countries are the same and it is not suggested that they are linked to government officials which is not the case with other countries of the region.

The coverage of Kosovo is dominated by discussion on the involvement of current high rank government officials with past illegal traffic activities, guerrilla groups and the active criminal organizations (The Economist, Jun 10th 2010; Dec 16th 2010; Jun 27th 2011; Mar 3rd 2011). One of the articles cites foreign sources claiming that Hashim Thaci, the president of Kosovo “was one of the biggest fish in organized crime in the region.” (The Economist, Jan 27th 2011). Thaci is also referred to as “guerrilla commander” involved in drug smuggling, organ trafficking and murder (The Economist, Dec 16th 2010; Jan 27th 2011).

In the case of Albania, the rhetoric is similar and more generalized. The discussion resolves more around the political environment of the country rather than the political actors. An article titled “Albania`s political deadlock” directly refers to the level of democracy in the country by contrasting it with the “European” standards: “Albania has applied for EU candidacy. But the EU requires applicants to be well-functioning democracies” (The Economist, Jun 10th 2010). Another article commenting on the most recent elections states: “There has been no normal politics in Albania since a general election in June 2009, when Mr Rama accused Mr Berisha of fraud” (The Economist, Mar 3rd 2011). Since election processes are one of the most significant factors measuring quality of democracy, statements like this imply low levels of democratic governance.

The coverage of Bosnia, stresses on inefficient governance and lack of political effort for reform: “Bosnia has been virtually ungovernable since a set of modest constitutional changes failed to pass in 2006. Milorad Dodik, president of the Serb-dominated bid, the Republika Srpska, openly calls for Bosnia`s dissolution” (The Economist, Apr 14th 2011). The article implies that foreign involvement in the governance process is highly needed, since otherwise “Bosnia risked break-up, and even fresh conflict” (The Economist, Apr 14th 2011).

As the excerpted quotes imply, in the coverage the democratization process appears to vary across the Western Balkans. The improvement of democracy is often identified with the “progress” towards EU integration. In that context, in the coverage the region appears to be divided into two parts with the first “progressing” towards the EU and the second being in a “deadlock”. This distinction is explicitly illustrated in one of the articles making an overview on the development progress of the region. On one side there are Serbia which “has done enough to merit candidate status subject to “significant progress” in the Kosovo talks”, Montenegro which is rewarded with a recommendation that the EU set a date for accession talks to begin” and Croatia which “likewise gets a good report, but it had already been cleared to join in 2013” (The Economist, Oct 15th 2011). However, “that is where the good news ends” since “for Kosovo, Albania, Bosnia and Macedonia the joke is that they are getting not progress but stagnation reports”. It is worth noting how in that context the image of the EU appears as a model of “stable” and “sustainable” democracy which drives the progress of the region. The title of the article is “The Balkans and Europe: The pull of Brussels” and the last paragraphs imply that for the candidate states meeting the requirements of the EU is a “textbook for modernization” and that “for the Western Balkans the transition from years of disintegration and war never seems to end. But the pull of Brussels remains strong.” (The Economist, Oct 15th 2011).

What appears as a trend in the studied sample, is that in terms of levels of democracy and stability of institutions Serbia and Croatia are presented as the leaders of the region. Despite having considerable issues with high-rank corruption and organized crime, the countries are presented as actively making efforts for reforms and “slowly” improving their levels of democracy. As the coverage implies the two regional leaders are “cooperating” and getting “less nationalistic”, “more focused on the condition of the economy and levels of employment” and are “slowly” progressing towards their accession. In contrast, on the other side of the democratic spectrum, there are Kosovo, Albania and Bosnia which “tolerate high-level corruption” and risk a “break up” if the international community does not intervene. Generally the coverage in the sample presents the region as slowly recovering from the conflicts in the 1990s and struggling for EU accession. It appears as politically divided in two areas, the first of which is making a tangible progress towards EU membership and the second still not initiating its actual integration process because of its inability to overcome particular domestic issues.

Considering the topics that were not identified in this part of the analysis, it should be mentioned that issues of immigration were not discussed in none of the articles from the entire sample. This is worth noting because a discussion on immigration in the context of the Western Balkans would infer that in the media discourse the EU accession of the region is perceived as a threat rather than as an opportunity. As an example for this we can refer to the case of Bulgaria and Romania, whose accession in 2007 was discussed in foreign media mostly in the context of the “waves” of migration within the EU that they will cause (Mutner, 2008, p.38). Therefore, the studied coverage suggests that the Western Balkans has considerable internal issues, but does not present them as a potential threat to the integrity of the EU.

Due to the small size of the sample, it cannot be inferred if the Western Balkans is positively or negatively represented in the analyzed articles. The fact that the thematization of the levels of democracy varies for the different countries, suggests that there is a lack of regional bias in the coverage. However, it has to be considered that the general discourse is rather similar for the entire region, which is going to be elaborated in the following section. What is common for all the countries is that their political development is discussed in the context of their EU integration and varies according to their individual progress. A more systematic study can identify if this rhetoric is persistent in the coverage and consequently evaluate its implications on the public opinion in the EU.

3.2.1 Usage of metaphors and patterns of “othering”

Apart from the topics discussed in the articles, the analysis also examines the usage of the metaphors identified by Petrovic and the presence of notions of “Balkanism” and European supremacy, as defined by Todorova. The metaphors were identified not only by the exact words denoting them but also by the context of the text e.g. a reference to Serbia as a “car” is considered as an instance of the metaphor of the “road”. Besides not so strongly related to public opinion, the presence of a specific rhetoric will identify some aspects of the foreign political and media discourse, which are worth a consideration regarding the “mental” integration of the Western Balkans.

The metaphors that were identified in the coverage are the ones of EU as an end of a path and as the future. The two associations were used both separately and together:

Only a few months ago a deep gloom hung over the Balkans. Both Croatia and Serbia had only been stopped in their separate tracks towards the European Union. (The Economist, Dec 30th 2009)

Yet in the end talks will have to take place. Without them Serbs and Albanians will remain like two men handcuffed to one another to take the road to Brussels and unable to break free from the past. (The Economist, Oct 28th 2010)

The quotes are extracted from articles discussing the economic condition of Croatia and Serbia, and on their foreign relations with the countries from the region. The first one is used as an introductory sentence and the second as a conclusion. What can be inferred from those statements is that the countries from region are presented as each “traveling” on its separate track. However, some of the tracks are interfering in some places, which appear to be problematic. The second article comments on the mutual hostilities between Serbia and Kosovo. In that context, the usage “handcuffed” underlines that the two states are forced to cooperate in order to progress on their path towards the goal that is EU membership and they would not do so in the absence of common incentive. Thus, the EU appears as an outside factor that facilitates the cooperation in the region and prevents the emergence of new conflicts.

It is also explicitly implied that despite the EU enlargement agenda, the achievement of the goal is primarily dependent on the national leaders in the region and their efficiency in initiating the required reforms. An article titled “Kosovo`s future: Organs of state” infers that:

The road to Europe is bumpy for Thaci.....A successful referendum on Kosovo`s European future was how Hashim Thaci, the prime minister, described Kosovo`s general election on December 12th, its first since independence in 2008. Mr Thaci`s Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) claims to have won the election, with 33.5% of the vote. But the news since the polls closed has been so bad that this future cannot be taken for granted.....allegations of fraud, organ-harvesting and drug-trafficking will hamper any government`s attempts to set Kosovo on the path towards the European Union. (The Economist, Dec 16th 2010)

The article discusses the internal affairs of Kosovo and the challenges that its political elites face. The metaphor of the “path” is used to illustrate the obstacles that the country has to overcome. In that case, the „path” denotes the fraud and criminal practices that has to be eliminated in order for Kosovo to get out of its political „deadlock”. Besides the quoted excerpt, expressions such as „widespread fraud”, „drug smuggling and murder” and „industrial-scale cheating” are also used in the article. As implied in the first part of the qualitative analysis, unlike Serbia and Croatia which are „on their path”, the coverage of Kosovo defines the country more as preparing to take its „path” to its European future.

An article titled „The Balkans and Europe: new obstacles on the Balkan route towards Brussels”, discusses the overall progress of region implying that „in the western Balkans it is one step forwards, two steps back”(The Economist, 16th Jun 2011). While it is clear that the way forward is leading towards EU accession, but it is also worth noting how the way back is defined. An article from the sample titled “Serbia and Turkey: past and present intervene in Serbia in unexpected ways”, presents a more explicit discussion on how the region is positioned in the rhetoric of the magazine:

JANUS-faced Serbia is looking to past and future. On July 11th Boris Tadic, its president, paid homage to some 8,000 Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) men and boys murdered at Srebrenica when the town fell to Bosnian Serb forces 15 years ago. Meanwhile, in Novi Sad in northern Serbia, revellers from across Europe were enjoying the tenth annual Exit music festival.....

.....Ironically, Turkey now appears to be Serbia’s new best friend. After addressing the ceremony at Srebrenica, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish prime minister, visited Belgrade. A series of agreements were made between the two countries, including the abolition of visas. A free-trade deal will come into force in September.....

.....Serbia's main strategic goal remains EU membership, says Mr Milosavljevic, but if this begins to look unattainable his country will further intensify relations with Russia, China and Turkey. In two years it will be a century since the Turks were finally ejected from the Balkans after more than 500 years. There is, it seems, never an exit from the strange ways of history. (*The Economist*, Jun 15th 2010)

The discussion identifies that the “journey” of the Western Balkans takes place between two spheres of influence. Although not directly expressed, the metaphor of the “future” is used to illustrate where actually the “future” and “the past” of the Western Balkans are. The rhetoric implies that the road ahead to the future leads to the European Union, while the past behind is denoted by the violent ethnic conflicts and further back to the ottoman influence in the region. The identification of Europe with the future and Turkey with the violent past, demonstrates some notions identified by Todorova and Said. The cited paragraphs represent the concepts of “Orientalism” implying that in the western political discourse the notion of Europe corresponds to progress and civilization while the notion of the Eastern powers is related with backwardness and violence.

Another article titled “The Balkans after Mladic: Slowly towards Europe” discusses the arrest of the convicted general and the implications it holds for the entire region, defined as the “Mladic Effect”. After reporting on the event, the article provides an overview on the political status of the region:

EU officials like to talk of a regatta, with each western Balkan country sailing elegantly in after completing its accession process. In reality the former Yugoslavs and Albania are more like old cars, juddering forward, breaking down and sometimes spluttering backwards. To varying degrees all have similar problems that will hold up their membership. These include organised crime, corruption, party cronyism and a media hobbled by political and commercial interests.....

.....Bosnia has spent five years moving backwards. It held an election last October but still has no government. A crisis with Republika Srpska, the Serb bit of the country, was recently averted. The Bosnian Croats complain that they are

being marginalised by Bosniaks. But if both Serbia and Croatia move towards the EU, Bosnia will surely take notice. Any new conflict would be a disaster all around. No leader in Belgrade or Zagreb could allow his Bosnian cousins to derail their own future. (The Economist, Jun 16th 2011)

The analogy with a regatta and the old cars is another example how the metaphor of the “road” is used. The first paragraph illustrates Petrović’s notion of how non member states are often associated with separate vehicles on their way to accession. Thus, the text illustrates how the different countries are positioned on their “road” to the EU. It is worth noting how failure of accession is described as “derailment” from the EU membership, which is presented as the only possible future.

The road metaphor is used in another article where it is denoted by the comparison of Croatia with a van that leads the other countries in “procession” towards the EU. This time it is used to describe a higher interaction between the different vehicles:

Serbia has averted the prospect of its march to Europe being blocked just when its neighbour, Croatia, is preparing to become the 28th member of the union (it should end its negotiations by early July, and could join in 2013).

Until a few days ago Croatia looked like the tail of the procession of ex-communist countries joining the EU. Turkey’s talks have almost ground to a halt, and the western Balkans seemed hopelessly stuck in the past. With the arrest of Mr Mladic, though, Croatia may yet become the van of a new parade of Balkan members. For Stefan Füle, the EU’s enlargement commissioner, the Mladic arrest could be the “spark” that revives the region. (The Economist, Jun 2nd 2011)

Unlike the other articles in the sample, this one was situated in the „Charlemagne” section of the magazine, which discusses issues of Europe. By commenting on the capture of Mladic, the text introduces the topic of the integration of the region and its implications for the EU. The event is discussed as a „leap towards integration with Europe” and overcoming of a major issue from the past. In a sense the coverage presents the country’s journey to accession as a struggle with its

past, which is implied by the useage of analogies such as “march” and a “procession” suggesting a military discipline in the movement towards the goal. In the context of the general integration of the EU, the text infers that “The Balkans, said Winston Churchil, ‘produce more history than they can consume’. They may also produce more history than the EU can digest” (*The Economist, Jun 2nd 2011*). Thus, the rhetoric of the article implies that the accession of the region can actually be considered as a potential threat to its integrity. Giving Bulgaria, Romania and Cyprus as examples of member states that were “prematurely” accepted, the text suggests that the EU should be cautious about further enlargement: “if mishandled, Balkan accession could yet bring more Cypruses, Romanians and Bulgarians rolled into one” (*The Economist, Jun 2nd 2011*). Despite not identified in the thematic analysis, this rhetoric implicitly infers that there are existing considerations about the „problems” that the Western Balkans can cause within the EU.

Besides the use of metaphors, the rhetoric of the coverage also contains some instances of differentiation between the “developed” Europe and the candidate members who need to be “westernized” and detach from their “Ottoman” legacy”:

Caution is in order. The EU has so far made the most progress with the easier cases. Slovenia (an EU member since 2004) and Croatia are the most westernised bits of the former Yugoslavia. Enlargement is effective only if local leaders, like Mr Tadic, are predisposed to integration.

Balkan countries struggle with many handicaps.....they must contend with an ethnic patchwork in which peoples and borders can never align, and a legacy of atavistic bloodshed dating to the break-up of the Ottoman empire. (The Economist, Jun 2nd 2011)

The use of the word “atavistic” is worth a brief discussion. The term originates from biology and is defined as unexpected reappearance of primitive traits in organisms. As used in the cited paragraph it indicates that the conflicts in the Western Balkans are regarded as part of its basic

and primitive stages of evolution when it belonged to the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore the region needs to be “westernized” in order to achieve social progress. This juxtaposition between the democratic “Europe” and the “primitive” Ottoman Empire can be regarded as an example of the concepts of “Orientalism” as defined by Edward Said. Furthermore, it implies that the evolution of the Balkans originates from its “Ottoman” legacy and progresses towards the “civilized Europe”, which is its ultimate phase of development.

Notions like these appear in other parts of the coverage as well. An article reporting on an election fraud titled “Albania`s political deadlock: dancing but not moving” states:

The invitation to Au Crocodile (The European Union) began with some boilerplate about the spirit of compromise being the European way of doing things. But then the European parliamentarians came brutally to the point. Albania has applied for EU candidacy. But the EU requires applicants to be well-functioning democracies. (The Economist, Jun 10th 2010)

In the context of the article, the paragraph underlines the difference between the “democratic and compromising” Europe and Albania which is unable to change and deal with its fraud practices putting the country in “political deadlock”.

The significance of the European Union for the progress of the Western Balkans is further implied in other part of the studied article sample:

Ten years after the fall of Slobodan Milosevic, the Serbian leader who plunged the Balkans into bloodshed in the 1990s, it is desperate to show the world that it is a normal, law-abiding European country tolerant of its minorities.

The answer is that outsiders are still needed to push Serbs, Bosnians and Kosovo Albanians into sorting out their many problems. Cajoling agreements out of Balkan leaders is necessary, says one diplomatic source, to avoid sleepwalking into new wars in a few years' time. (The Economist, 2010 14th 2010)

The differentiation expressed here is between the “normal” European Countries which are tolerant of their minorities and the “Balkan” leaders who need to be supervised in order not to be “sleepwalk” into violent conflicts. Such categorizations exemplify Todorova` s notions about “Imagining the Balkans” (1997).

Referring back to Kaplan`s book discussed in section 1.2, it is worth noting how the region is still associated with major global events: “June 2014 will mark the centenary of the assassination in Sarajevo that led to the first world war. With luck it will be commemorated in a region that has become quiet again”(The Economist, Jun 2nd 2011). Regarding the notions of “Balkanism” it is relevant to note how the perception of The Balkans as the place where World War I started is reproduced from the book issued almost two decades ago to the contemporary media discourse.

The results of the second part of the qualitative analysis identify some aspects of the rhetoric in the coverage that are valuable for the purposes of the study. The usage of the EU Metaphors as defined by Petrovic, imply that the Western Balkans is generally perceived as not yet part of the European “family”. All the countries are regarded as being in their different stages of their “journey” towards their EU accession. Another differentiation that is present in the coverage is the one between the future and the past. The future of the Western Balkans appears firmly as accession into the European Union, which is needed for the economic and political stability of the region. The present of the countries is associated with their current position on their “path” towards the EU and their past is associated with the influence of the Ottoman Empire, which resembles the western discourse as defined by the concept of “Orientalism”. More generally, the analysis reveals that the discursive patterns defined by the concepts of “Orientalism” and “Balkanism” are present in the western media discourse.

Conclusion

The main aim of the study was to answer the question: how is the image of the Western Balkans constructed in European political discourse, and more specifically is it presented as originally belonging to Europe or as a region that is socially distant and culturally from it? The study is relevant in the context of the EU integration of the region because an assessment of the European discourse on the Western Balkans would identify how it is perceived by the EU community and what are the contexts within it is usually discussed. The research is based on media analysis, which was defined to be the most relevant way for analyzing political rhetoric. In order to obtain the needed results the content of the article sample was analyzed through both quantitative and qualitative methods.

The design, the justification and the logic of the analysis are based on the theoretical framework provided in chapter 1. Firstly, it discusses the meaning of national identity and how it is reproduced in mass media. The reviewed theories of Benedict Anderson, Michael Billig and Sabina Mihelj provided an explanation of why it is relevant to analyze media content for the study of how collective identities are constructed in public discourses. The second part of the theoretical framework provided a historical background of the regional perceptions within Europe. It traces how they have evolved since the enlightenment and how European nations perceive the world east of the continent. The key theories that were applied in the study were the ones of “Orientalism” and “Balkanism” as identified by Edward Said and Maria Todorova. Their concepts of how European societies perceive the Orient and the Balkans, were used for the qualitative part of the analysis. The third part of the theoretical framework discusses the relation between mass media, public opinion and support for EU enlargement. It is based on quantitative

research and indicates that how the European nations perceive each other and candidate member states has an effect on the EU integration and enlargement processes. This notion is valuable for the study because it reveals how the representation of the Western Balkans in the European political discourse is related to its European integration. The last part of the theoretical chapter discusses Tanja Petrovic`s concepts of the political rhetoric of the European Union. She identifies the key metaphors through which the EU is depicted in the public rhetoric. Her analysis identifies how the metaphors of EU as a family, as a house, as a road and as a future are generally used and how they are typically applied to the case of the Western Balkans. Therefore, Petrovic`s concepts provided the framework through which the content of the article sample was analyzed.

The general answer of the research question is that the Western Balkans is represented in the European political discourse, as a region that is originally not belonging to Europe and has to be reformed in order to be accepted in the European community. The thematic analysis identified that the coverage of the region has changed since the period of armed conflicts that marked the disintegration of the former federation. Firstly, there is notable shift in the terminology applied to the region. Names such as “Yugoslavia” and “Ex-Yugoslavia” are not used in the article sample from 2010 and 2011. Instead, the term “Western Balkans” is widely applied in the two years. This observation is significant for the study because it implies that the region is often discussed in the context of its European integration. In the same time it also infers that it is perceived as a political entity that needs to be changed according to the European standards in order to be considered as part of the community. The content and the descriptive part of the analysis revealed that in the second time period of examination, the region is less associated with crime violence and nationalistic affiliations and increasingly with its relations with the European

Union. However, the discussion in the articles focuses mainly on the domestic issues of the region, which are mostly related with high-rank corruption, organized crime and slow reform implementation. The analysis did not identify a deliberative emphasis on certain issues, and therefore no directional bias was established. Despite that the coverage on the Western Balkans decreased in the years of 2010 and 2011 it cannot be implied that the region is neglected by the outlet. It appears in every third issue, which is a significant frequency for a magazine with a global readership and areas of coverage ranging from politics to finance and culture.

The rhetoric of the coverage was evaluated by the qualitative part of the study. The analysis identified the appearance of metaphors and evaluated their usage. The most frequently used metaphors were the ones of EU as a path and as a future. In that context the analogy with a path and a journey was often applied to illustrate the different stage of the countries` progress on their EU integration. As implied by Petrovich, the accession was defined as the “end of the road” and the political goal that was required in order for the region to be “integrated” by the European Union. The usage of the future metaphor was mostly used in order to infer how the Western Balkans is positioned in terms of international sphere of influence. The past of the region was often identified with its Ottoman legacy and its current relations with Turkey, while the future was denoted by the European Union and the present by the road that leads to accession. Therefore, the results of the analysis imply that currently the Western Balkans is not “mentally” integrated within the European community but is expected to pursue its only possible future.

Considering the lack of directional bias and the distribution of the topics discussed in the articles, it cannot be concluded that the coverage may have a particular effect on the opinions of the EU citizens. However, the rhetoric of the outlet suggests that despite being alien to the values

of the European community, it can be integrated through reform and regulation conducted in accordance with the EU.

Regarding the interpretation of the presented results, the limitations of the study should also be taken into account. On first place, due to the time limit and language constrains the sample cannot be regarded as highly representative of the European public discourse. A more representative data sample has to consist of coverage issued in different countries of the EU and amounting to a higher number of articles. Secondly, the research design can be further improved in order to provide more accurate results. For the quantitative part, a statistical analysis on the coded data can better illustrate the relationship between how the coverage is related to the political dynamics of the region. The qualitative examination can be further elaborated by a more detailed analysis on the different frames used in the coverage. Furthermore, a discourse analysis can be applied for the evaluation of particular meanings identified in the coverage. Despite its shortcomings, the study indentifies some aspects of the representation of the Western Balkans that can be further elaborated and contribute to the better understanding of the European Political Discourse.

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