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The long-journeying poor cousin before the shut EU door: How the Western Balkans are metaphorically conceptualised in the context of the EU integrations

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Summary: In this paper we critically analyse how the identity of the Western Balkans (WB) has been metaphorically conceptualised in the latest stages of the EU integration processes in a corpus of internet news articles recently posted in Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Hercegovina. Unlike the accession processes of the former membership candidates from Europe, the WB's integration has proven to be a very long one, hindered by many, perhaps insurmountable obstacles and subject to a great deal of uncertainty regarding its final outcome. Although this process is predominantly conceptualised through the already established metaphors employed to depict such processes of the former member candidates (journey, house, circles/rings, family, etc.), their evaluative content is different, given that the roles and the positions of the EU and the WB are starkly asymmetrical, i.e. that the WB is deeply marginalised. We identified some new metaphors that this specific political situation has engendered, also reflecting the said asymmetry – the WB is perceived as a colony, self-imprisoned state, Trojan horse, victim of blackmail, immature person, experimenting ground and waste-collector for immigrants. These metaphors construct an image of the WB as that of the very inferior Other.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor, scenario, news article, marginalisation, the EU, the Western Balkans, the Other

1 Introduction

The present paper presents how the Western Balkans (WB) has been metaphorically conceptualised in the latest stages of its EU accession processes in the online

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media in Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Hercegovina. The integration process of these countries has proved to be quite different from that of the former member candidates. Namely, the accession process of the other European countries took 5–10 years on average and was always crowned with new memberships, the last being Croatia's in 2012. On the other hand, despite having aspired to join the EU for almost two decades, the remaining countries of the WB are still far from entering the EU and the realistic prospect of membership is actually nowhere in sight. As no parallels can be found in the way this negotiation process is turning out to be with those from the past (with the exception of Turkey), the conceptualisation of the integration processes has shifted in a different direction. In addition, the wars of the 1990s and the unenviable economic situation, *inter alia*, have deeply affected the construction of the Balkans' identity in the EU-WB relations. This unique situation has engendered a re-construction of the Western Balkans' identity through the already existing metaphors (those used to conceptualise the EU-integrations of the former membership candidates), alongside some novel ones.

2 Theoretical background

In the theoretical section of the paper, we briefly discuss the conceptual metaphor theory and the method of critical metaphor analysis, and provide a short overview of the previous studies on the metaphors used to represent the WB in relation to the EU.

2.1 Conceptual metaphor

The following linguistic realisations: *he's come far; her life is going nowhere; as I go through life...; they have gone separate ways*, have all been derived from a common conceptual metaphor – LIFE AS A JOURNEY, which seems to be present in many languages. The analogy present in the wording of the metaphor suggests that *life* is thought of as a *journey*, which also implies that people are travellers, destination points are the purposes that travellers have set out to achieve, difficulties in life are the hardships encountered during the travels, choices to be made in life are the crossroads, etc. To put it differently, the domain JOURNEY (called the *source domain*) is mapped onto the domain of LIFE (called the *target domain*), whereas the above-mentioned individual analogies are called *mappings*, some of which are largely stable in thought and language. Conceptual metaphors belong to the realm of thought, but are expressed through various concrete linguistic realisations.

Why is metaphor important? In their seminal book *Metaphors we Live by*, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that thinking is basically metaphorical in its very essence; metaphor facilitates the understanding of the world as a cognitive process which is reflected in linguistic expressions (Lakoff 1987; Kövecses 2005). According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphor is all-pervasive, subconscious and used automatically, to many discourse purposes.

2.2 Critical discourse approaches to conceptual metaphor

The source domain of metaphors is often physical, although not always; conceptual knowledge is also grounded in the social world and metaphor selection may reflect a certain ideology (Charteris-Black 2004: 247). And not only reflect – within Critical Discourse Analysis it is held “that linguistic representation in discourse can determine, to some extent, conceptual representation” (Hart 2008: 94). Unlike Lakoff and Johnson (1980), who argue that metaphor is only used automatically and selected subconsciously, Charteris-Black (2004) talks of *choosing* metaphors for particular communication goals and analyses concrete examples of linguistic realisations of conceptual metaphors as they arise in discourse. Although a majority of metaphors appear to be used automatically, unconsciously and conventionally, metaphor is sometimes obviously used deliberately, Steen argues (2008). How metaphors reflect ideology and how some of them are used deliberately, are certainly topics worth investigating, which the earliest cognitive semantic methods are insufficient to account for.

We theoretically couch this study in the discourse approach to metaphor as theorised and studied in Andreas Musolff’s works (2004, 2006, 2010, 2016). It is one of the recent critical discourse approaches to metaphor. Let us briefly illustrate what critical approaches to metaphor do. For instance, in his analysis of the British debates on immigration, Musolff (2015) finds the following metaphorical representations of the immigrants: parasites, leeches, bloodsuckers. Cognitive semantics would stop at just identifying the metaphor and its mappings (IMMIGRANTS ARE PARASITES, for instance). However, taking into account the discourse in which the metaphor was linguistically realised (the immigration discourse), explaining the choice of the metaphor would be necessary (why parasites, instead of many other possible metaphors?), so as to provide a full interpretation that such a metaphor warrants, bearing in mind its potential to become an entrenched metaphorical mapping in the minds of some who are exposed to it. This approach, thus, integrates corpus linguistics (as analysts work with authentic corpora), pragmatics (as it is important to understand how specific context and co-text contribute to meaning), critical discourse analysis (which provides a platform for ex-

posing social inequality and abuse of power and how these are enacted in discourse) and cognitive linguistics (which offers the basic framework for analysing conceptual metaphor). Conceptual metaphors are extrapolated from concrete linguistic metaphorical expressions and critically evaluated. We use this theoretical and methodological framework for our analysis of the conceptual metaphors depicting the WB in the context of its EU accession process.

Musolff (2016: 30) introduces the notion of a “scenario” as a recurring narrative-evaluative pattern or mini-narrative, i.e. a set of assumptions about the prototypical elements of a concept (participants, story lines and default outcomes), as well as ethical evaluations of these elements. For instance, in his study of the metaphors drawing from the source domain of FAMILY in the EU, he identifies three scenarios: a parent-child relationship, relating to the themes of solidarity and hierarchy-authority; a married life of the EU couple; and a love/marriage relationship (and problems). This scenario-oriented approach to metaphor will be especially useful for our study.

2.3 Conceptualisation of the EU and the WB-EU relations

In his investigation of the EUROMETA corpus, containing more than 2,000 texts from German and British newspapers (published between 1989 and 2001), Musolff (2004) identified the following source domains: NATURE-WEATHER, LOVE-MARRIAGE-FAMILY, WAR-FORTRESS-BATTLE, GROUP-CLUB-CLASS, GAME-SPORTS, PERFORMANCE-SHOW, WAY-MOVEMENT-SPEED, TECHNOLOGY-BUILDING, GEOMETRY-GEOGRAPHY, SCHOOL-DISCIPLINE, LIFE-HEALTH-STRENGTH. Silaški and Đurović (2014a: 48) note that in Serbian the same metaphors and frames are used as those in English, but that they often convey “different evaluative content and rhetorical impact”. Likewise, studying Croatia’s media discourse, Šarić (2005) found that the typical metaphorical representation of the EU accession process was that of a *journey*, where the candidates were thought of as travellers, i.e. persons, and the path model blended with the personification model. The *journey* domain was also the largest source of metaphorical mappings in British and German debates, followed by domains such as *geometry*, *building*, *club*, *school*, *economy*, *life*, *health*, *game*, *war*, etc. (Musolff 2004). The utilisation of the said domains in the Balkan’s public discourse has been noted by a number of scholars (Šarić 2005; Škara 2009; Petrović 2009, 2010; Đurović & Silaški 2014a, 2014b; Werkmann & Buljan 2013; Kapranov 2016; Barčot 2016).

Werkmann and Buljan’s study (2013) of Croatia’s conceptualisation in its EU accession process, which is a diachronic study covering 12 years, points to the evolution of these metaphors over time, i.e. the fact that different source domains

were employed in different periods (e.g. in the earlier stages – race and co-movement, and in the later stages – school/discipline and physical conflict) and that, in the case of those source domains which remained the same, different “categories rose to prominence” over time (e.g. while the *journey* source domain was constant, in the later stages it was depicted as *slow*).

In addition, many authors dealing with the conceptualisation of Balkan countries in their relations with the EU point to an asymmetry in the way power is distributed between the two sides, as well as to a negative representation of the other coupled with a positive self-representation – for instance, Silaški and Đurović (2014a) analyze the *teacher-student* metaphor, characterising the relations between the EU and Serbia as of late, which is intrinsically asymmetrical. Petrović (2009: 41) notes that the metaphors representing the WB countries as immature “reproduce and legitimise a paternalistic attitude”, where children are thought of as irrational and unaccountable for their behaviour, needing assistance and supervision.

A group of anthropologists have even concluded that the term *Balkan* itself can be deemed as a metaphor. Thus, the edited volume *Balkan as a metaphor* (Bjelić & Savić 2003) studies the concepts that the word *Balkan* has come to be commonly associated with. A neutral geographical toponym has somehow grown into a civilisational offence, stigmatised as “tribal, backward, primitive and barbaric, i.e. the misfortunate Other” (Savić 2003: 9) or, perhaps, the “internal other” or “semi-other” of Europe (Petrović 2009: 21). The very name does not invoke Europe and the member candidates first have to prove their “Europeanness”, Petrović concludes (2009: 25). The new term, the Western Balkans, does not connect the countries it refers to in any way other than their not being in the EU (geographically, it would include Croatia and Slovenia, but in the public discourse it does not), which makes it a political term actually (2009: 33).

3 Data and method

The data analysed in this study encompass 137 articles published in 2018 on 31 Serbian, Bosnian and Montenegrin online news portals, totalling 94,671 words. The author used a specialised search engine covering the regional newspaper portals – *Naslovi.net* – to find the potential articles for the corpus using the “EU” as the search criterion and read all the articles containing it over the course of a whole year (2018). The articles which the author intuitively determined as containing instantiations of conceptual metaphors framing the EU-integration process were later tested for metaphoricity using the MIPVU procedure (Steen et al. 2010). The sources include the following online news portals: *B92*, *BBC Serbian*,

Beta, Bijeljina Online, Blic (including the editions for Bosnia and for Montenegro), *Brotnjo, CDM, Dan, Danas, Dnevni Avaz, DW, Fokus, Fonet, FOS Media, Indeks, Informer, Kurir, Mondo, N1, Nova ekonomija, Novi Magazin, Novosti, Pobjeda, Politika, Portal analitika, Radio Slobodna Evropa, RTS, Sputnik, VOA* and *Vijesti*. Some of these are read in all the three countries or have somewhat different editions for the three countries which use the same articles, typically slightly changed, and most of them take articles from each other, sometimes naming the source but often not doing so. Therefore, it would require a lot of research, which is outside the scope of this study, to determine the original source, i.e. the country of origin of each of the articles from the corpus. However, it can be said with certainty that the corpus covers most of the regional portals and that it is sufficiently diverse.

The MIPVU procedure (Steen et al. 2010) included determining lexical units, establishing their contextual meanings, comparing their basic meanings to their contextual meanings from the articles and, in the case that those two contrasted, marking such lexical units as metaphorical. Conceptual metaphors were extrapolated from the so-obtained linguistic metaphors, i.e. concrete metaphorical expressions, via Steen's model (1999) and relying on our intuition (as some of the steps of the model are inevitably dependent on the researcher's intuition [Deignan 2016]). In order to reduce the necessity of relying on intuition, we took into account only those conceptual metaphors with at least five concrete linguistic realisations, so as to exclude one-shot metaphors (Lakoff 1987), for which it may be hard to determine their metaphoricity and establish the domains, as little evidence is available. At the same time, we can assume that the metaphors with the largest number of realisations were the most representative of the discourse analysed. Also, in formulating the conceptual metaphors, we heavily relied on the already established conceptual metaphors in the discourse on the EU (mostly relying on Musolff 2004). Therefore, in the final set of the so-obtained conceptual metaphors, the chances of interpreting the metaphorical expressions as different conceptual metaphors were significantly reduced.

We provide some statistical data regarding the number of instantiations of the metaphors utilising certain source domains.

In the analysis, we use a hybrid approach, i.e. a combined corpus and discourse approach (Deignan 2016), as we analyse metaphorical expressions within single extended stretches, so as to account for the context they are found in, by applying the theoretical framework of political metaphor analysis and metaphorical scenarios as propounded by Musolff (2016).

4 Analysis

In the following table, we provide an overview of the source domains used in the metaphors found to conceptualise the WB, featuring at least 5 instantiations. We relied on the source domains found in Musolff (2004) for categorisation of the source domains already established in the literature. The order of the source domains is based on the number of the instantiations of the metaphors using these domains.

Table 1: Overview of source domains used in the metaphors conceptualising the WB

SOURCE DOMAINS	METAPHOR INSTANTIATIONS AND FREQUENCIES	Total no.
WAY/ MOVEMENT/ SPEED	put (56), ići (21), približiti se (18), korak (17), brzina (16), blokirati (15), usporavati (14), ubrzati (14), približavanje (13), zastoj (12), zeleno svjetlo (11), prepreka (11), kočiti (10), usporavanje (9), tempo (6), odmaći (6), krenuti (5), crvena linija (5), dug [put] (5), sporo (4), brzo (4), bliže (4), pokretni cilj (3), ubrzanje (3), kočnica (3), rampa (3), stići (2), kretati se (2), koračić (2), stop (2), voz (2), blizu (2), puzati (2), puževski (2), blokiranje (2), saplirati noge (2), puzeći (1), puž (1), puzanje (1), iskoračiti (1), prečica (1), sustizanje (1), prekretnica (1), postavljanje klipova u točkove (1), kurs (1), brz (1), prebrzo (1) [TRANSLATION: <i>road, go, approach, step, speed, block, slow down, accelerate, approaching, halt, green light, obstacle, brake down, slow down, tempo, move on, set off, red line, long [road], slow, fast, closer, movable goal, acceleration, brake, parking barrier, arrive, move, little step, stop, train, close, crawl, snail-crawling, blocking, trip up, crawl-like, snail, crawling, step out, shortcut, catch up, turning point, putting a spoke in the wheels, course, fast, too fast</i>]	310
BUILDING	ulazak (48), vrata (37), ući (23), dvorište (4), otvoriti [vrata] (4), zatvoriti [vrata] (4), predsoblje (3), odškrinuta [vrata] (1), ulaženje (1), kućni prag (1), temelj (1) [<i>entry, door, enter, yard, open [the door], close [the door], antechamber, kneeling (before the door), ajar, entering, doorstep, foundation</i>]	127
GEOMETRY/ GEOGRAPHY	rupa (15), daleko (11), krug (11), dalje (9), jaz (9), udaljen (4), najdalje (2), periferija (4), ispasti iz vizure (2), prsten (1) [<i>hole, far, circle, farther, gap, away, furthest, periphery, lose from sight, ring</i>]	68

Table 1: (continued)

COLONY	kolonijalni (15), kolonija (11), kolonizator (5), divljaci (3), kolonizatorski (2), naučiti kako se jede viljuškom i nožem (1), urođenik (1) [colonial, colony, coloniser, savages, colonising, teach how to use fork and knife, native]	38
GAME/ SPORTS	igrač (12), igra (7), regata (3), trka (3), karta (3), utakmica (2), igrati (2), smeč (1), poigravati (1) [player, play, regatta, race, card, game, to play, smash, play]	34
PRISON	zarobljena [država] (22), limbo (1) [imprisoned [country], limbo]	23
WAR/ BATTLE	trojanski konj (8), udarac (5), izboriti (3), boriti (1) [Trojan horse, blow, fight out, fight]	17
DEBT	zaslužiti (10), moralna obaveza (2), dug (1), loša savjest zbog ranije učinjenog (1) [deserve, moral obligation, debt, bad conscience for what was done]	14
IMMATURITY	nezreo (9), moći biti zreo do (2), ne biti zreo (1) [immature, be mature until, not be mature]	12
BLACKMAIL	uc(j)enjivati (5), uc(j)ena (5), ucijenjen (1) [blackmail (v), blackmail (n), blackmailed]	11
SCHOOL/ DISCIPLINE	đak (3), domaći zadaci (2), diplomski rad (1), razred (1) [pupil, homework, diploma paper, grade]	7
EXPERIMENT	teren za eksperiment (4), poligon za eksperiment (1), tle za eksperiment (1) [experimenting terrain, experimenting polygon, experimenting grounds]	6
FAMILY	rođak (4), rodbina (1), posesivni roditelj (1) [cousin, family, possessive parent]	6
WASTE COLLECTOR	kanta za đubre (3), deponija (2) [waste basket, landfill]	5
CLUB/ CLASS	drugorazredni (5) [second-class]	5

Our analysis is divided into two sections. We first look at the metaphors already established in the literature for the conceptualisation of the EU-integration processes and concentrate on their specific evaluative content, as well as on how the roles of the EU and the WB are defined and positioned in the media discourse space. In the second part we look at the novel metaphors found.

4.1 Old metaphors, new scenarios

The following source domains belong here: WAY/MOVEMENT/SPEED, BUILDING, GEOMETRY/GEOGRAPHY, GAME/SPORTS, WAR/BATTLE, SCHOOL/DISCIPLINE, FAMILY, CLUB/CLASS. These source domains account for 84.04 % of the source domains used to depict the EU-WB relations in our corpus. The “old” metaphors, therefore, dominate the corpus, which is unsurprising. Bearing in mind that much has been said on these metaphors, we will concentrate on their specific evaluative content in the case of the WB’s integrations, i.e. the role and the position assigned to the WB.

WAY/MOVEMENT/SPEED

When it comes to the journey metaphor, what is novel in the way it is used to depict the current EU-WB relations is that the journey is presented as very slow (sometimes even depicted as *the crawling of a snail*) and full of obstacles to overcome, which are often implied as impassable while the journey itself seems incompletable. The EU does not act as a passive destination point to be reached by the traveller; instead, it is predominantly seen as an active agent and, in fact, often the saboteur of the journey process. At the same time, despite the fact that the act of travelling generally assumes activity, the WB as a traveller is usually presented passively. Thus, a series of the journey metaphors suggest that the travelling vehicle got stopped and that its driver is not the WB:

- 1) Podrška Balkanu za **put** ka EU, Francuska još drži **kočnicu** [Novosti, 17/05/2018]
(*Support to the Balkans for the **road** to the EU, France still holding the **brake***)
- 2) Novosti istražuju, EU Srbiju **koči** planski? [Novosti, 18/06/2018]
(*Novosti investigates: the EU is deliberately **blocking** [literal translation: **braking**] Serbia?*)

In 1 and 2, the EU is braking, which means that the EU is the one operating the vehicle. The WB is seen as a passive passenger driven by the EU, who is actually the real agent. This agency of the EU and the corresponding passivity of the WB is implied in many of the metaphors studied here. A prominent mapping in the metaphor sees the accession-process impediments as the journey-related obstacles. The travellers thus encounter many barriers on their way, conceptualised as ramps, stop signs or red lines, for instance:

- 3) Makronovo **STOP** ZA ZAPADNI BALKAN [*Blic*, 17/04/2018]
(Macron's **STOP** FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS)
- 4) “**Dupla rampa**” iz Evropske unije [*B92*, 23/06/2018]
(A “**double parking barrier**” from the European Union)
- 5) **Crvene linije** za ulazak u EU [*Danas*, 27/05/2018]
(**Red lines** for the entry into the EU)

3 and 4 suggest that the culprit for the blockage is the EU, which is most often the case in the corpus, and so the integration process discourse in the Balkan media is increasingly becoming accusatory. An alternative view of the situation is that the fellow travellers are sabotaging each other, which shifts the blame on them instead:

- 6) EU podržavajući političare i države, koje ne samo da neiskreno sudjeluju u integrativnim procesima, nego “**sapleću noge**” drugim državama Zapadnog Balkana, radi protiv svog vlastitog interesa [...] [*VOA*, 1/02/2018]
(By supporting the politicians and countries, which are not only insincerely taking part in the integration processes, but are also “**tripping up**” other countries of the Western Balkans, the EU is working against its own interests [...])
- 7) [...] u novonastaloj situaciji svaki izgovor za postavljanje **klipova u točkove** proširenja je dobar. [*Vijesti*, 11/06/2018]
([...] in the new situation any excuse for putting a **spoke in the wheels** of expansion is good.)

The WB countries are personified and presented as *dishonest* travellers who are *tripping* each other *up* (6) and sabotaging each other's *wheels* (7).

When it does act as a destination point, the EU again, counter-intuitively, assumes activity. Even if the slow traveller covers some distance over time, the biggest problem might be that the destination point is, in fact, *moving away* (THE EU AS A MOVING DESTINATION POINT):

- 8) “Region nikada nije bio bliži Briselu, formalno gledano. Međutim, ponekad se čini kao **pokretni cilj** koji nam sve više izmiče kako mu se približavamo. Kao da je Zapadni Balkan u današnjim globalnim previranjima suštinski ispao iz vizure EU”, rekao je crnogorski predsjednik Milo Đukanović [...] [*Portal analitika*, 11/12/2018]
(“The region has never been closer to Brussels, formally looking. However, it sometimes seems as a **moving goal**, which escapes us as we approach

it. As if the Western Balkans, in today's global turmoil, has essentially fallen out of the sight of the EU," said the Montenegrin president Milo Đukanović [...])

The traveller is so far away that they have fallen out of sight of the EU, which is presented as an elusive destination point.

The evaluative content of the journey metaphor is defined by an active role of the EU and the passive one of the WB. Thus, the metaphors cluster around three new *scenarios*, in Musolff's (2016) terms: the EU as the saboteur of the WB's integration journey, the WB countries as sabotaging each other in the integration journey, and the EU as a moving destination point.

BUILDING

A very frequent metaphor is that of representing the EU as a container, i.e. a *house*, which member candidates are trying to enter (the containment image schema). The house is predominantly metonymically represented as A DOOR FOR THE HOUSE and the WB is seen as trying to enter it. Namely, the WB is personified and seen as a guest (NATION AS A PERSON), but not a very welcome one. The EU is sometimes opening its door, but often it holds it just a little ajar or leaves it closed before its guest:

- 9) [...] ali da imaju još mnogo toga da urade na rešavanju nagomilanih problema, pre nego što im **vrata** EU budu **odškrinuta**. [*Mondo*, 17/05/2018]
([...] *but they have so much more to do to solve the piled-up problems, before the EU's **door** is left **ajar**.*)
- 10) Ne ostavljajte Srbiju pred **vratima** [*Fonet*, 22/05/2018]
(*Don't leave Serbia at the **door***)

The WB is the *Other*, as the house represents the centre, outside of which the WB finds itself, sometimes even having to openly beg to be let in:

- 11) Ovakve izjave da Crna Gora neće klečati i moliti da se **otvore vrata** EU ne odgovaraju stvarnom stanju i stepenu demokratizacije [...] [*Vijesti*, 27/05/2018]
(*Such statements that Montenegro will not kneel and beg for the EU to **open its door** do not fit the actual condition and level of democratisation [...])*

Therefore, the new scenario couching the cluster of the metaphors above, features the WB as an unwelcome guest at the door of the EU.

GEOMETRY/GEOGRAPHY

Another series of metaphors sees the EU and the WB as physically separate, with the EU in the centre and the WB on the periphery (again, the containment image schema is present). For instance, the EU is likened to the world (THE EU AS THE WORLD), which is to say that the WB, not being part of it, does not belong to the world and is an outsider in the literal sense:

- 12) Jer, ne možemo da kažemo da se u Hrvatskoj **svet** završava pa da onda ponovo počinje u Grčkoj ili Bugarskoj, već moramo voditi računa i o prostoru između tih zemalja. [DW, 6/02/2018]
*(Because we may not say that **the world** ends in Croatia and that it starts again in Greece or Bulgaria, but we must take care of the space between those countries too.)*

In a number of the metaphors, the EU and the WB are indeed both part of the same world, but the world seems to be divided into circles. Thus, the position of a circle indicates its status (the metaphor STATUS IS POSITION). The WB falls far outside the most prestigious, first circle, and is typically seen as belonging to the third one, the lowest in position, aspiring to join the second one:

- 13) On je to rekao komentarišući nedavnu analizu Makrona, koji je Evropu podijelio u tri **kruga** [...] otvara se prostor za interpretaciju o građanima Evrope prvog, drugog i trećeg **kruga** – kazao je Đenero. [...] nije isključeno i da se mi nađemo u tom drugom **prstenu** za pet do sedam godina. [Pobjeda, 13/08/2018]
*(He said this commenting on a recent analysis by Macron, who divided Europe into three **circles** [...] room is opened for interpretations of the citizens of Europe of the first, second and third **circle** – Genero said.[...] it is not excluded that we find ourselves in that second **ring** in five to seven years.)*

The metaphor STATUS IS POSITION is evidenced in a series of metaphor realisations which treat the citizens of the WB as inferior or less important. However, this scenario is not new and has been present not only in the depiction of the former candidates but also to conceptualise the current state of the EU.

A scenario which is specific to the EU-WB relations, around which many of the metaphors from the corpus cluster, is that which sees the WB as an unfitting part of Europe. Thus, on the one hand, the WB is perceived as a geographic hole in the EU. The context in which the metaphors were used foregrounds the WB not only as a missing part, but also as a *black*, *ugly* or *broken* part which ruins the whole:

- 14) [...] ne smemo dozvoliti da u Evropi nastane crna **rupa** koju će drugi popunjavati svojim zamislima. [DW, 6/02/2018]
([...] *we can't allow that a black **hole** be created in Europe, which others will fill according to their plans.*)
- 15) U EU zjapi ružna **rupa** zemalja koje nisu njeni članovi, smatra Krsto Lazarević. [DW, 10/02/2018]
(*An ugly **hole** gaps in the EU, made of the countries who are not its members, Krsto Lazarević finds.*)

On the other hand, sometimes the WB is also perceived as an island in the EU, which is likened to a large body of water (THE EU AS THE OCEAN, THE WB AS AN ISLAND):

- 16) **Ostrvo** u Evropskoj uniji [DW, 9/02/2018]
(*An **island** in the European Union*)

In this metaphor used in a headline, the roles are reversed, as the WB is not a hole but rather the protruding element, but again not fitting into the rest of the whole.

GAME/SPORTS

The process of accessing is often thought of as a game, where both sides, the EU and the WB, are players. There are two scenarios at play in our corpus – one which sees the game or sport match between the EU and the WB as an uneven/asymmetrical one; and a rarer one, which sees it as a double game.

The EU is predominantly presented as the player in total control of the game, which might not be a novel scenario but it is a scenario which marginalises the role of the WB, as evidenced in the tennis *smash* metaphor below:

- 17) Zatim je usledio **smeč** francuskog predsednika Emanuela Makrona u Evropskom parlamentu, rečenicom da neće biti novog proširenja bez reformisane EU. [Blic, 22/04/2018]

*(Then there was a **smash** from the French president Emmanuel Macron in the European Parliament, who said that there would be no new enlargement without the reformed EU.)*

In this scenario, the WB is implied as the player losing the game, who is in the defence mode, which testifies to the asymmetry of the positions.

The scenario of a double, pretence game is present in the following excerpt:

- 18) Stiče se utisak da obe strane **igraju dvostruku igru**. EU se pretvara da zemlje regije mogu da se pridruže – ako ispune kriterijume – a i balkanski lideri se pretvaraju da žele da se učlane i obave svoj deo posla. [Radio Slobodna Evropa, 19/05/2018]

*(The impression is that both sides are **playing a double game**. The EU is pretending that the countries of the region may join – if they fulfil criteria – and the Balkan leaders are pretending that they want to join and do their part of the work.)*

This scenario does not point to marginalisation as is the case with most of the other ones. However, it represents both players in a negative light.

WAR/BATTLE

The EU-WB negotiation process is also presented as a fight or a battle, in which the EU is dealing a blow to the WB, which the WB passively endures without having room for fighting back:

- 19) I politički analitičar Dejan Vuk Stanković smatra da je najnoviji uslov EU Srbiji nizak **udarac** [...] [Kurir, 30/11/2018]

*(The political analyst Dejan Vuk Stanković also thinks that the latest condition which the EU imposed on Serbia is a low **blow** [...])*

- 20) [...] bulgarsko predsedništvo EU bi izbeglo blamažu a proevropske snage u Srbiji i Crnoj Gori najniži **udarac** koji su mogli da dobiju od EU na samitu u Sofiji. [Kurir, 30/11/2018]

*([...] the Bulgarian presidency of the EU would have avoided the embarrassment and the pro-EU forces in Serbia and Montenegro would have avoided the lowest **blow** which they could have received from the EU at the Sofia Summit.)*

The *blow* usually collocates with *low* in the corpus, whereas the agency of the EU is clearly indicated. This scenario which sees the two sides as fighters in an uneven fight is not new, however, it underscores the WB's marginalised position.

One new scenario is that in which WB is seen as a subversive element threatening the EU. An interesting metaphor is that of likening the WB to a Trojan horse of the other world super powers, most notably China. The WB, entering the EU some day could prove to be a deceitful intruder, intending to undermine and destroy the EU from within:

- 21) Han: Kina pravi “**trojanske konje**” od zemalja Zapadnog Balkana [RTS, 27/07/2018]
(*Hahn: China is making “Trojan horses” out of the Western Balkans*)
- 22) Vulin: nismo ničiji **trojanski konj** [Novosti, 28/07/2018]
(*Vulin: We are no one's Trojan horse*)

This metaphor assumes a high moral ground for the EU, whereas the WB is accused of deceitfulness. However, the imminent doom caused by the WB as the subversive element is also implied.

SCHOOL/DISCIPLINE

In the school metaphors, the WB is presented as a slow-progressing student, whereas the EU tacitly assumes the position of a teacher – the WB is often depicted as a bad student:

- 23) Daleko od toga da ćemo biti idealni **đaci** [...] Preći ćemo u sledeći **razred**, ali kao slabiji **đaci**. [Radio Slobodna Evropa, 27/05/2018]
(*We are far from being ideal students [...] We will be admitted into the next grade, but as weaker students.*)
- 24) [...] šest zemalja je daleko od ispunjavanja traženih “**domaćih zadataka**” [DW, 22/05/2018]
(*[...] six countries are far from completing the requested “homework”*)

The school scenario evidently polarises the WB and the EU positions and marginalises the WB.

FAMILY

Representing the EU as a family of nations is a common metaphor. In the corpus, however, the EU is seen as an *extended family* and the WB is its poor cousin:

- 25) [...] uvoz novih siromašnih **rođaka** koji čekaju novac iz zajedničke kase. [Novi magazin, 24/04/2018]
 ([...] *an import of new poor **cousins** who are waiting for the money from the common money-box.*)
- 26) Evropski političari na Balkan i dalje, međutim, gledaju kao na pre-dsoblje Evrope, a na balkanske zemlje kao na siromašne i neuke **rođake**. Stidite ih se, verovatno ih i prezirete, ali šta ćete kad vam zakucaju na vrata. Nažalost, rodbina ste. [Danas, 17/01/2018]
 (*The European politicians, however, still look at the Balkans as an ante-chamber to Europe and at Balkan countries as poor and unlearned **cousins**. You are ashamed of them, you probably despise them, but what will you do when they come knocking at your door? Unfortunately, you're family.*)

The WB is a poor cousin, undeserving and expecting money from the wealthier members of the family. The cousins are also unlearned, despised by their rich relatives, who are ashamed of them and hate being related to them (26). “What will you do when they come knocking at your door?” sounds almost as a threat to the EU. This threat of the peripheral entities coming to the centre is called *proximisation* in Cap’s model of discourse space (2012). This concept is used in the analysis of the immigration discourse and it seems that the EU integration process may be likened to an immigration process. The scenario, therefore, sees the WB as an unwanted member of an extended family.

CLUB/CLASS

The metaphor STATUS IS POSITION is evidenced in a series of metaphor realisations which treat the citizens of the WB as second-class, inferior or less important:

- 27) “Ovo je i dokaz da nas tretiraju kao države **drugog reda**. Jasna je njihova poruka – vi jeste **drugorazredni**, vi jeste periferija [...]”, jasan je Radić. [Dan, 17/06/2018]

(“*This is a proof that they treat us as **second-class** countries. Their message is clear – you are **second-class**, you are the periphery [...]*” Radić was clear.)

- 28) To je percepcija na nekim međunarodnim adresama koje valjda misle da ovdje žive **drugorazredni** ljudi koje treba stalno opominjati tako što ćemo im propisivati formule života. [Vijesti, 13/06/2018]

(*This is a perception of some international addresses who seem to think that **second-class** people live here and that they should constantly be reprimanded by prescribing them formulas on how to live.*)

These metaphors are analogous to the metaphors derived from the GEOMETRY source domain. The assumed inferiority of the WB implies that the EU is superior. In 28, the class division is used together with the physical centre-periphery division, which is similar to the circle metaphor, underscored by the indicative use of pronouns (a strong division along the *we-you* lines). These metaphors were used in a critical context, as both the politicians using them suggest that the EU treats the WB unfairly.

This is definitely not a novel scenario but, again, it is one of those used to marginalise the WB's position.

4.2 New metaphors

In this section of the paper, we present the new metaphors depicting the WB – these have not been used for the conceptualisation of the EU-integration processes of the former membership candidates or, at least, the available literature has not recorded them as such, to the best of our knowledge.

COLONY

In this metaphor, the people of the WB are likened to *savages*, whom the EU has colonised as a conqueror:

- 29) [...] u tvrdnji da nema alternative se zapravo kriju tragovi kolonijalnog mišljenja: **divljaci** tamo dole ne mogu da ovladaju sopstvenom situacijom, pa ih je potrebno **prosvetiti** a to će učiniti apsolutistički pomagači iz Brisela koji će ih **naučiti kako se jede viljuškom i nožem**. [Danas, 12/02/2018]

([...] *in the claim that there is no alternative, there are actually traces of colonial thinking: the **savages** down there cannot handle their own situation, so it is necessary to **enlighten** them and this will be done by the absolutist helpers from Brussels, who will **teach** them **how to eat with a fork and a knife**.*)

- 30) Juncker: Ako ne primimo **divljake** s Balkana u EU, oni će opet međusobno zaratiti [Brotnjo.info, 9.04.2018]
*(Juncker: If we don't admit the **savages** from the Balkans into the EU, they will start a war again)*
- 31) Srbija je **kolonija**. [RTV Pobjednik, 7/12/2018]
*(Serbia is a **colony**.)*

In excerpt 29, the WB citizens are savages or natives “down there” (out of the EU’s deictic centre), who need to be ruled and enlightened, and even taught how to use a knife and a fork (which should stand for their learning and adopting a democratic way of life). In 30, the words of an EU politician are interpreted to mean that the people of the Balkans are savages, who can only wage wars. The WB is thus thought of as a colony, in the contemporary context of neocolonialism (31). The dichotomy between the metaphors THE EU AS A COLONISER and THE WB AS SAVAGES is very divisive.

PRISON

In most of the above metaphors, the position of the WB is conceptually construed in opposition to that of the EU. However, sometimes, the imagery is construed without the EU, as in the case of the metaphor of THE WB AS A SELF-PRISONER:

- 32) To nisu bile “**zarobljene**” države od strane raznih elita, kao što je slučaj sa balkanskim. [Slobodna Evropa, 19/05/2018]
*(Those were not countries “**imprisoned**” by various elites, as is the case with the Balkan ones.)*
- 33) Štajnaker: Članstvo u EU neće pomoći **zarobljenoj** državi [Vijesti, 21/07/2018]
*(Steinacker: EU membership will not help an **imprisoned** state)*

The WB is presented as imprisoned, not by the EU, but by its own ruling elites or individuals. Even though the EU is not an agent here, the position of the WB still remains inferior.

DEBT

A number of the metaphors involve morality and debt, and suggest that the EU owes accession to the WB. There is a moral obligation in the sense that the WB *has deserved* to be part of the EU and an implication that the EU should pay this debt:

- 34) On je naveo kako zemljama aspirantima ka EU ne treba davati savjete, već bi savjete trebalo uputiti Briselu da ne postavljaju rigidne kriterijume i da osjećaju **dug** prema Balkanu. [Vijesti, 22/05/2018]
(*He stated that the countries aspiring to the EU should not be given advice, but that Brussels should be advised not to set rigid criteria and to feel a **debt** to the Balkans.*)
- 35) Zemlje članice imaju “**moralnu obavezu**” prema Makedoniji kojoj su obećavali otvaranje evropske perspektive odmah nakon rešenja spora oko imena. [Radio Slobodna Evropa, 17/06/2018]
(*The member countries have a “**moral obligation**” to Macedonia, which was promised an opening of the European perspective right after solving the dispute of the name.*)

Although debtors are typically in a worse position than creditors, here it is the opposite, as the creditor must be reminded that there is, in fact, a debt to be paid, which implies that the creditor does not really recognise this debt.

IMMATURITY

In one strand of the metaphors, the WB is portrayed as an *immature* person (within the more general metaphor NATION AS A PERSON), where the level of maturity is to be judged by the EU. Thus, again, the division of power is large. The EU assumes the high ground of a judge and the WB is assumed not to have reached the adulthood yet, i.e. it is treated as a child:

- 36) A dnevnik Prese smatra da su “Balkanske republike ekonomski i institucionalno **nezrele** za EU” [...] [DW, 12/02/2018]
(*The Magazine Presse thinks that the “Balkan republics are economically and institutionally **immature** for the EU” [...]*)
- 37) Komesar Han je rekao istinu – niko od država zapadnog Balkana sada nije **zreo** za članstvo u EU [...] [Vijesti, 22/05/2018]
(*The Commissioner Hahn said the truth – none of the countries of the Western Balkans are now **mature** enough for the EU membership [...]*)

Reaching maturity typically requires a passage of time, which implies that the accession perspective is still far from the WB.

BLACKMAIL

In this scenario, the EU is a blackmailer, with an agency always explicitly indicated, whereas the WB is a blackmailed person:

- 38) Dačić odgovorio na pritiske Brisela: Možemo mi i sa Rusima, ne mogu da nas **ucenjuju**. [*Danas*, 26/05/2018]
*(Dačić replied to the pressures from Brussels: We can also choose Russians, they can't **blackmail** us.)*
- 39) [...] što su pojedine države, uključujući i Hrvatsku, koristile da **koče i ucenjuju** našu zemlju u pregovaračkom procesu. [*Novosti*, 15/08/2018]
*([...] some countries, including Croatia, have used this **to block and blackmail** our country in the negotiation process.)*

Usually, the context is very negative – in the excerpts, a WB politician directs threats at the EU (the threats usually involve other world super powers).

EXPERIMENT

The WB is also likened to a testing/experimenting ground, which is to imply that the conductor of the experiment is the EU, whereas the role of the WB is just a passive one – the people of the WB are perceived as guinea pigs:

- 40) Balkan je na istom mjestu gdje je i bio, prostor i pogodno **tle za eksperimente** i igre moći velikih. [*Dan*, 12/10/2018]
*(The Balkan is in the same place it has always been, a place and suitable **ground for experiments** and the power games of the big ones.)*
- 41) Crna Gora je izgleda izabrana kao **poligon za eksperiment** na kome će EU pokazati ostaku Zapadnog Balkana da stvari ovako dalje ne idu. [*Vijesti*, 20/06/2018]
*(It seems that Montenegro has been chosen as an **experimenting ground** on which the EU will show to the rest of the Western Balkans that things cannot go on this way.)*

WASTE COLLECTOR

In the metaphor THE WB AS A WASTE COLLECTOR, the WB is an object or a place for storing the waste of the personified EU. Due to this, the superiority/inferiority division in this case is sharp:

- 42) “Taj pokušaj da se vruć krompir prebaci na prostor Balkana, to im je najlakše, ali mi ne treba da budemo **kanta za đubre** Evrope. Zašto bismo mi trpjeli lošu politiku Evropske unije, da postanemo **kanta za đubre** za migrante”, pitao je Trifunović. [*FOS Media*, 18/06/2018]
 (“That attempt to transfer the hot potato to the Balkans is the easiest for them, but we should not be **a trashbin** of Europe. Why should we suffer the consequences of the EU’s bad policies by becoming **a trashbin** for migrants,” Trifunović asked.)
- 43) Andrej Nikolaidis: Balkan je **deponija** ljudi koje Evropa ne želi [*Fokus*, 23/06/2018]
 (Andrej Nikolaidis: The Balkan is a **landfill** for the people Europe does not want)

Europe, which is often used synonymously with the EU, is clearly designated as the owner of the trashbin/landfill and, sadly, the trash is used to represent the migrants.

5 Discussion

Our critical analysis of the conceptualisation of the WB in the latest stages of the EU integration process points to its marginalised role and a considerable division of powers between the EU and the WB. Although such a division is natural to an extent, given that the WB is the one asking the EU to admit it, the level of division significantly exceeds these simple grantor/requestor roles. Thus, in the scenarios analysed in our corpus, the WB almost invariably has a passive and marginal role:

- journey metaphors: the WB is typically a passive passenger, driven by another driver and is blocked on its way;
- building metaphors: the WB is waiting at a shut door, unlikely to open;
- geometry/geography metaphors: the WB is in the outer rings/circles, which are of a lower value, or is an element which does not fit the rest of the whole;
- colony metaphors: the WB is seen as a colony;
- game/sport metaphors: the WB is the underdog; it is losing the game or is just pretending to play it;

- prison metaphors: the WB is imprisoned;
- war/battle metaphors: the WB is being beaten;
- debt metaphors: the WB is owed a debt that the debtor does not want to repay or recognise;
- immaturity metaphors: the WB is an immature person;
- blackmail metaphors: the WB is being blackmailed;
- school metaphors: the WB is a bad student making little progress;
- experiment metaphors: the WB is an experimenting ground;
- family metaphors: the WB is an unwanted poor cousin;
- waste collector metaphors: the WB is a waste collector of Europe;
- club/class metaphors: the WB belongs to a second or third class.

We may say that the image of the WB is rather a sad one – subjugated and undignified to an extent that the very word *Balkan* has started to mean something negative and to the point of being avoided altogether, to escape its negative connotations. Of course, this process started before the latest stages of the integration process and some may even argue that such perceptions have a long history, but it certainly was strongly reflected in the choice of metaphors and their evaluative content in our corpus, as evidenced by our analysis, marking the tone of the discourse and making it uniquely different from the integration discourses of the former member candidates. In some passages of our corpus, the interviewees even directly spoke of these processes. For instance, professor of political science Simeunović finds that the term has come to be associated with being *backward, raw and conflictual* and adds:

Separation and connectedness of Europe with the Balkans is manifested in the very use of the term and the adjective derived from it. However undisputable that the Balkans, a geographical term, is part of Europe, it is still undisputable that the term Balkan and the adjective Balkanian, as well as other words derived from it, such as the word balkanisation, are used pejoratively in the rest of Europe. The derogatoriness of the term Balkan is such that no one wants to be the Balkans. (*Politika*, 25/11/2018)

Moreover, some EU politicians notice the same trend (these quotes are also from our corpus of articles):

Some politicians have reasons to prefer using the term ‘South-East Europe’. The Balkans always sounds so [...] as something connected to crises and a lack of the rule of law [...] Sobotka said. [*CDM*, 24/08/2018]

Serbia does not belong to the Balkans but Central Europe, the same as Montenegro, said today the Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban. [*Blic*, 28/07/2018]

The two EU politicians, Sobotka and Orban, would rather use terms such as *South-East* or *Central Europe*, in order to avoid using the term *Balkan*. Both these alternative, preferred terms include the word *Europe*, which is to suggest that the word *Balkan* excludes it. Additionally, as can be seen in Sobotka's explanation, *Balkan* has become a metaphor for crises or a lack of the rule of law. Bearing in mind the metaphorical construction of the inferior WB's identity, as suggested in our analysis, it is not excluded that the alternative words to *Balkan* and the alternative metaphorical conceptualisations related to them, will start to dominate the public discourse of and on the WB.

The asymmetry in the conceptualisation of the WB vs. the EU has, of course, been noted before (as indicated in the theoretical section – Petrović 2009; Bjelić & Savić 2003); however, these observations mostly came from anthropologists and they are not a result of a systematic corpus approach, which is why we hope we have given a new linguistic contribution to the ongoing discussion. We have once again drawn attention to this and provided additional evidence to the proposition made in the title of Bjelić and Savić's edited volume (2003) – that *Balkan* may indeed, in a sense, be a metaphor, i.e. associated with civilisational and other inferiority, the Other of the EU, which, despite being geographically Europe is not any time soon to *become* Europe.

With reference to the theoretical overview provided earlier, we have generally established the same tendencies as Silaški and Đurović (2014a). Namely, the same EU and EU accession metaphors were used for the integration of the former membership candidates and the integration of the WB (*journey, container, family, building...*); however, these same metaphors now featured a different evaluative content in the case of the WB. For instance, the *journey* metaphor now foregrounds the WB as a slow, fatigued traveller, encountering obstacles at every turn and, unlike in the case of the former member candidates, it is often suggested that the journey might prove incompletable, obstacles impassable and perhaps the entire journey abandoned altogether. Another example: the EU was often depicted as a house in the earlier discourse, but the dominant scenario now is that of representing the WB as a guest at the EU's doorstep to whom the doors are shut indefinitely.

We may say that the conceptualisation of the accession process in the WB was dealt with to a considerable degree in the literature before, however, these bleak and increasingly asymmetrical scenarios have come to dominate the already established frames only recently, and as such it was worth exploring them anew. This was also corroborated by Wekmann and Buljan's diachronic study (2013), which pointed to the evolution of these metaphors over time, depending on political circumstances, which our study has also confirmed.

6 Conclusion

In this paper we critically analyse how the identity of the Western Balkans (WB) has been metaphorically conceptualised in the latest stages of the EU integration processes in a corpus of internet news articles recently posted in Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Hercegovina. Unlike the accession processes of the former membership candidates from Europe, the WB's integration has proven to be a very long one, hindered by many, perhaps insurmountable obstacles and subject to a great deal of uncertainty regarding its final outcome. Although this process is predominantly conceptualised through the already established metaphors employed to depict such processes of the former member candidates (journey, house, circles/rings, family, etc.), their evaluative content is different, given that the roles and the positions of the EU and the WB are starkly asymmetrical, i.e. that the WB is deeply marginalised. We identified new metaphors that this specific political situation has engendered, also reflecting the said asymmetry – the WB is seen as a *colony*, *self-imprisoned state*, *Trojan horse*, *victim of blackmail*, *immature person*, *experimenting ground* and *waste-collector for the immigrants*. These metaphors embody the Self-Othering discourse of the WB's media and were not typical of the accession discourse of the former candidates.

We have seen how the WB's journalists, politicians and other interviewees see the current EU-WB relations or perhaps how they think the EU sees the WB. The readers of the WB's internet media discourse are exposed to such views of the WB's status, position and worth, and it is unlikely that all of them will take these metaphors critically – many will accept, reproduce and perpetuate such attitudes towards the WB, and themselves as belonging to an inferior region and being second- or third-class citizens. Perhaps such views have already been entrenched to a point of no return. Namely, in line with the tendencies we spoke of in our discussion, perhaps such a perception of Balkan has reached a level where there is no other option but to drop the term entirely and reconstruct the image of the region under another name.

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