The Enlargement Of The European Union Into The Balkans: A Perspective From Balkanism

Master's Thesis

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This thesis sets out to explore the influence that discourses on the Balkans have on their accession procedures to the European Union. Doing so, it proposes a hybridized theory that incorporates on the basis of a layered interpretation of history. Proposing that the Yugoslav Wars brought discourses such as Balkanism to the fore that were incompatible to the self-image of the European Union. Instead suggesting that the EU was influenced by these Balkanist modes of thinking to adopt a regionalized policies that distorted the political situations on the ground and was obstructive to these countries' accession processes. These claims are substantiated by the application of discursive theories onto the theories of institutional constructivism, and securitization. After treating EU accession from these respective viewpoints, they are put to the test through the case studies of Albania, Bulgaria, and North Macedonia.

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1. Introduction

'It is curious that it has needed a world drenched in blood to bring peace to these parts'

– Aubrey Herbert, 1918.[1]

It has been nearly 29 years since the Iron Curtain fell and some twenty years since the end of the last large-scale violence resulting from the breakup of Yugoslavia. In this time, the EU has grown from fifteen member states to 27 today. While three of these states were in the Balkans, much of the peninsula still forms a gaping geographical hole in the European Union. Why has this region's inclusion proven to be so particularly difficult? In this thesis, I offer an insight into this question from the side of the European Union by asking; how have EU perspectives of the Balkans influenced the accession procedures of Albania, Bulgaria, and North Macedonia?

Choosing to research the role that the EU plays in this difficult relation does not mean that the EU is solely to blame, as the region is plagued by conditions of corruption, state capture, domestic tensions, slow economic development the like of which many other post-communist states have managed to leave behind.[2] But, without relativizing responsibility, the EU also purports an interpretation of the Balkans which is non-conducive to the region's chances for accession to the Union. Chapter 2 – *A dynamic way to look at the Balkans,* will deal with the question; what exactly is this interpretation that the EU holds on the Balkans? Leading in this answer of this question is Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans*, who sets out a discursive theory of 'Balkanism' in which the region's inhabitants are essentialized as 'a region of hopelessly mixed races, of a medley of small states with more or less backward populations, economically and financially weak, covetous, intriguing, afraid, a continual prey to the machinations of the great powers, and to the violent promptings of their own passions'.[3] On account of these qualities, the Balkans has been described to be 'Europe's dark side within'.

Although she is leading in the context of this thesis, Todorova is not alone in offering theoretic handles to which Europe's posturing towards the Balkans might be measured. Next to her, authors like Edward Said, Larry Wolff, Milicia Bakic Hayden, and Diana Mishkova have all purported different discursive versions of Europe's imaginings of its border-zones. While these theories at times overlap, they are not

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[1] Margaret Firtzherbert, The man who was Greenmantle: A biography of Aubrey Herbert, Oxford University Press, 1985, quoted in: Derek R. Hall, Representations of Place: Albania, *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 165, No. 2, (Jul., 1999), pp. 161-192, 172-173.

[2] Milada Anna Vachudova, EU Enlargement and State Capture in the Western Balkans: A Failure of EU Conditionality?, in: Jelena Dzankic, Soeren Keil, Marko Kmezic, *The Europeanisation of the Western Balkans A Failure of EU Conditionality?* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 64.

[3] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, (Oxford University Press, 2009), 34.

regarded here as excluding one another. Instead, inspired by Bakic-Hayden, Goldsworthy, and Mishkova's diffuse history of perceptions of not only the Balkans and of Europe, these various theories are thought to be part of a layered history in line with Reinhart Koselleck's work. In it, Koselleck explains how history is a layered structure, in which a multiple of these layers of history and perceptions may coexist with one another leading to a hybrid of many perceptions, combined in one place.[4]

As the study of history is a matter of discourse, the perspectives that the discourse analyses on the Balkans offer are no different from Koselleck's layers of history. By taking this layered approach, the various discourses that are discussed can become more dynamic and prone to historical change by shifting the emphasis and values attributed to them. Using this basis in layered history, I aim to offer a hybrid of existing theories which at times may incorporate either of the aforementioned authors. In accordance with the dynamic character of discourse theory, these layers may also essentialize, or de-essentialize the Balkans. Through this essentialization, Balkan countries may be condemned over the histories of their Balkan neighbourhood, or if de-essentialized, targeted over their own specific pasts.

As this interpretation is established, Chapter 3 – *Balkanism and the EU accession process*, makes the transition to EU accession by asking; how could a perspective affect a massive political-bureaucratic undertaking such as the accession process to the EU? Mirroring the attributed identity to the Balkans to the self-identification of the EU, it becomes clear how the two collide; the Balkans are the archetype of a more brutal age, one which Western Europe has been through but now defines itself against. With EUrope defining itself as what it means to be civilized and peaceful, and the Balkans a place of threats and barbarity, this spectrum is then drawn into the political scene. Two theories are guiding in this transition: namely that of institutional constructivism, and securitization. The former theory, developed by Sieglinde Gstöhl, Ulrich Sedelmeier and Frank Schimmelfenning states that, if a country is thought of as ranking highly in 'Europeanness' it is conducive to that country's chances to be admitted into the EU. The latter theory, that of securitization, has been applied to European Enlargement by Atsuko Higashino, in which he purports that, if a country is securitized and thereby deemed a security threat, one which may only be rendered safe when it is incorporated into the EU. This thesis considers these two theories to be heavily interlinked. For when there is a popular discourse that describes a region as being particularly prone to danger, it is quickly considered to be less 'European' and is instead likely to be securitized as a threat. What results is a spectrum

[4] Reinhart Koselleck, *Sediments of Time, On Possible Histories*, (Stanford University Press, 2018) translated and edited by Sean Franzel and Stefan-Ludwig Hoffman, XIII.

between the perception of a place's Europeanness and its perceived threat whereby a shift towards the former means an easier way to EU accession while the latter means the opposite.

With the compatibility of institutional constructivism and securitization to Balkanist theories explored in Chapter 3, they are applied to the case studies of Bulgaria, Albania, and North Macedonia (the latter is consistently named in accordance with the 2018 Prespa Treaty over historic names such as Socialist Republic of Macedonia, Republic of Macedonia or FYROM) in Chapter 4 – *Country profiles*. The countries on which this is tested are not chosen on the basis of their likeliness, but over their differences. As a diversified group they experienced radically different developments both before and after the great upheaval of 1990. Although they are differing the one thing they have in common is their relative lack of involvement in the Yugoslav Wars.[5] This is significant as this thesis hypothesises that in spite of the differences between them, the conflict led to a revival of the idea in which the region was de-Europeanized and could be securitized, subsequently leading to greater difficulty in their accession process to the EU. This is first done through a case study into the accession of Bulgaria, as a part of the 2004 (and eventually 2007) enlargement group. Followed by the separate cases of North Macedonia and Albania, who are subsequently viewed together through the lens of their Security and Association Agreements, and their troubled joint pathways to the start of their negotiations. This diversified spread enables distinctions to be made between approaches to the singular state, the region of the Balkans, and the greater region of post-communist Europe.

As stated, this thesis primarily (but not solely) builds on the principles as they are laid out in Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans*. But above all, it is meant to serve as a bridge between two academic fields that scantly intersect, but whose findings are thought to have the potential to strengthen one another. On the one hand there is the work of authors like Todorova, who seek to answer questions of identity and perceptions on the basis of discourse analysis. However, when it comes to measuring the effects that their findings have on contemporary political developments, they tend to refrain from further inquiry.[6] On the other, there are authors like Dimitar Bechev, or Bohdana Dimitrovova, who in spite of their obvious awareness of the discussions surrounding Balkanism do not actively engage with it. Referring to their respective fields, Kathrine Fleming would state years before; ''there is little contact between the two,

[5] Although the 2001 insurgency is often considered to be a part of the wars that broke up Yugoslavia, for the purpose of this thesis they are considered to be of a different scale and severity to be considered a part of this string of conflicts.

[6] Erik de Lange, Perception and Policy, *Balkanism and the Dutch intervention in Bosnia*, Master's Thesis, University of Amsterdam, (2014), 3, 18, 19.

for obvious reasons, as they are interested in different questions and problems, and write for different audiences''.[7] Due to this bifurcation, much has been written on the regions foremost discourse analysis – Balkanism, and much has been written on the region's foremost contemporary political development – namely relations to the EU. It is in the crevasse between the two however that new insights may be found, making it the central goal of this thesis.

In no way could it be claimed that building a bridge between the two fields would provide a catch-all explanation to the region's relationship to the EU. Instead, this thesis merely aims to map the political room for manoeuvre that politicians and policy makers who work on the matter may have and to see how this is expressed in political developments.[8] This too however, is not without criticism, for as Ekatarina Nikova complained: a part of the reason why the Balkan studies of the 1990's were unable to keep up with developing situations in the Yugoslav wars was because they were too immersed in the theories of identity, orientalism, and postcolonialism. Nikova states that in reality these approaches proved irrelevant in providing a deeper understanding of Western policies. Instead, domestic concerns in the West were far more to be the basis for regional policy making.[9] Balkanist works that, according to Todorova and others have influenced policy (most prominently Robert Kaplan's travelogue -'Balkan Ghosts'), are said by Nikova to be merely instrumentalized to justify a policy of non-interference.[10] Although such criticism is wholly warranted, such an opportunist statement still has to resonate with an episteme that holds this Balkanist statement as truth. The more important question that Nikova's criticism prompts to ask is whether it is always Balkanism that we are talking about? After all, evocations that seem like Balkanism may in fact be shared among several other post-communist countries, Orthodox Christian countries, or many other historical layers that warrant their own method of perception.

Discourse theories such as the ones that are advocated by Said, Todorova, of Wolff are predominantly constructed with reference to historic sources oftentimes reaching from the Enlightenment up to - but mostly not including- the modern day. As these statements are dependent on a time-bound

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[7] Katherine E. Fleming, Orientalism, The Balkans, and Balkan Historiography, The American Historical Review, Vol. 105, No. 4 (October 2000), pp. 1218-1233, 1227.

[8] Alina Curticapean, Bai Ganio and Other Men's Journeys to Europe: the Boundaries of Balkanism in Bulgarian EU-Accession Discourses, *Perspectives*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (2008), pp. 23-56, 25.

[9] Diana Mishkova, *Beyond Balkanism, The Scholarly Politics of Region Making*, (Routledge Borderland Studies, 2019), 216.

[10] Ekatarina Nikova, Balkans, Balkan Studies, Balkan Politics (Балкани, балканистика, балканска политика), T*he Balkans*, No. 2, (2013), pp. 94-105, 98. (Translated using Google Translator)
As Ekatarina notes, the paradox is that Robert D. Kaplan, himself was a convinced hawk interventionist with regards to the Yugoslav wars.

epistemology this means that the historic examples used are only of indicative value. However, seeking their resonance in contemporary EU sources which pertain to the enlargement process, they provide linkages to layers of historic perceptions as they are explained in the various theories of the discourse analysts. This connection is primarily sought for in EU documents which pertain to the enlargement process. The regular reports by the European Commission on progress towards EU accession processes, or Security and Association Agreements are to form a consistent framework of technical data which can shed light on specific focusses of EU processes. To embed these technical sources in a political context, these are added to EU Council Presidency Conclusions and speeches from relevant actors wherein long-term goals and political circumstances are explained.

2. A dynamic way to look at the Balkans

This thesis is essentially about the self-perception of Europe through the mirror of the Balkans. It is therefore not attempting to study the Balkans, merely to study the place it is ascribed in a European conceptualization of the world around it. To this end, it ventures into the field of Balkanology without the pretention to actually study the Balkans, but rather with the aim of researching how the study of the Balkans reflects on Europe. To contextualize this perception therefore means to map the way that the Balkans have been written about by Europeans. In analysing these questions, it is insufficient to speak of 'Western Europe' or 'Eastern Europe' as these refer to reasonably geographically stable units. Therefore, in speaking of their conceptualization as a cultural unit, this thesis will instead be speaking of the 'Occident', and the 'Balkans' as dynamic units which can shrink and grow to incorporate places as they develop through history.

Indeed, many theories have been developed over the last decades, but which one holds the most truth? Or is it perhaps possible to construct a hybrid synergy between these various theories? In this Chapter, this thesis opts for the second option. Arguing for this, the first aim is to contextualize the field of Balkan studies with reference to their historical development. How have Europeans historically looked at the Balkans and how could these historic ideas inspire future work? This historic contextualization is followed up by a short explanation of Edward Said's seminal work of *Orientalism*. Although Said's book was written about a region adjacent to but not necessarily including the Balkans, his ideas were key to inspiring a new school of thought in Balkan Studies, ones that are often leading in this thesis. Following the explanation on the concepts that are at the basis of Said's work, prominent theories that were born from his theory of Orientalism are explained. Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans*, and the concept of Balkanism that she sets out here is leading in this theory. While the concept of Balkanism provides a thorough framework of an essentialized vision by Europe onto the Balkans, it provides few handles through which this can be brought into the contemporary political sphere. To help in this multi-faceted transition, it is useful to employ theories which have proven influential in the field of Balkan Studies which is in turn supported by Milicia's Bakic Hayden's 'Nesting Orientalism', and Larry Wolff's 'inventing Eastern Europe'. How can these theories work together to study politics through the lens of Balkanism? What are their central tenants and how do they correspond to each other? While these theories often look at the Balkans from a wide variety of angles – the region as Oriental or a 'dark side within', an essentialized Balkans vs. that of a de-essentialized one, they are not seen as inherently contradictive. Using Richard Koselleck's

theory of a layered history, this thesis argue that these various theories may coexist on a model similar to layered histories.

2.1 A short history of the study of the Balkans

The field of Balkan Studies has had a tumultuous history. Described by American historian Kathrine Fleming who stated that that; "Balkanism" as a discourse does not rest on an earlier academic tradition of "Balkanism" for the simple reason that there isn't one'''.[11] Instead, she asserts that what is written on the Balkans, could roughly be subdivided into either adventure fiction, or travelogues.[12] This statement has later been heavily disputed by experts of Balkanologists who argued that even though the European study of the Balkans would be unable to measure up to the richness, respectability and influence of Orientalist studies, it too boasted a long history of scholarly interest. Appointing a true starting date to the study of the Balkans, also from these diverse perspectives, is doomed to be arbitrary up to a certain point as the region has always been present in one degree or another in European history.[13]

Provocative as Fleming's statement on the reduction of Balkan Studies into adventure fiction and travelogues might be, it is reflected in much of the work that has studied the Balkans around that time. Amongst these were the most influential authors of this time, like Maria Todorova, Larry Wolff, and Vesna Goldsworthy.[14] Through the extensive use of adventure fiction and travelogue, the aforementioned authors argued that the European travellers imposed their perspective onto the Balkans, suffocating local voices seeking the power to define themselves. Expanding on the travelogue sources, Diana Mishkova would heavily include intellectual ones, looking into the wide variety of ways in which the Balkans had historically been studied in a wide variety of countries. More importantly, the Bulgarian historian opposed the unilateral direction that had characterized earlier studies, instead she explored a causal relationship between academics from Balkan countries, and their various European counterparts. This new and causal relation showcased the limited applicability of Kathrine Fleming's assessment on the non-existence of a history of Balkan Studies that in many ways precede the discursive studies of the 1990's. Instead, Mishkova showed how German, Austrian, Hungarian, Croat, Slovene, Ukrainian and Russian authors took an active interest in the Balkans through the study of philology, textual analysis, history, and religion.[15] It seems instead that Fleming's judgement that "Balkanism" as a discourse does not rest on an earlier academic

[11] Katherine E. Fleming, Orientalism, The Balkans, and Balkan Historiography, 1226.
[12] Ibidem, 1225.
[13] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 64.
[14] Katherine E. Fleming, Orientalism, The Balkans, and Balkan Historiography, 1225.
[15] Diana Mishkova, *Beyond Balkanism, The Scholarly Politics of Region Making*, 2.

tradition of "Balkanism" for the simple reason that there isn't one''[16] was predominantly relevant to Anglo-Saxon scholars, and came about more as a slump in research due to political developments than as a complete absence.

On the post-war map of the social and human sciences, in sum, the Balkans did not altogether disappear but came to feature as a historical sub-region of Eastern/East Central Europe. American, West German and Soviet academia showed a certain interest in cultivating Balkan research, yet not to the point of turning it into an autonomous field. From the perspectives of both official Marxism and area studies, Eastern Europe as a whole appeared as the original underdeveloped area, the study of which was deemed relevant for dealing with the contemporary developing world. However, Eastern Europe and the Balkans did not become the focal point of a grand theoretical scheme within general social science as did Middle Eastern and Latin American studies. Instead they served mainly to provide data aimed to confirm, improve or refute "general" theories.[17] In the 18th century however, the study of the region would be recognizable to modern scholarly efforts in its regional definition and methodology. A study that was born out of an enlightenment and driven by the urge to classify and categorize the world.[18] As a result becoming increasingly aware about the differences between the region that had before been ill defined and somewhat oriental, it was finally given the name ''Balkan'' by the Prussian geographer Johan August Zeune in 1808.[19]

The naming of the region would prove emblematic to its study, which for the duration of the late 18th and whole of the 19th century was predominantly an affair of the German-speaking world. Falling under the category of ''Slavistics'', scholars in Vienna, Munich, Leipzig and Berlin combined the research of linguistics, literature, history, and ethnography in one field. Initially these studies focussed more on the South-Slavic group as a people than on the Balkans as a region. It would take until the early 20th century for the study to be institutionalized as a study of the Balkans, rather than as Slavistics.[20] In its early days, the study became most specialized in the Habsburg Empire, which found itself political motivated to study the Balkans by the prospect of possible territorial expansions in the region. As the Habsburg Empire fell, this role of academic pioneering was superseded by German political interest, who by building on mid-19th century notions of a German dominated Mitteleuropa, envisioned the Balkans as a German hinterland for

[16] Katherine E. Fleming, Orientalism, The Balkans, and Balkan Historiography, 1226.
[17] Diana Mishkova, *Beyond Balkanism, The Scholarly Politics of Region Making*, 203.
[18] Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe, The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, (Stanford University Press, 1994), 361-362.
[19] Diana Mishkova, *Beyond Balkanism, The Scholarly Politics of Region Making*, 8.
[20] Diana Mishkova, *Beyond Balkanism, The Scholarly Politics of Region Making*, 11-12.

a German Reich.[21] The interwar period also saw the rise of transnational and ontological models, aiming to discover common structures in the region.[22] As Todorova notes though, the period also saw racist values being added to the models of analysis, leading to the circulation of many negative stereotypes about the Balkans. In *Imagining the Balkans* this period would be earmarked as the time of origin in which many of the aspects that would compose the theory of Balkanism were formed.[23] Amongst others, it would be the start of accusing the Balkans for having a predisposition to instability and violence on archaic grounds of backward, deep rooted ethnic hatreds. The Südostforschung in Germany became intertwined with the Nazi regime, adopted its obsession with racial ideology and helped to instrumentalize it to execute its Lebensraum politics and conquests.[24] In Mishkova's eyes, this does not negate the entirety of their findings, calling the work by Fritz Valjavec, 'remarkably insightful regional conceptualizations', presaging the study of the Balkans as a space that was constituted by its historical Byzantine and Ottoman heritage, not by geography and politics. Furthermore, according to Valjavec, the Balkan Wars, and WWI had caused the Balkans to lose their special character, instead becoming part of a greater South-East European region.[25]

As World War II ended, the study of the Balkans came in a slump. The Austrian Balkanologie departments all but disappeared and so did their French counterparts, while similar research institutes in the region itself had to close their doors either on the basis of Nazi pressure, or later by that of the Communists.[26] In the West, the Valjavec's argument for the incorporation of the Balkans into the greater European region was adopted in practice. Although the concept of the Balkan was neither denied, nor disappearing, the study lost its autonomous character, being studied in unison within a larger framework of Eastern European (under)development.[27] The region became defined by its lack and lag in relation to Europe, with written histories seeking to explain this supposed backwardness. Alhough Valjavec managed to reopen the Südost-Institut in Munich and some others slowly picked up again as well, academic familiarity with the Balkans remained limited. The limits of these studies were aggravated by the lack of exchange taking place between French/German expertise and those in the US.[28] As Erik de Lange found in his study on Balkanist influences on Dutch interventionist policy in the Bosnian war, at the end of this period

[21] Ibidem, 16.
[22] Ibidem, 3.
[23] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 123.
Diana Mishkova, *Beyond Balkanism, The Scholarly Politics of Region Making*, 70.
[24] Diana Mishkova, *Beyond Balkanism, The Scholarly Politics of Region Making*, 126.
[25] Ibidem, 127-128.
[26] Ibidem, 129, 197, 200-201.
[27] Ibidem, 203.
[28] Ibidem, 195-196, 200.

The Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs only comprised three officials who were concerned with Yugoslavia, Albania, and the Warsaw Pact. Instead, most contacts ran through mediation by the EC and the UN.[29] De Lange posits that the situation may well have been similar for governments in France and the UK who also had little direct contact with Yugoslavia outside of the EEC framework.[30]

When Yugoslavia started to disintegrate and war erupted, government officials from EC countries tried to make sense of the situation by reverting back to old long-held notions of the Balkans. In many ways, these notions were the polar opposite of what it meant to be EUropean. Whereas EUrope identified itself with modernity, peace, and its own transcendence over its warring history, the Balkans were seen to revert back to barbarity, war, and its doomed fate to endlessly repeat a history full of war. In researching the Srebrenica Report on the Dutch involvement in that tragedy, researchers found official Western perceptions of Yugoslavia to be 'largely fictitious since they hardly corresponded with local realities'.[31] As the world was looking on in horror at images of mass graves and destroyed homes, bearing names such as Vukovar, Srebrenica and Sarajevo featured on TV screens and in newspapers, a plethora of people who thought they had the tools to tackle the question of how this could happen, wrote bookshelves full of explanations. These anthropologists, diplomats, historians, philosophers, and politicians were often looking for a monocausal explanation which would subsequently explain the diverging problems in the peninsula by transfusing the problems of Yugoslavia onto the entirety of the Balkans. Like officials, these authors recreated the Balkans as a wild place, full of people who were fundamentally violent and foreign.[32] Todorova claims these prejudicial assessments (most notably Robert Kaplan's 'Balkan Ghosts') played a role in the decision making processes for non-intervention.[33] While in De Lange's research, the (Dutch) academics that had been involved in Balkan studies before the Yugoslavian wars were the most ardent supporters for intervention in it.[34]

2.2 Edward Said – laying the basis for a discursive study of the Balkans

Academics that had long been involved in Balkan studies rushed to counter these images, bringing forth books such as Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans*, Larry Wolff's *Inventing Eastern Europe*, and Vesna

[29] Erik de Lange, Perception and Policy, *Balkanism and the Dutch intervention in Bosnia*, 24, 25.
[30] Ibidem, 24, 25, 90.
[31] Ibidem, 29
[32] Ekatarina Nikova, Balkans, Balkan Studies, Balkan Politics, 94.
[33] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 187-188
[34] Erik de Lange, Perception and Policy, *Balkanism and the Dutch intervention in Bosnia*, 27

Goldsworthy's *Inventing Ruritania.*[35] They responded to these stereotypes on the basis of Edward Said's now monumental book O*rientalism*, in which the Palestinian professor in literature founded the field of post-colonialist studies. Said, based his ideas on a long tradition of structuralist thinkers who founded their school of thought on the work of Ferdinand de Saussure's conceptualization of signs, symbols and their use or interpretation. Aiming to objectively understand a world he could only perceive through subjective means, Saussure and others studied structures (such as religion, or state institutions), which became the namesake of the so-called structuralists. These structuralists claimed that underlying structures could be detached from the perception and will of individual actors yet still managed to influence their behaviour by exerting influence on their lives.[36] As one of (post) structuralisms most famous spokespeople Michel Foucault explained*:*

> (structuralism) is the effort to establish, between elements that could have been connected on a temporal axis, an ensemble of relations that makes them appear as juxtaposed, set off against one another, implicated by each other—that makes them appear, in short, as a sort of configuration. Actually, structuralism does not entail denial of time; it does involve a certain manner of dealing with what we call time and what we call history.[37]

In this theory, language is dissected into a sign -the observable manifestation, and the signifier – the mental concept that is related to it. This relation is ultimately constituted by human interaction.[38] Later scholars, calling themselves post-structuralists, introduced a hierarchy to this system in which the signifier became more significant than the sign.[39] According to Levi-Strauss, a prominent post-structuralist, the human mind seeks order, a goal it achieves through a combination of discrimination and attributing value.[40] Such an approach seems to resonate with Fritz Valjavec (an academic contemporary) when he argued that the term

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[35] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, .
Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe, The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, (Stanford University Press, 1994).
Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania, The Imperialism of the Imagination*, (Yale University Press, 1998).
[36] Michiel Leezenberg, Gerard de Vries, Gerardus Hendrikus Vries, *History and Philosophy of the Humanities* (Amsterdam University Press, 2017) 224-225.
Robert Scholes, Towards a Semiotics of Literature, in: Dennis Walder, *Literature in the Modern World: Critical Essays and Documents*, Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 154 – 160, 158.
[37] Michel Foucault, Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias, An *Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité* (October 1984), ("Des Espace Autres," March 1967 Translated from the French by Jay Miskowiec), 1.
[38] Seumas Miller, Foucault on Discourse and Power, *Theoria*, Vol. 76, (October 1990), pp. 115-125, 115.
[39] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 21-22.
[40] Edward W. Said, Orientalism, (Penguin Publishers, 1977), 53-5.

'Balkan' was socially constructed by a historical constitution and could therefore be reincorporated into a greater European region.

Considering that the meaning of words stems from a manmade relation between sign and signifier, and that the signifier is in turn subjected to a hierarchical subdivision, Foucault claimed that knowledge itself is built up through human interaction, meaning that all that a subject could know was built on a system of claims or statements. This system can be seen to discipline or limit the possible options of the subject's comprehension and the statements it can make on this basis.[41] The implication of this is that all knowledge is constituted through subjective discourse, making objective observation, such as one about the Balkan, an impossibility.[42]

Staying true to the structuralism of Saussure's days, the production of discursive knowledge supersedes that of the individual actor but occurs through a process of validation from the framework of the discourse. The individual is thus shaped by discourse which sets the boundaries of its agency by providing it with a 'plurality of possible positions and functions'. The validity of a subject's statements is only dependant on its resonance to the episteme – a system of perspectives that constitute an interpretation of knowledge. Although this system is subjected to change, it does so without pre-set direction but only through the ability of one statement to be accepted over another.[43] In the study of the Balkans, this means that native discourses of self-definition are suppressed as they are unable to find resonance in the established occidental (Western) episteme.

Whether or not statements are found eligible for incorporation into discourse is, according to Foucault, a matter of power. This complex notion of power is an inherent quality of discourse as the ''objective'' knowledge system that it portrays permits and assures the exercise of certain powers.[44] Foucault is ambivalent as to whose power this is; it is simultaneously of a limited and an ubiquitous nature. It is best explained in his quote: 'power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere'[45], Foucault argued that it was not an entity, or a structure, but a network of practices and techniques.[46] Any subject partaking in this network is constructed by power, coerced by it,

[41] Stephen Frederick Schneck, Michel Foucault on Power/Discourse, Theory and Practice, *Human Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1, Foucault Memorial Issue (1987), pp. 15-33, 20.
[42] Seumas Miller, Foucault on Discourse and Power, 117, 120.
[43] Stephen Frederick Schneck, Michel Foucault on Power/Discourse,, 17 -18.
[44] Seumas Miller, Foucault on Discourse and Power, 117, 118.
[45] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, (Pantheon Books, 1978), 93.
[46] Juan J. Jiménez-Anca, Beyond Power: Unbridging Foucault and Weber*, European Journal of Social Theory*, (2012), pp. 1-15, 4.

and emits its own power. But, while power is everywhere, it is not everything, the concept necessitates a toolbox of phenomena that can be utilized. Likewise, while discourse exerts power, it is not its sole characteristic - it also transmits information.[47] How power is exerted and who the benefactors of the discourse are can only be understood insofar the procedures through which it is exercised are understood.[48] To study discourse in this sense is to attempt to inch closer towards a reality outside of the discourse.[49] This attempt to tread outside of discourse by studying it is part of the aim of the scholars like Said, or Todorova, who by studying the Western epistemological perspective onto their respective regions wish to free these regions from their restrictive straightjackets. This dissection of knowledge by revealing what is hidden in a text is central to the work of Foucault, and a trope often employed by Said.[50] What becomes important is not just what is being said, but how it is being said.[51]

On the basis of Foucault's fundamental thinking about the relation between power and knowledge, and employing the French philosopher's epistemology and the discursive creation of it, Edward Said set out to critically apply these theories to the European traditions of studying the Orient.[52] One of Said's most significant contributions for the purpose of this research is his pioneering in the use of 'othering' on a global scale.[53] The basic tenant of this is that a group, society, or nation, would define itself in opposition to a differing 'other'. Ascribing normalcy to itself, the 'other' automatically becomes a deviation from the original that is defined by its opposing values. These subsequently serve to emphasize the 'normal self's' qualities. In Said's words;

> The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, "different"; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, "normal." But the way of enlivening the relation-ship was everywhere to stress the fact that the Oriental lived in a different but thoroughly organized world of his own, a world with its own national, cultural, and epistemological boundaries and principles of internal coherence.[54]

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[47] Seumas Miller, Foucault on Discourse and Power, 120-121.
[48] Margaret A. Paternek, Norms and Normalization: Michel Foucault's Overextended Panoptic Machine, *Human Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1, Foucault Memorial Issue (1987), pp. 97-121.
[49] Seumas Miller, Foucault on Discourse and Power, 118.
[50] Edward W. Said, The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Summer, 1978), pp. 673-714, 675.
[51] Edward W. Said, Orientalism, (Penguin Publishers, 1977), 130.
[52] Ibidem, XVI.
Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 9.
[53] Seumas Miller, Foucault on Discourse and Power, 122.
[54] Edward W. Said, Orientalism, (Penguin Publishers, 1977), 40.

By historicizing the discursive construction of space Said laid bare the power relations that enforced an Occidental superiority over the Orient.[55] In line with Foucault's epistemological work, Orientalism was seen as an Occidental style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. [56] It was a 'closed system in which objects are what they are *because* they are what they are, for once, for all time, for ontological reasons that no empirical matter can either dislodge or alter''.[57] Spurred on by an enlightenment zeal for categorization formerly well-established discursive regimes were unsettled and became susceptible to different modes of understanding.[58] As linguists and artists came to observe the region, they automatically shaped it in the mould of their Occidental episteme. The Orient itself, as it laid before them, merely provided the inspiration for their enterprise but would hardly guide the Orientalists observations. The result was the creation of a symbol of the Orient, rather than a natural depiction. In Saussurean terms, the signifier has become wholly detached from the sign, being replaced by a mere symbol. As Said states: Orientalism responded more to the culture that produced it than to its putative object, which was also produced by the West.[59]

This so called ''exteriority'' of the representation was always connected to the assumption that if the Orient would have been able to present itself, it would have.[60] In the Foucauldian power-knowledge speak, this meant in effect that the self-representation from the Orient lacked the power and epistemological compatibility to contribute to the Western system of objective knowledge. Consequentially, the Orient is seen as incapable of understanding itself, giving the West an obligation to interpret it. By appropriating the right to interpret the Orient, the West acquires the authority to describe, teach, rule, and thereby hegemonically dominate it. All this happens on the basis of its own episteme and is ultimately serves to strengthen and maintain its authority. [61]

2.3 The Balkans - an 'Orient' or a dark-side within?

Were the same terms of reference that were applicable to the Orient also applicable to the Balkans? Or did the Balkans warrant a reference palate of its own? The question of whether or not it needed to be adopted,

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[55] Ryan Gingeras, Between the Cracks: Macedonia and the 'Mental Map' of Europe, *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes, Vol. 50, No. 3/4 (September-December 2008), pp. 341-358,* 343, 344.
[56] Pamela Ballinger, Whatever Happened to Eastern Europe? Revisiting Europe's Eastern Peripheries, *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, Vol. 31, No. 1, (February 2017), pp. 44–67, 53.
[57] Edward W. Said, Orientalism, (Penguin Publishers, 1977), 70.
[58] Katherine E. Fleming, Orientalism, The Balkans, and Balkan Historiography, 1231-1232.
[59] Edward W. Said, Orientalism, (Penguin Publishers, 1977), 20-23.
[60] Ibidem, 21.
[61] Edward W. Said, Orientalism, Penguin Publishers, London 1978, 3. Cited in: Zrinka Blazevic, Rethinking Balkanism: Interpretative challenge of the early modern illyrism, d'études balkaniques 2007, No. 1, pp. 87-106, 87-88.

modified, or inspire a new set inspired many articles by the Balkanologists of the 1990's. Although, as Tony Judt argued, direct debate between them was of a limited nature.[62] As the process of criticizing, adoption of ideas, and refinement of theory was less developed in the case of Balkanism than in Orientalism, it is necessary to hybridize the several studies instead of holding to one single theory. A common point of reference to all theories comes from Todorova's book '*Imagining the Balkans'*, published in 1997. Being at the forefront of the group of Balkanists who wished to refute the stereotypical images that sprang from the Yugoslav war, Todorova is directly influenced by Said's Orientalism in referring to the discourse that is abundant in negative stereotypes on the Balkans as 'Balkanism'.[63] Her adaptation of Orientalism was vested in the inherent difference between the perceptions of the Orient and those of the Balkans; it is an 'other within', a subject completely knowable because it is a constitutive part of the self. Although it is a part of it, the subject is hierarchically ordered amongst the lowest of the low, stuck in a different temporality of rural barbarity. The following subchapter explores these themes one by one, going from the concept's difference to Orientalism, to the concept's characterization of the Balkan subject as a barbaric, hypermasculine actor forever stuck in a time that the Occident itself has long abandoned.

Like its inspirator Orientalism, Balkanism is constituted by the creation of dichotic positions that, in accordance with Levi-Strauss' theory, constitute a hierarchical arrangement. Besides this basic similarity, the theories deviate in several ways and, according to Todorova, have developed independently. Much of this is dependent on the non-oppositional character that Balkanist discourse entails. What takes its place is a complex relation that epitomizes the uneasy place of the Balkans in Europe. Instead of being an opposing 'other', Todorova describes this relationship as an ambiguity, an 'in-betweenness' that constitute an incomplete version of the European self that is undoubtedly negative.[64] The people in the Balkans are not truly Oriental on account of their geographic location, white skin, and (oftentimes) Christian faith, though they are also not fully Occidental. Falling in the gap between the two sides, it could become an incomplete 'other', but can instead be best defined as an incomplete self of the Occident. In between the two, the Balkans are a peripheral zone that is consistently contradicting the self-aggrandized Occident, treating the differences within oneself the Balkans became the European self's shadow side – its ''structurally despised alter-ego'' or ''dark side within''.[65]

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[62] Erik de Lange, *Balkanism as Historiography, Development of Debate and Discourse*, MA Tutorial Paper, University of Amsterdam, 2014, 1.
[63] Ekatarina Nikova, Balkans, Balkan Studies, Balkan Politics, 95.
[64] Alina Curticapean, Bai Ganio and Other Men's Journeys to Europe, 23-24.
[65] Erik de Lange, Perception and policy, *Balkanism and the Dutch intervention in Bosnia* 5

This imputed ambiguity, or in-betweenness recurs through most factors in the relationship between Europe and the Balkans. The Oriental, as Said revealed it, partially served those in the West as an escape from civilization. It was constructed to be mysterious and exotic, a place that was supposed to have gone unchanged over the centuries and thereby became a refuge for those who longed back for simpler times. As it was mysterious, the meaning of this refuge was multi-interpretable.[66] Being colonized, penetrable, and unable to speak for itself, the Orient was often ascribed a feminine gender connotation.[67] As the Orient is feminine, the Occident holds a decisively male connotation. This masculinity extends to the Balkans, but instead of this being a ground for commonality it is another way of emphasizing the Balkan in-betweenness. For whereas the real Europe holds noble male characteristics, the Balkans hold 'feminine frailties', meaning irrational aggression, unpredictability, impulsiveness and unreliability. In spite of the Balkan commonality in masculinity with the Occident, this does not bring the two any closer together. Rather, they are a further ground for differentiating between the two up to such a measure that the feminine Orient becomes even more akin to the Occident due to it being perceived as non-threatening as opposed to the threatening Balkan masculinity.[68]

Another issue that distinguishes Orientalism from Balkanism is that of (Post-)Colonialism, or the supposed lack thereof in the case of the Balkans. Whereas Said places a lot of emphasis on the influence on this in creating images about the Orient, Todorova disputes that the statements based on this have any bearings on Balkanism as it lacks a comparable colonial past. Although at different points in time the whole just parts of the Balkans were conquered by the Ottoman Empire, Todorova considers this foreign domination to be of a critically different nature than that of the European colonial empires. Still considered to be a 'foreign yoke' by the contemporary Balkan peoples, their colonialism was of a different kind, a quasi-colonialism more akin to older Empires such as those of the Habsburg and Romanov dynasties which were of a less syncretic character, invalidating traditional (post)colonial methods of analysis for the Balkans.[69] Although Todorova found support for this point in Kathrine Fleming's influential paper ''Orientalism, The Balkans, and Balkan Historiography'' many others remained unconvinced whether or not the experience of

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Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 17-18.
Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 12-18 in: Zrinka Blazevic, Rethinking Balkanism: Interpretative challenge of the early modern illyrism, *d'études balkaniques,* No. 1, (2007), pp. 87-106, 89.
[66] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 13.
[67] Edward W. Said, Orientalism, (Penguin Publishers, 1977), 138, 182, 206, 220.
[68] Alina Curticapean, Bai Ganio and Other Men's Journeys to Europe, 23-24.
[69] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 163, 195.

colonialism in the Balkans is comparable to that of the Orient, and if this invalidated major points of Said's post-colonialist Orientalist critique remained a point of contention for the Balkanist scholars of the 1990's.[70]

Similar ambiguities are to be found in the overall denomination of people in the Balkans as being white and Christian. This is opposed to Said's theory of Orientalism which is intricately interwoven with the Orient's predominantly Islamic faith and the supposed inherently 'other' qualities that it pertains. However, like its masculinity, the coincidence of the Balkans and the Occident as places of Christianity did not lead to much fraternization but led to a reminder of the Rome-Constantinople split in the great Schism of 1054, which designated the Orthodox Christianity of the Balkans as heretical.[71] These ancient differences would be revived and reincorporated to support modern prejudices when necessary though at other times it could also be one of the few redeeming factors that ensured the Balkans being attributed a place in Europe.[72] Comparable to this attitude was the denomination of the people in the Balkans as being white. Although the concept gained influence a lot later, it caused the Balkans to be firmly placed in Europe. This too deflated the Orientalist opposing fundament of a white Occident vs. a coloured Orient. According to Todorova, this was little ground for reprieve for the Balkan peoples as though they were white, the discourse on them was almost identical to that of the lowest classes in Europe.[73]

Temporality is another such example; whereas the Orient meant an escape for those that felt disillusioned by the industrialization of the West. Although this was not wholly positive, the unknowable and mystical feminine nature of the Orient gave it some reprieve. [74] The Balkans provided no such refuge. It was a place that the Occident deemed itself well familiar with as it was equated with the darkest periods of its own violent mediaeval past with primitivity in the form of brigandage and plotting, which the Occident itself has long abandoned. As late as the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), an observer epitomized this view saying;

> "War is so obscene, so degrading, so devoid of one redeeming spark, that it is quite impossible there can ever be a war in West Europe. This was the one thing that consoled me in the whole bestial experience. War brings out all that is foulest in the human race, and the most disgusting

[70] Katherine E. Fleming, Orientalism, The Balkans, and Balkan Historiography.
[71] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 18.
[72] Ibidem, 162.
Ryan Gingeras, Between the Cracks: Macedonia and the 'Mental Map' of Europe, 343, 344.
[73] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 18, 19.
[74] Pamela Ballinger, Whatever Happened to Eastern Europe? 57.
Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 13.

animal ferocity poses as a virtue. As for the Balkan Slav and his haunted Christianity, it seemed to me all civilization should rise and restrain him from further brutality''.[75]

This temporality outside of Occidental modernity was interwoven with the perception of the Balkan people as a lower class of white people who supposedly lived predominantly in villages. Owing in part to their ascribed rural character, these villages were placed outside of temporality and the modern development of the Occident. Although in spatial terms they inhabit the same space, in cultural and temporary terms they do not and are thus placed outside of the dynamism of hierarchical Occidental politics.[76] The recurrence of these images of the burning Balkan village, running from 19th century anti-Ottoman insurgencies to the Yugoslavian wars is a testament to the durability of this temporality.[77] Deemed underdeveloped but in a framework that is familiar to the Occident, the Balkans were contradictorily seen to stand still, but still be on the same track as Occidental development. As the shadow side of the Occident it was able to adopt phenomena that belonged to different temporalities. This means that the region is consistently recognizable, yet even seeming similarities are thought of as being of 'the wrong kind' and are thus reduced to a perversion of the Occident. For example, whereas Yugoslavia was made up of multicultural communities, its brutal division along these lines was thought to be proof that its multiculturalism was nothing like that the multiculturalism on which the EU prides itself but an anarchic perversion of it that was doomed to fail.[78] As Edward Freeman observed; ''In Eastern Europe . . . the past – even the very remote past – and the present are in being side by side''.[79]

Once again Balkanism made for an easier canvas to project prejudices on as they were similar enough to be considered knowable. This constant lack of opposing characteristics that do not lead to fraternization, but increased distancing is a recurring theme throughout much of *Imagining the Balkans.* Together, these arguments support Todorova's thesis that as opposed to the Orientalist othering between different types, Balkanism is about treating the differences within one type.[80] This ''other within'' enjoys no benefit from its resemblance to the Occident – in many ways, the attribution of a superficial resemblance only serves to strengthen its condemnation. Freed from the threat of being accused of racial

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[75] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 6.
[76] Jane Nadel-Klein, Occidentalism as a Cottage Industry: Representing the Autochthonous 'Other' in British and Irish Rural studies, in: James G. Carrier, *Occidentalism, Images of the West*, (Oxford University Press, 1995), 111.
[77] Ekatarina Nikova, Balkans, Balkan Studies, Balkan Politics 94.
Andrew Hammond, Balkanism in Political Context: From the Ottoman Empire to the EU, *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (2006), pp. 6-26, 10.
[78] Erik de Lange, Perception and Policy, *Balkanism and the Dutch intervention in Bosnia*, 49.
[79] Diana Mishkova, *Beyond Balkanism, The Scholarly Politics of Region Making*, 117.
[80] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 19.

or religious bias as one might be when speaking of the Orient, the Balkans became a readily accessible repository that seemed familiar enough to attribute negative traits to it.[81] As this ''other within'' was deemed so knowable, and as it fell outside of the scope of post-colonialism, it warranted no academic study as refined as that of Orientalism.[82] Instead, it was a discourse that was more readily influenced by journalists, travellers, and politicians who could all claim knowledge of the knowable Balkans.[83] As Todorova summarized ''After all, I believe that the production of scientific knowledges moves along a line that only occasionally intersects with the production of popular mythology''.[84] Since the group of people who are seen as capable to perpetuate the discourse of Balkanism is diverse, it also opens the way to study its effects through modes of public debate that reach beyond the academic debate.

When comparing the two theories, it is obvious how much of an inspiration Said's Orientalism was to the Todorova's Balkanism. In spite of having a similar core in discursive theory, the result of both theories is quite different. Most importantly, whereas Orientalism treats the subject of an outsider against whom the European could define itself, Balkanism is a theory on treating an ambiguity, one that confronts Europe with its past self. The discussion between the two was cause for much discussion those that offered discourse analyses on the Balkans. But are these theories necessarily mutually exclusive?

2.4 How can different discursive theories be used in hybrid form?

Stemming from this post-structuralist perspective of the Balkans are various theories who all seek to offer insight into how Europe has created discourses that describe the Balkans. However, owing to the gap between this discourse analysis on the Balkans and the study of their contemporary political development, there is no readymade theory at hand which can be applied to bridge the two fields. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate these theories and see how they may correspond to act in a hybrid form to offer new insights into the multi-dimensional study of these political developments.

Identity is the central unit reference point to which all these discourses may be compared and through which it may eventually be applied to political theory. The central point of departure to the interpretation of discourse analysis on this identity was accosted by James G. Carrier as he stated; ''political relations within and between societies shape the construction and interpretation of the essential attributes to these societies''.[85] Meaning that the identity that is ascribed to a place such as the Balkans, be it in the

[81] Ibidem, 187-188
[82] Diana Mishkova, *Beyond Balkanism, The Scholarly Politics of Region Making*, 1-2.
[83] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 19.
[84] Erik de Lange, *Balkanism as Historiography, Development of Debate and Discourse*, 2.
[85] James G. Carrier, *Occidentalism, Images of the West*, (Oxford University Press, 1995), 8.

form of Balkanism, is shaped by the political relations to that place. Additionally, Carrier purported that in describing the identity of another, the Occident was also imposing an identity on itself.[86] Thus, political relations may describe both the other, but also the self.

To speak of identity and the projection of it in such clear cut terms was a problem Said himself was struggling with, when he asked the question; "Can one divide human reality, as indeed human reality seems to be genuinely divided, into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races, and survive the consequences humanly?" [87] When Said asked this question, he was questioning the fundaments of his theory – how can one reduce a reality in all its diversity into a category? The question stands equally prominent in Balkanism; are Europe and the Balkans two units which can be measured? Or are they a patchwork of overlapping characteristics?

A prominent proponent for this gradual and de-essentialized approach is Milica Bakic-Hayden who, in her article ''Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia'', claims that the Balkans need to be seen as a gradual map of Orientalisms. When one ventures into this Orient, the people there would always point towards their neighbours further removed from Europe as being more Oriental than them.[88] Through this, de-essentialization, Bakic-Hayden showcases Balkan countries are able to appropriate the process of otherizing by contrasting themselves to an ''Other'' deemed more radically different. Whereas Bakic-Hayden challenged that next to the essentialized image of the Balkans there was also a gradualist one, Vesna Goldsworthy in effect performed the reverse for the countries projecting these visions, showing how a lack of familiarity with the Balkans in the case of Britain influenced the creation of fanciful images about it.[89] As Diana Mishkova mapped the measures of academic involvement by various European countries, it became possible to distinguish how single European countries have specific and differing projections on one single Balkan country.[90]

While recognizing this de-essentialized approach, the layered character of identity also creates an essentialized approach between group identities like 'Occidental Europe', and 'the Balkans'. How does this essentialization work in practice? This is often done in reference to a core/periphery model. This periphery

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[86] James G. Carrier, Occidentalism: Images of the West, New York 1995; vgl. Occidentalism: The World Turned Upside-down, *American Ethnologist,* Vol. 19, (1992), pp. 195-212, 195.
[87] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 10.
[88] Milica Bakić-Hayden, Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia, *Slavic Review*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (Winter, 1995), pp. 917-931, 918.
[89] Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania, The Imperialism of the Imagination*, IX, X.
Vesna Goldsworthy, Der Imperialismus der Imagination, Konstruktionen Europas und des Balkans, pp. 253-274, 257.
[90] Diana Mishkova, *Beyond Balkanism, The Scholarly Politics of Region Making*.

serves as a contrasting dichotomy in which the ''us'' is placed in opposition to the ''them''. Although its shortcomings in presenting accurate portrayals has been amply discussed, essentialization forms an integral part in this process. As the dichotomy is part of a contrasting process, the essential image that is projected onto the periphery automatically says something about the subject that projects it, meaning that self-identity, and otherness exist in a symbiotic relationship.[91] The modus operandi of this relationship was accosted by James Carrier as a process in which ''political relations within and between societies shape the construction and interpretation of the essential attributes to these societies''.[92] Ergo, this political process of essentialization creates and imposes an essentialized identity for those that it considers peripheral. Whereas identity is diffuse by nature, an essentialized identity can often encompass various people regardless of what their actual differences are. Balkanism may be an adequate description of what this essentialized and imposed identity by the Occident encompasses.

Literature offers plenty of alternatives to the explanations that are offered by Balkanism. One such alternative is proposed by Larry Wolff who, using Orientalist theories, finds that a lot of the imagery that is being used to describe Eastern Europe was comparable to the Western description of Oriental lands.[93] In making little clear distinction between Eastern Europe and the Balkans, Wolff offers an alternative viewpoint to Balkanism, namely that of 'Eastern Europeanism'. In doing so, Wolff places comparatively little emphasis on the different ascriptions of identities between the Balkans and the rest of Eastern Europe by the EU. Instead, he emphasizes how the two share a lot of similarities from the EU's point of view. Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans* on the other hand meticulously follows the belonging – or not belonging – of the Balkans to Europe over the course of centuries and concludes it to be the ''dark side within''. Thereby placing it, (albeit begrudgingly) in Europe.

Neither side directly engages with the question of how their region differs from one another, but the result is all too relevant in an institutional constructivist framework. If considered to be Eastern European, the Balkans risk being associated with Russia on the basis of its Slavic character and (superficially) similar communist histories. Due to the complex relation to the concept of Russia to Europe this would be an inhibiting factor to Balkan accession. Similar judgement would befall the Balkans if it were to be

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[91] Eva-Lena Kurz, *The European Self-Image and Identity in Relation to the Western Balkans*, Master's Thesis, Radboud University of Nijmegen, (2011), 66
Iver B. Neumann and Jennifer M. Welsh, The Other in European Self-Definition: An Addendum to the Literature on International Society, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (October 1991), pp. 327-348, 329.
[92] James G. Carrier, *Occidentalism, Images of the West*, (Oxford University Press, 1995), 8
[93] Milica Bakić-Hayden, Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia, 920-921.

associated to its time under Ottoman rule.[94] While if associated with its mediaeval, Byzantine or Greek past, its chances of being seen as European (and therefore prospective EUropean) would be much enhanced.[95]

Although all these periods of history lay claim to the history of the Balkans, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Both Todorova, and Wolff describe the Balkans as a place with relative stability in the Occidental epistemology. Respectively, they either describe the Balkans as a 'dark side within', or as an entity that is an 'other' not entirely different from the Orient. Discourse analysis, the theory that both authors heavily employ, questions the very stability of these descriptions and thereby also offers room to highlight the historically constituted characteristics from the restrictions of the less dynamic episteme. If more emphasis is placed on this dynamism, then it would become possible for both assessments, and all claims to history, to hold truth from the viewpoint of Balkanist projections. The necessity to ask this question is exemplified in Andrew Hammond's 'Balkanism in Political Context' which aims to explain contemporary EU-Balkan relations through the context of the historic British response to the 19th century decline of the Ottoman Empire. Comparing the British projections onto the Balkan region with EU policies, there is insufficient regard for the way individual countries who hold different perceptions on the Balkans may influence EU policy.[96] To explain these actions, it is important to pair the essentialized regional approach with an approach that takes the geographically and culturally diffuse and porous interpretation of the Balkans into account through which the commonalities, but also the distinctions, may be recognized.

Resulting from these essentialized and gradualist discourses and perspectives of the Balkans is a multitude of ways of looking at the region. While regions in the EU, hold specific views of the Balkan region, individual EU countries may also hold singular discourses and perspectives on specific Balkan countries through which they ascribe an identity to these places. The existence of one of these visions does not dispel the existence of others. Afterall, an individual may hold a certain perspectives onto a region such as the Balkans, and a different perhaps even conflicting one on a subpart of that region. How these layers may work together can be explained through the German historian Reinhart Koselleck's theory on ''layered history''. As he explains in his work *Sediments of Time, on possible histories*, history can be seen as being composed of layers, all present at the same time, pressed together into one whole. While some of these layers are volatile and changing in saliency, some have hardened and exert their influence in more latent

[94] Erhan İçener David Phinnemore, Dimitris Papadimitriou, Continuity and change in the European Union's approach to enlargement: Turkey and Central and Eastern Europe compared, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2, (2010) pp. 207-223, 209.
Katherine E. Fleming, Orientalism, The Balkans, and Balkan Historiography, 1224-1225.
[95] Ibidem, 1221, 1224, 1225.
[96] Andrew Hammond, Balkanism in Political Context: From the Ottoman Empire to the EU, 8.

ways.[97] Considering that discourse and the perspectives that come with them are constituted through social interactions throughout history, these discourses are not markedly different from these historical layers. As Koselleck states, the tension under which these layers dwell may be the cause for historical change. However, historical change may also effect these layers in return - In every repetition there is rupture and therefore the possibility of something new.[98]

In the case of the Balkans this layered history means that every part of its history, be it ancient, Roman, Byzantine, independent mediaeval kingdoms, Ottoman, newly independent warring states, communism and post-communism, may all be present at the same time. Cultural histories such as Slavism, Orthodox Christianity or others could perform similar roles. The result is a projected image of the Balkans in which some EU countries may hold perspectives over a place whereby depending on their separate histories, these countries are more Orientalized, more Balkanized, Eastern Europeanized, or 'Europeanized'. Through the different salience that is attributed to these layers, countries may be considered to be part of a region and the discourse based characteristics that are associated with that region, or leave that region and become part of another one. These regions may also be diffuse, running into and over one another. Statements on the space of Orthodox Christianity could couple some countries to Eastern Europe, while statements on the ''powder keg'' of Europe are clearly directed at the Balkans. Likewise, old layers such as ones developed before WWII, which displayed an ethnic attitude towards Slavic people as being primitive, passive, and responsive only to hardhandedness, may still (unconsciously) be a part of the way that a region or a people is essentialized.[99]

This unconscious and ethnic layer of history aligns well with the image that Todorova, Wolff, or Bakic-Hayden paint of the representation of the Balkans. As the latter quotes;

> ''Violence was, indeed, all I knew of the Balkans: all I knew of the South Slavs, "for violence in the Balkans has been not only a description of a social condition but considered inherent in the nature of its people. There, grievances passed down through generations return ... to encircle the Balkans and hold the area in the grip of violence."[100]

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[97] Reinhart Koselleck, *Sediments of Time, On Possible Histories*, XIII.
[98] Ibidem, XIV.
[99] Ezequiel Adamovsky, Euro-Orientalism and the Making of the Concept of Eastern Europe in France, 1810-1880, *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 77 (September 2005), pp. 591–628, 625.
Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 19, 185.
[100] Milica Bakić-Hayden, Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia918-919.

These old layers could thus easily be transcribed onto the essentialized version of their prescribed identities. As this is considered essential to the Occidental gaze, so are the opposing descriptions of itself as inherently more advanced of this older version of itself and thus peaceful. Whereas the older layers persist, new layers may gain or lose in importance. This explains why seemingly contradictory assessments of what constitutes Europe may all hold truths but are simultaneously false. These statements have been made over the course of centuries, but all exist simultaneously in one layered history. In this way, a letter to the old Habsburg outlooks court contemplating how to ''throw them (the Ottomans) completely out of Europe'',[101] can exist side to side with statements from the Yugoslavian wars in the 1990's that condemned the place for un-European behaviour.[102] Interestingly, the aforementioned principle of essentialism would mean that states that are in the Balkans may be grouped together in one layer, in spite of them not partaking in the historical events that constituted this layer. Most prominently, this means that countries like Albania, Bulgaria, and North Macedonia may be attributed the same negative values associated with the Yugoslavian wars of the 1990's without their (official) partaking in this war.[103] This is especially noticeable in references to these wars as the 'Balkan Wars', connecting them to the historic wars of 1912-1913.[104] Showcasing this essentialization, the signifier Balkan Wars, which refers to conflicts between Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, Serbia, the Ottoman Empire, and Romania, could be connected to a wars involving, , Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia. Todorova fittingly asks:

> Why does the war need to be Balkan? The Spanish civil war was Spanish, not Iberian or Southwest European; the Greek civil war was never Balkan; the problem of Northern Ireland is fittingly localized—it is called neither Irish, nor British, not even English, which it precisely is. Why is it, then, that "Balkan" is used for a country at war that, before the sad events, insisted it was not Balkan and was previously not labelled Balkan but considered to be the shining star of Eastern Europe by its Western supporters? Has "Balkan" become so much of a Schimpfwort that it is hoped that those to whom it is applied would be horrified?[105]

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[101] Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe, The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, 166.
[102] Erik de Lange, Perception and Policy, *Balkanism and the Dutch intervention in Bosnia*, 45
[103] Andrew Hammond, 'The danger zone of Europe', Balkanism between the Cold War and 9/11, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2005), pp. 135-154, 139.
[104] Atdhe Hetemi, Orientalism, Balkanism and the Western Viewpoint in the Context of Former Yugoslavia, *Iliria International Review*, Vol.1., (2015), pp. 311-335, 319.
European Commission, Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission Plenary Session of the European Parliament Strasbourg, Speech/00/352, (3 October 2000).
[105] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 186.

This regionalised essentialism showcases how through Balkanism, countries are imbued with values which are not their own. In Foucauldian terms this could be explained by the Balkans, being outside of the Occidental episteme. Being outside this system of knowledge, the Balkans have fewer possibilities to dictate the perception of their countries to the outside world. Instead, as it is judged from the outside by the EU, it is less known and therefore essentialized into one region, adopting all of this region's qualities.[106] This corresponds well to the vision as it was presented by Katherine Flaming, when she stated that from the perspective of the Balkanist observer while the region is seen as a violent melting pot of small nations, these nations are all thought to be basically the same. This reduces these countries to 'every countries', composite places that are based on the assumption of interchangeable characteristics. Through this, the region can be seen as one singular place where knowing one part of it, means to know the rest.[107] As such the whole of the Balkans were connected to a war that was deemed to be decisively un-EUropean and therefore nonconductive to their accession to the EU.

2.5 Conclusion

How does one study a region in all its diversity and uniqueness? In the case of the Balkans, many have tried their hand at creating a theory which would explain the relationship between this region and the Occident. The theory that is to be considered leading in this thesis comes from Maria Todorova as it is set out in her book Imagining the Balkans. In it, Todorova presents a European perception of the Balkans that is 'the dark side within', a place that is recognizably European but a perverse, backward Balkan distortion of the peaceful and civilized European self.

Todorova is however not alone in presenting theories on the Balkans. Whereas she describes the region as a 'dark side within', others see it as an 'other' that is seen as inherently different from Europe. Although the substance of these theories is not put into doubt, they are considered to offer only partial explanations to questions about contemporary political developments. Whereas some seek out to establish a gradualist vision of both the Occidental observer and the Balkan subject, others seek a more regional approach in which they attempt to distil an essentialized region to region projection. Instead of challenging these theories and opting for a new one, I argue that several of them hold value in explaining the complexities and contradictions of contemporary society in which this de-essentialization and essentialization exist congruently.

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[106] Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe, The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, 15.
[107] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 10.

At its core, discourse is a dynamic system of knowledge. However, this dynamism does not feature prominently in the works Todorova, Wolff, or Said. While these authors historicize their theories by discussing its origins, they predominantly look for the continuity of their discourse through history while paying little interest in its dynamic application in the current day. By coupling these various theories to Reinhart Koselleck's theory on layered history, I aim to offer an analysis that showcases the contemporary changeability on the Balkans. This is done by arguing that these theories exist in a layered historical structure in which all endure into the present. This results in a spectrum in which, through discursive action, countries in the Balkan may shift towards one interpretation of the Balkans that is based on a historical layer of the Balkans as an oriental 'other', shift towards one which sees it as a 'dark side within', or even turn it into a part of Europe.

Throughout history, this meant that the deep-rooted layer of Todorova's Balkanism that saw the Balkans as a 'dark side within' could become more akin to Larry Wolff's Eastern Europeanism when the region was under Communist rule. Dynamic as these historic layers of remembering are, the Balkanist layer would readily resurface in order to explain the violent behaviour that was considered un-European by observers in the West. Intersecting and coexisting with these essentialized projections on the region are de-essentialized and possibly deviating projections. Well established by authors such as Bakic-Hayden or Mishkova, these de-essentialized images may form in the interaction between Balkan states, European states or both. Susceptible to change like the essentialized images, these projections may influence a country's specific standing in the eyes of the Western observer. The result of which is that essentialized perceptions of the region may negatively (or positively) influence political perceptions of a country, whereas specific singular perceptions may offer a pathway out of this regionalization and towards EU accession.

3. Balkanism and the EU accession processes

Having explained how the theory of Balkanism can be combined and criticized into a hybrid theory that encompasses multiple strengths it is now important to see how this could be fitted into the specific political context of the EU accession process. This is explored with the help of two theories: namely that of 'institutional constructivism', and 'securitization'. In short, institutional constructivism purports that if a country is perceived as being more a part of Europe, it is more likely to be included into the European Union. On the other hand, securitization theory when applied to European Enlargement, states that if a country is deemed a threat, the EU may act to secure this threat through by aligning the county to the EU's standards. In this form, a country's accession to the European Union is the ultimate mode of eliminating a country's perceived threat.

For the purpose of this chapter, the two are considered to be two sides on a single spectrum. On the one side, there is the status of a country as a European state, eligible for accession, while on the other end it is securitized and needs to be pushed towards alignment to the EU to eliminate its threat. From this perspective, countries are attributed a value that is either 'European' and thus secure, peaceful, and compatible enough to the EU for the county to accede. To bring a country closer to this point means to 'Europeanize' this country.[108] If a country is on the other side of the spectrum, then it is considered a threat, both to itself and ultimately also to the EU. Being seen as threatening, the country is ineligible to join the EU, but at the same time urgently needs to be brought on a path that will make it more secure, and peaceful – in other words, to Europeanize it. Discursive theories on the Balkans are a part of the epistemological basis that influences both these theories. As Europe's 'dark side within' it is in a strenuous position in which it is may be discursively pushed Europeanized and made part of the EU, or securitized and subsequently otherized, pushing it away from EU membership. The position in between these two is characterized by an unequal power relation that is expressed in a domineering fashion by the EU onto the Balkan countries.

This first sub chapter will contextualize the accession processes in which these theories have proven their analytical use. After an introduction of the actors and processes relevant to the Enlargement of the EU, the two theories are first individually dissected and linked to the context of Balkanism. This is

[108] This is not applicable in every case as some countries such as Morocco may never become part of Europe, no matter how secure, peaceful and compatible it is. It is instead mostly applicable to countries who may be geographically classified as European, but wherein the Europeanization or lack thereof places them closer to the centre or further to the periphery.

treated in so far as it is applicable to a wider European strategy for the neighbourhood, the lessons of which will be applied to the individual research countries in the next chapter.

The application of these theories makes pervasive use of the term 'European' and its derivatives to point to the European Union. As is later explained, this is part of a self-identification strategy that is strongly recurrent in application talks. To distinguish between the different concepts of Europe – namely those that pertain to the continent as a whole, or merely a part of it – a reference is made either to Europe in reference to the continent, or EUrope when referencing the European claim that is made by the European Union.

3.1 EU Accession policy towards the Balkans

Before the post-structuralist arguments on the perception of the Balkans are coupled to political theory, it is worthwhile to contextualize the political process onto which the two are applied. What are the various processes and actors involved in this complex process of a state's accession to the European Union, and in which context might the theories that are to be coupled to Balkanism exert their influence on this process?

Above all, the process of a state's accession to the EU is a bulwark to bureaucracy and an ode to labouring civil servants. As the entirety of a state structure is brought into the regulative and political framework of the EU, the accession asks for a thorough restructuring of the state apparatus and an enduringly costly commitment by society to conform to it. With such a lengthy process, one could be forgiven for thinking it is inflexible, highly structured, or even highly strategized. In fact, this lengthy process is above all characterized by an uneasy dualism around the principle of conditionality and interpretation. On the hand of conditionality there is the process of a state's closing of the so called 'chapters of the acquis' – in which each chapter can be characterized as a step towards alignment to the EU in a specific field. Next to that, there is the aspect of interpretation, in which actors are given a significant measure of discretion about how these rules are interpreted. It is there that biases and political motivations can conduce or trammel a state's attempt to join the Union. This dualism has the consequence that neither the analysis of accession as a bureaucratic/technocratic process, nor from a purely institutional constructivist perspective can provide a full explanation for enlargement policies.[109]

Especially the European Commission tends to play a conducive role in many countries' accession processes. In this function, it holds responsibility for most of the bureaucratic work in agreements that precede accession, and the accession process itself – most prominently the closing of the chapters of the

[109] Dimitris Papadimitriou, Eli Gateva, Between Enlargement-Led Europeanisation and Balkan Exceptionalism: An Appraisal of Bulgaria's and Romania's Entry into the European Union, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, Vol. 10, No. 2, (2009) pp. 152-166, 153.

acquis communautaire. As this process may take decades, it is up to the Commission to interpret the readiness of countries to close a chapter in a flexible and evolutionary way that is fitting with the politically dynamic environment. In this process it is guided by the red lines as they are stipulated in the Treaty of Maastricht (Article 49), combined with the conclusions of the Council's Copenhagen summit of 1993 that were later enshrined in the Treaty of Nice (2001), and finally added to in the Treaty of Lisbon (2007). Though these treaties provide some structure to the process, they still hold ample room for interpretation (or discursive bias). For example, some of the most important criteria that resulted from the Copenhagen summit required left vacant the definitions of what constitutes a 'democracy', a 'market economy', or 'the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces'. Nor did the Copenhagen criteria clarify the actual principles on which conformity to the chapters would be measured.[110]

After the chapters of the acquis are closed off, the Commission gives its recommendation for the country to accede, whereupon it is up to the European Parliament to approve of the enlargement (something which they traditionally do), and to the European Council to give the green light.[111] Although these parameters have stayed the same, the rest of the enlargement process has seen many evolutionary steps. This evolutionary approach is a salient feature in the matter of accession groups.

The first of these accession groups came upon the end of the Soviet Union and the regional order that was associated with it. Describing it as a historic opportunity to fulfil its duty for the reunification of Europe (a trope that will be expanded upon later), the EU actively engaged with the new democracies on its doorstep. This active engagement meant that the EU would even commit itself to these countries *before* any of them had applied for membership. The accession applications of these countries were grouped into the Luxembourg group - Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Cyprus, and the Helsinki group - Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Malta. Wherein only Malta and Cyprus were not formerly behind the Iron Curtain, while Slovenia was a former part of Yugoslavia instead of the Warsaw Pact. The countries for whom the bridging of the divide that was caused by the Iron Curtain were also called the CEEC countries. While most of these states acceded in 2004, due to dissatisfaction over reforms, Bulgaria and Romania have to wait until 2007. By that time, the grand narrative of post-Cold War

[110] Malvina Tema, The European Union and the Paradox of Accession: the Conflicting Logics of Integration and Democracy in the Case of Albania, *The Western Balkans Policy Review*, Volume 1, Issue 2 (2011), 49, 50.
[111] Dimitris Papadimitriou, Eli Gateva, Between Enlargement-Led Europeanisation and Balkan Exceptionalism155.'

rehabilitation lost in discursive power, as EU actors began to doubt the ability of the Union to take in many more members.[112]

This increasing weariness to enlargement also became apparent in the EU's handling of the other nations in the Balkans. Whereas up to 1999 the European Union was not very invested in Europeanizing the Balkans.[113] Indeed, at the beginning of that decade, it was seen as being highly reluctant to expand eastward at all, leading its strategies to be criticized as 'a conglomeration of discrete activities than the result of a well-developed strategy', 'dilatory, technical and ad hoc' and having been undertaken with 'no sense of urgency'.[114] It would not be until the end of the main conflicts of the Yugoslav wars that the it was realized that the process could be a good method of stabilizing and securing the region.[115] This was epitomized by the initiation of the Stabilization and Association Process (1999). Fitting with the emphasis on stability and uncommitted involvement, these countries would strive to conclude 'Stabilization and Association Agreements' as opposed to the earlier group's 'Europe Agreements'.[116] Although Slovenia managed to evade the trap, the EU invented the term 'Western Balkans' for these Balkan states that missed the boat on starting accession talks. This awkwardly placed Albania, a country with differing historical background, into one group with the post-Yugoslav states.[117] Fitting with the backdrop of the Yugoslav wars, these countries were engaged through more narrative more specified towards security and stabilization. These agreements would have roughly the same goal – to establish peace and security in a country by aligning it to EU standards, and as was established in the 2003 EU-Western Balkans Summit in Thessaloniki. However, showing no break with the past in seeing a lack of urgency to enlarge, the EU also maintained that it was not committed to a set date do so.[118]

Even though the Commission's stance on enlargement has grown accordingly apprehensive, it retains a more conductive posture than the Council. This has become evident in the discrepancy between

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[112] Erhan İçener, David Phinnemore, Dimitris Papadimitriou, Continuity and change in the European Union's approach to enlargement, 217.
[113] Walter Mattli, Thomas Plümper, The demand-side politics of EU enlargement: democracy and the application for EU membership, *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 9, No. 4, (2002) pp. 550-574, 553-554.
[114] Atsuko Higashino, For the Sake of 'Peace and Security'? The Role of Security in the European Union Enlargement Eastwards, Cooperation and Conflict: *Journal of the Nordic International Studies Association,* Vol. 39, No. 4, (2004), pp. 347–368, 364.
[115] Lucia Vesnic-Alujevic, European Integration of Western Balkans: From Reconciliation to European Future, *Centre for European Studies*, (2012), 24.
[116] Steven Blockmans, *Tough Love: The European Union's Relations with the Western Balkans*, Dissertation, University of Leiden, (2007), 251.
[117] Steven Blockmans, *Tough Love: The European Union's Relations with the Western Balkans*, 13.
[118] Ibidem, 252.

the Commission's recommendation for the launch of negotiations with North Macedonia in 2009, and Albania in 2016, while Council approval to this would take until 2020.[119] This discrepancy begs the question – why is the Commission such an avid proponent of enlargement and how does this fit into the wider EU enlargement narrative?

With an abundance of states that aspire for EU membership, enlargement seems to be permanently on the mind of the EU's visions for the future. But this expansion is not necessarily a given, in fact, many of the early dominant theories that sought to explain the workings of the EU perceived it as an economic club that acts on a rational cost/benefit analysis that always ultimately lead to mutually beneficial outcomes. From this perspective, EU policy making is the result of a bargaining process between two actors who try to maximise material preferences.[120] When viewed through this lens, enlargement is not necessarily the optimal way to achieve this as it puts a strain on the EU's structure, institutions, finances, and politics that puts a limit on its 'integration capacity' which subsequently led to 'enlargement fatigue', a central argument that resulted from the ambitious 2004 enlargement round.[121] Considering these strains begs the question – why does the EU expand and how is this presented in the Balkans?

With some exceptions, the EU's expansion has often been the prerogative of bureaucrats and diplomats, acting under the auspices of a 'permissive consensus' by the public. This process was radically changed in the great enlargements into post-communist Europe in 2004. Since then, enlargement has featured with significantly more prominence in domestic political debates. Emphasizing the value of popular support, the EU's 2005 enlargement strategy stipulated to increasingly engage in communication efforts that gauged the perception of applicant countries by the public, and their opinions on where the borders of the EU should lie.[122] With the increasingly heavy involvement by the public, traditional

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[119] European Commission, *European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, North Macedonia*, website accessed: 10 July 2020 https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/countries/detailed-country-information/north-macedonia_en
European Commission, *Communication From the Commission to The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of The Regions, 2016 Communication on EU enlargement Policy*, COM (2016), 715 final, Brussels, 9.11.2016.
[120] Malvina Tema, The European Union and the Paradox of Accession, 46.
[121] Erhan İçener, David Phinnemore, Dimitris Papadimitriou, Continuity and change in the European Union's approach to enlargement, 215.
[122] European Commission, Communication from the Commission, 2005 Enlargement Strategy Paper, Brussels, 9.11.2005, COM (2005) 561 final, 4.

arguments on geo-strategic, political, or economic benefits are increasingly accompanied by questions of identities, both as they are attributed to the self, and to the other.[123]

It is in this influencing through perceptions that Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier's theory can affect the enlargement procedure. Using normative arguments, states or other political actors are driven by their own self-perception to push for the enlargement of the Union as a whole. Moving others to do the same, Schimmelfenning suggests actors use a form of 'rhetorical entrapment' wherein enlargement-sceptical actors are shamed into changing their stance by the use of normative arguments.[124] The European Commission has proved itself to be an avid user of these normative arguments for the sake of enlargement. As the 'keeper of the Treaties', the Commission plays a special role in promoting a unified EUropean narrative. This was especially prominent in the run up to the great enlargement of 2004, wherein important actors such as Prodi or Verheugen would actively try to remove hurdles that might hinder the accession of the new members.[125]

3.2 Europeanization and Balkanism – an institutional constructivist perspective

While the study of discourse on the Balkans can count on Maria Todorova's Balkanism as a mainstay element, a similarly singular guiding source is not offered in explaining the driving forces behind the accession processes of the European Union. The overwhelming academic interest in this process has produced a wealth of material through which the enlargement processes could be analysed.

This was not always so. In the beginnings of the study of EU enlargement the predominant schools of thought, such as neo-functionalism and transactionalism have tended to focus more on increased cooperation than on geographical expansion. If enlargement was written on at all, it was most often done in the context of descriptive studies, singular cases, or policy analysis. In accordance with the perception of the international organization as an economic club, this theoretical study of enlargement had long been the prerogative of economics. Because of that, its studies focussed above all on cost/benefit analyses of membership for acceding members, and for the existing club. This political-goal orientated research was often concerned with matters such as the institutional adaptation of prospective EU members. Over time however, political concerns were introduced by the school of rationalist institutionalism, followed in turn

[123] Erhan İçener, David Phinnemore, Dimitris Papadimitriou, Continuity and change in the European Union's approach to enlargement, 220.
[124] Helene Sjursen, Why Expand? The Question of Legitimacy and Justification in the EU's Enlargement Policy, *JCMS*, Vol. 40, No. 3. (2002) pp. 491–513, 500.
[125] Erhan İçener, David Phinnemore, Dimitris Papadimitriou, Continuity and change in the European Union's approach to enlargement, 213.

by constructivist institutionalists who introduced ideational factors such as norms, ideas and national identities.[126]

These established views on the economic rationality to enlargement were challenged however as a result of the geopolitical upheaval that resulted from the end of the Cold War at the beginning of the 1990's.[127] As the formerly Communist countries regained the independence to decide their own foreign policy, EEC/EU membership quickly became the ultimate goal for many of them. This sudden abundance of potential for enlargement led to much academic writing on the subject, which also led researchers to criticize the economic purview over EU studies. One such criticism came from a study that was dubbed 'institutional constructivism'. Shaped by the German political scientists Frank Schimmelfenning and Ulrich Sedelmeier, this theory sets out to explain that issues of enlargement are generally shaped by ideational and cultural factors, most prominently represented by the concept of 'community', and the 'cultural match' with another community. To study enlargement then meant to analyse 'social identities, values, and norms, not the material, distributional, consequences of enlargement for individual actors'. In a gradual fashion, the measure in which this matches to the EU, the more likely the EU is to perceive itself as having a 'duty' or a 'solidarity' to enlarge and incorporate these countries.[128]

These social identities, values, and norms are considered to be more important as they imbed the ideas on which the EU defines itself. On the basis of this self-definition, the Union judges the measure of similarity that it has to other states and the related amount of willingness it has to become part of its group. As German political scientist Sieglinde Gstöhl, argues; political orders need to resonate with pre-existing identities that are embedded in political institutions and cultures if they are to present themselves as a legitimate. If they are illegitimate, regarded as a threat, or as foreign to essential elements of the self-identity, integration policies become hampered. Ergo, when these similarities in values and norms are perceived high enough, the EU will find more incentives to pursue stronger ties and incorporation into its own structure.[129] The establishment of these differences between the EU and other regions, shows obvious chances for a coupling to Balkanism as from a discursive point of view, this lack of similarity would be

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[126] Frank Schimmelfennig, Ulrich Sedelmeier, Theorizing EU enlargement: research focus, hypotheses, and the state of research, *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 9, No. 4, (2002) pp. 500-528, 523, 524.
Erhan İçener, David Phinnemore, Dimitris Papadimitriou, Continuity and change in the European Union's approach to enlargement, 209.
[127] Frank Schimmelfennig, Ulrich Sedelmeier, Theorizing EU enlargement, 502.
[128] Martin Dangerfield, Reviewed Work: Constructing the Path to Eastern Enlargement: The Uneven Policy Impact of EU Identity by Ulrich Sedelmeier, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 86, No. 1 (January 2008), pp. 188-190.
[129] Frank Schimmelfennig, Ulrich Sedelmeier, Theorizing EU enlargement, 513.

constituted by historically established discourse on the region, something which also according to Gstöhl is historically changeable.[130]

Owing to this appreciation of similarities, the EU thus values other states either as potential partners. But what of those that it perceives as being too dissimilar to see as potential compatriots and possibly future EU members? Some insight to this question may be provided through the framework of securitization theory. As the episteme that constitutes the self-identification of the EU creates partners and outsiders, it also provides it with Others that are placed outside of the group. Being too dissimilar from the EU, they may be discursively made out to be threats that in one way or another pose a danger to the Union.[131] While, as institutional constructivism prescribes, when they are perceived as more similar, they are more likely to be seen as partners. In this sense, institutional constructivism provides a latent tendency to be willing - or disapproving - towards the accession of a European country.

If a country's compatibility to the EUropean self-identification is a conducive factor for a country's chances to accede – then the important question is what does it mean to be EUropean? Doubtlessly, no single answer could be an adequate reply to this question. The question of whether or not there is such a thing as Europeanness, or a European identity has been the subject of numerous studies. This is fitting as the EU itself can only be defined as a contested entity as neither public or academic debates have successfully managed to establish the nature and purpose of the EU. As it is neither a state, nor just an international organisation, its status remains unclear and ambiguous.[132] Although it is far from a nation-state, the search for a definition of ''Europeanness'' can still take inspiration from the discussion of what makes a nation state. Whether it is territory, myths, memory, culture or any other of the plethora of explanations for what constitutes a nation, for the purpose of this research it suffices to say that all could be surmised as being a collection of narratives which inhabit a particular discursive space.[133]

So, what are these narratives that could create ''the European? As stated, in spite of the EU not being synonymous with the Europe, it has appropriated the term and claimed to be its embodiment. With the appropriation of the term, the EU also lays claim to the wider cultural self-definitions of being at the forefront of modernity and civilization – a symbol of cultural superiority and power. It was at this time that

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[130] Sieglinde Gstöhl, Scandinavia and Switzerland: small, successful and stubborn towards the EU, *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol 9, No.4, (2002) pp. 529-549, 530, 536.
[131] Atsuko Higashino, For the Sake of 'Peace and Security'? 351.
[132] Helene Sjursen, Enlargement and the nature of the EU polity, In: Questioning EU Enlargement, Europe in search of identity, edited by Helene Sjursen, (Routledge, 2006), 1.
[133] Nevena Nancheva, *Transforming identities in Europe: Bulgaria and Macedonia between nationalism and Europeanization*, PhD Thesis, University of Westminster, (2013), 32-34.

philosophers came to self-perceive ''Europe'' as an entity that was coextensive with modernity. From this light, to Europeanize a country thus means more than the implementation of the EU's chapters of the acquis, but as one of the earliest proponents of the theory worded it; "an incremental process reorienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy-making" – in other words, to make the subject think and act in a way that is similar to the modern reasoning of established West European countries.[134]

If to Europeanize is to become modern and take a seat at the dining room table ensemble of countries that see themselves as the seat of civilization in the world, then it also needed claimants against whose primitivity its own cultural superiority and power could shine all the much brighter.[135] As the Occident's self-ascribed modernity was multi-facetted, it required different 'Others', to contrast the different self-accredited virtues of progress, liberty, civilization. Based on images created at the time of the Enlightenment the Occident the East, there was the despotic Orient, in the intermediate space between it, the idea of Eastern Europe evolved.[136] Iver Neumann further characterized these three other as various ''East'' in a process reminiscent of Bakic-Hayden's Nesting Orientalisms. These Easts ranged from Russia, to Turkey, to the so-called inner Easts, against whom those who were viewed by their Western neighbours as Eastern, could nonetheless define themselves as Western. Of these others, Western Europe accredited Eastern Europe as the primitive, pre-modern contrast to the European Self. [137]

Viewed from the Occident, this pre-modern state was an inescapable state of affairs for their fellow Europeans to the East. Only the Occident could rise above these challenges and face the changing environments of history. It is not difficult to see how the EU adopted these same ideas; 'Europe can rise to the great challenges that history throws in its path', European Commission President Romano Prodi exclaimed.[138] Indeed, this interpretation of Europe's release from the bounds of historical repetition and determinism means that the EU is able to move at the forefront of civilization where others are bound by their history to stay behind in their set ways. This self-description of unboundedness is most obviously displayed in the Union's self-definition against its own temporal other – its own history of antagonizations

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[134] Sandro Knezovic, Valbona Zeneli, Europeanization in a Difficult Environment, *Southeastern Europe*, Vol. 42, (2018), pp. 199-223, 201-202.
Diana Mishkova, Symbolic Geographies and Visions of Identity A Balkan Perspective, *European Journal of Social* Theory Vol. 11, No. 2, (2008), pp. 237–256.
[136] Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe, The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, 7.
[137] Eva-Lena Kurz, *The European Self-Image and Identity in Relation to the Western Balkans*, 62-63.
Pamela Ballinger, Whatever Happened to Eastern Europe? 51-52.
[138] European Commission, Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission Plenary Session of the European Parliament Strasbourg, Speech/00/352, (3 October 2000).

and warfare. One of the most fundamental founding acts of the Union would be to break from this historical repetition. As the Schuman declaration - one of the monumental founding acts that would ultimately lead to the creation of the European Union - read:

> ''By pooling basic production and by instituting a new High Authority, whose decisions will bind France, Germany and other member countries, this proposal will lead to the realization of the first concrete foundation of a European federation indispensable to the preservation of peace''.[139]

There, enshrined in the founding acts was the clearly articulated goal to let European cooperation be the basis is of making war between the European states a thing of the past – an impossibility. European cooperation vowed to make the continent more unified, and therefore more peaceful. This addition of peaceful coexistence to the historical layers that make up European self-definition was embodied by the supranational body that was at first the High Authority of the Coal and Steel Community, and later evolved into the European Commission. Since the time since its creation coincides with the accomplishment that ''Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free. The violence of the first half of the 20th Century has given way to a period of peace and stability unprecedented in European history'' the responsibility for this achievement is claimed by the Commission.

To bring European states under the banner of this project of peaceful co-existence and cooperation would then be dubbed to 'Europeanize' these countries. But to do this, the candidate for Europeanization would first need to be classified as an European State by the European Commission in a flagrant symbolization of the EU ascribing to itself the essence of European identity.[140] The effect of this is to justify a political-cultural condition in which some countries' Europeanness is a given, while others have to work for it.[141] With reference to this identity, this would mean that the hierarchical make-up of the ascribed identity shifts to one that is deemed familiar. As enough identity characteristics are shared, the discourse dynamically incorporates the society into the group through Europeanization.[142] As the place that the term of ''Europeanization'' is in the centre of the EU's thinking, it is also a consistent part of the EUropean lexicon when it considers its geographical neighbours. Appearing first at the European Council Summit in Copenhagen in 1993, they described these 'European values' above all as good governance, liberal

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[139] Robert Schuman, *Schuman Declaration*, 9 May 1950, (Website accessed on: 4 August, 2020) https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/europe-day/schuman-declaration_en

[140] Article 49, Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Official Journal C202/43, 7/6/2016.

[141] Andrew Hammond, Balkanism in Political Context: From the Ottoman Empire to the EU, 8

[142] Diana Mishkova, *Beyond Balkanism, The Scholarly Politics of Region Making*, 364.

democracy, and respect for human rights. The more countries would align with these values, the closer they could associate themselves with the EU.[143] In accordance with Institutional constructivism, the more European a state becomes, the more the EU declares itself to have an obligation to provide membership, inclusion, citizenship and other grants that come with Europeanness.[144] This closeness is limited however, to certain basic prerequisites that pertain that countries like those in the Balkans have a possibility to Europeanize, while other neighbours, like those in North Africa, are inherently incapable of full Europeanization as they hold no chance for EU membership.[145] The tension in this contested Europeanness is most prominently displayed in the discussion around the EU accession of Turkey, the answer of which could be detrimental or conductive to the country's prospects. [146]

If the tenants of institutional constructivism are followed, then these oppositions in EUropean self-identification and the identity that is attributed to the Balkans would have a negative effect on the chances of Balkan countries to accede to the European Union. This places much emphasis on the question; are the Balkans thought to be part of Europe? Or more specifically; what is the role of the Balkans in the EUropean self-identification? Fundamentally, the EU Perceives itself as the core of what it meant to be European, the EU constitutes itself as a centre over an expansive periphery. Being at the core over this periphery it sees itself as donning a mantle of 'spiritual heading', connecting itself to the highest of human culture and modernity. This head position also means that it is beholden to the ideal of the unification of Europe. Being outside of the EU, the countries in the Western Balkans today are said to appear as a ''black hole'' surrounded by EU territory.[147] Being described as a 'black hole' these outsiders are above all defined by their missing of factors that keep it from attaining full Europeanization. Their lacking these factors are then taken up as examples of why these countries have been unable to achieve the success that the EU has. These ''lands of absence'' are constantly bound to have their un-EUropean qualities explained by their deviation from EUropean ingredients like history or institutions.[148] In the case of post-communist Europe, they are seen to have lagged behind because they were unable to deviate from the ahistorical path from

[143] Freerk Boedeltje, The Other Spaces of Europe: Seeing European Geopolitics Through the Disturbing Eye of Foucault's Heterotopias, *Geopolitics*, Vol, 17, No. 1, (2012) pp. 1-24, 2-3.
[144] Ibidem, 11, 12.
[145] Ibidem, 2-3.
[146] Erhan İçener, David Phinnemore, Dimitris Papadimitriou, Continuity and change in the European Union's approach to enlargement.
[147] Tanja Petrovic, *A long Way Home: Representations of the Western Balkans in Political and Media Discourses*, (Ljublijana, Mirovni Institute, 2009), 78.
[148] Ezequiel Adamovsky, Euro-Orientalism and the Making of the Concept of Eastern Europe in France, 1810-1880, 591.

which the rest of EUrope freed itself – whereas the Balkans are a place of lacking, the EU is a place of plentitude, one in which the European observer should feel happy to live.[149]

However, it is thought that these lessons may still be replicated through the import of the liberal-bourgeois model of EUropean success with ingredients such as market forces, privatization, and civil society that resemble the demandant's own situation.[150] Only through the import of these superior EUropean models would these countries be able to develop from their ''land of absence'' and become Europeanised by design. This paternalism is ubiquitous to EUrope's perspective of its surroundings, indeed it is part of its founding treaty, in which Article 8 proclaims that that ''The Union shall develop a special relationship with neighbouring countries, aiming to establish an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness, founded on the values of the Union and characterised by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation''.[151] A position that exemplifies that the EU has to reach out to its neighbours and draw them closer but only on the EU's terms. This position already became saliently clear during the Cold War. At the time, the 'myth of Yalta' popularized the notion amongst EUropeans that the division of Europe symbolized a failure of the West to help its Eastern European brothers. Having supposedly abandoned their fellow Europeans to the Russian 'other', this tarnish on history could only be removed by the removal of the foreign imposed border that was the Iron Curtain.[152]

> That is the reason why enlargement is the right response to the end of the Cold War and the breakup of the Communist bloc. How are we supposed to explain to the people of Europe who only gained their freedom and self-determination in the last decade that the advantages of European integration are only available to those who happened to be on the "right" side of the iron curtain after 1945. (…) We will not permit any new division of Europe. We want to extend peace and stability to the whole of Europe.[153]

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[149] Hartmut Behr, The European Union in the Legacies of Imperial Rule? EU Accession Politics Viewed from a Historical Perspective, *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 13, No, 2, (June 2007) pp. 239–262, 250. Andrew Hammond, 'The danger zone of Europe', Balkanism between the Cold War and 9/11, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2005), pp. 135-154, 150.

[150] Eva-Lena Kurz, *The European Self-Image and Identity in Relation to the Western Balkans*, 62-63. Pamela Ballinger, Whatever Happened to Eastern Europe? 51-52.

[151] Article 8.1, Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Official Journal C 326, 26/10/2012 P. 0001 - 0390

[152] Helene Sjursen, Why Expand? The Question of Legitimacy and Justification in the EU's Enlargement Policy, 505, 507.

[153] European Parliament*, Debate Progress towards accession by the 12 candidate countries*, Nicholas Bethell, (COM(1999) 501 - C5-0024/2000 - 1997/2179(COS)), Strasbourg, (3 October 2000).

Although positioning itself magnanimously, in assuming this posture of superiority of being 'on the right side', the countries that deal with it are expected to bring merits, while the Union itself can remain non-conciliatory.[154] This one-sidedness is emblematic for a dominating posturing from the EU towards its candidate countries. This insistence on not having to learn from the other, but merely having to export its wisdoms and gradually expand its mastery shows a relation in which a coercive superior is allowed to set goals to the inferior.[155] While countries are said that they 'accede' to the Union, they are also said to be 'absorbed' and taken into the greater EUropean whole.[156] This even goes so far as an EU official describing its dealings with prospectively acceding governments as a 'learning process' in which 'little by little we see their adaptation to our values and to our language of communication'.[157] In accordance with this civilizing mission, the EU's repertoire of integration gives an impression of the superiority of European values—values that are not negotiable with 'outsiders' because they are the foundation of the EU's self-identification. Thus, in emphasizing its internal unity, the EU distances itself from its periphery.[158]

Allegations of paternalist practices in EU policies have to be accompanied with a footnote on the realities of international relations. As Todorova herself stated, the problem of identifying the Balkans is a part of a larger whole problem in the identities of small nations. Their inherent vulnerabilities always condemning them to a position of dependence, vulnerability, and under the restraint of its dominant neighbour's gaze.[159] Likewise, the EU sees itself as a core power on the world stage and in doing so assigns a peripheral designation to countries around to which it owes a responsibility. In the case of the Balkans, these circumstances are exacerbated by the geographic reality of their surrounded status by the EU.

In spite of the EU's ideals of uniting Europe, the bloc's modus operandi does not reflect the idealism of these goals. For a region like the Balkans, the economy is by necessity geared towards that of the EU and if it wants to expand these links, it is automatically subjected to action plans and conditionality that aim for Europeanization. While EU initiatives and treaties are keen to emphasize that 'embracing and committing

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[154] European Commission, *Communication from the Commission, 2005 Enlargement Strategy Paper*, Brussels, SEC(2005) 1433, COM (2005) 561 final (9 November 2005), 6.
[155] Andrew Hammond, Balkanism in Political Context: From the Ottoman Empire to the EU, 7.
Malvina Tema, The European Union and the Paradox of Accession, 49 – 50.
[156] European Commission, *Communication from the Commission, 2005 Enlargement Strategy Paper*, Brussels, SEC(2005) 1433, COM (2005) 561 final (9 November 2005), 3.
[157] Bohdana Dimitrovova, Imperial re-bordering of Europe: the case of the European Neighbourhood Policy, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 2, (2012) pp. 249-267, 257.
[158] Bohdana Dimitrovova, Imperial re-bordering of Europe: the case of the European Neighbourhood Policy, 264.
[159] Freerk Boedeltje, The Other Spaces of Europe, 3.

to core European values is a choice'[160], in reality, these countries that are surrounded by the EU have few other options. When engaged, the EU is adamant to use its leverage to improve human rights and the conditions of minorities, concurrently are equally keen to use similar definitions of 'European Standards' and the alignment of these countries to these standards.[161] These European economic standards mostly pertain to liberal policies, most prominently in free trade and privatization of public sector enterprises. Effectively, this opens up these states to EUropean companies, allowing them to extract resources, import but above all export goods, and ultimately increase its own competitiveness on the world stage. Whether forced or encouraged to do so, these market friendly reforms may often not correspond well with a country's economic stability, risking destabilization rather than stability, and deepening a country's internal socio-economic inequalities.[162] In the case of many Balkan states it has offered many oligarchs the opportunity to accrue assets which later featured prominently in the country's systematic corruption. While these reforms are mostly beneficial and are never performed under duress increase its own competitiveness on the world stage. Whether forced or encouraged to do so, these market friendly reforms may often not correspond well with a country's economic stability, risking destabilization rather than stability, and deepening a country's internal socio-economic inequalities.[163]

On the road to the EU, a country loses much of its agency to act on the basis of self-determination. While EU documents repeatedly emphasize the voluntary and contractual basis to their cooperation, the strategy of strong conditionality means that noncompliance will shut the country out of access to the EU's common market or pathways to political support.[164] While the EU sets out to 'support and advice' on which reforms need to be implemented, the acceding country is turned into an executive agent in the country's foreign and internal affairs. Especially in the case of the SAA, the compliance to these terms grants no certainty of the benefits of eventual accession. Meanwhile, if eventually the political will to accede is lacking

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[160] Council of the European Union, Council conclusions on enlargement and stabilisation and association process, (18 June 2019).

[161] *Stabilisation and Association Agreement, Between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, of the other part*, Official Journal of the European Union, L84/13, EURLEX: 22004A0320(03), (20 March, 2004).
Stabilisation and Association Agreement, Between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Albania, of the other part, Official Journal of the European Union, L107/166, EURLEX: 22009A0428(02), (28 April, 2009).

[162] Bohdana Dimitrovova, Imperial re-bordering of Europe: the case of the European Neighbourhood Policy, 254.

[163] Ibidem, 254.

[164] European Commission, Report from the Commission, *The Stabilisation and Association process for South-East Europe, Second Annual Report*, Brussels, 26 March 2003, SEC (2003) 243, p. 6.
European Commission, *Report from the Commission, The Stabilisation and Association process for South-East Europe, Second Annual Report*, Brussels, 26 March 2003, SEC (2003) 243, p. 3.

then the EU may still attribute the ultimate responsibility for this failure with the countries themselves.[165] Whether accession is successful or not, the countries have to be content with being included in the reform process for the sake of their citizens' wellbeing.[166] The vales that this integration holds for citizens is most often taken for granted, and what constitutes EUropean integration for a country is certainly not defined on the acceding country's terms, but rather for it.[167]

These policies mean that a Balkan country's relations with the EU are highly uneven. But is this unequal relation permanent? If the word 'Balkan' is interwoven with Balkanist qualities, i.e. it being the 'dark side within', then this begs the question – can states in the Balkans truly be a part of the EU while still being designated as Balkan? If it is indeed a part of the temporal identity of the Balkans that they can never truly transcend its past and change, then the signifier 'Balkan' becomes eternal. However, as the geographic indicator of the term is flexible, Balkan countries are capable of transcending their doomed status, however they only way for them to do so means that they are no longer considered to be part of the Balkans and instead become EUropean.[168]

Croatia and Slovenia prove a case in point to this so called ''Europeanization''. Upon their independence, both countries developed discourses that emphasized their ''entrapment'' in the Balkans, thereby emphasizing the Balkans as being non-compatible with their Europeanness. Slovenia managed to become one of the front runners to accession, the country joined the Union in 2004, thus confirming this European status and avoiding being grouped with the Western Balkans.[169] Croatia meanwhile, would reemphasize a key claim of its nationalist discourse, namely that Croatia is a Central European instead a Balkan country and that only its inclusion into Yugoslavia had finally pushed Croats into the Balkans, a place

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[165] European Commission, Report from the Commission, The Stabilisation and Association process for South-East Europe, Second Annual Report, Brussels, 26 March 2003, SEC (2003) 243, p. 16.
The speed and result of accession talks are placed completely under the responsibility of the Balkan states while the EU is uncommitted
European Commission, *Communication From the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy*, Brussels, 9.11.2016, COM(2016) 715 final, SWD(2016)366 final, p. 9-10
[166] European Commission, *Communication From the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy*, Brussels, 9.11.2016, COM(2016) 715 final, SWD(2016)366 final, p. 2.
[167] Andrew Graan, On the Politics of "Imidž": European Integration and the Trials of Recognition in Post conflict Macedonia*, Slavic Review*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (Winter 2010), pp. 835-858, 844.
[168] Erik de Lange, *Perception and Policy*, *Balkanism and the Dutch intervention in Bosnia*, 33
[169] Sashenka Lleshaj, Constructing the other within: EU enlargement, nesting orientalism and the Western Balkans, Conference Paper, *"Western Balkans after 2013 enlargement – Escape from the limbo?*" (2 November 2013), 7.

where they did not belong.[170] This led Croatian opposition leader Karamarko to say that "we [Croatians] are returning home, leaving behind the geostrategic region politically defined as the Balkans, we never were nor will ever be Balkanites".[171]

If EU accession meant throwing off the shackles of the signifier ''Balkan'', then how did this proceed in the case of a country traditionally considered to be in the heartland of the region, namely Bulgaria? According to both Sashenka Lleshaj and Todorova, as the Balkans always seemed to border the EU, but never be a part of it, the incorporation of Bulgaria (and Romania), meant they too had to exit the Balkans. Especially before the enlargement fatigue that followed the 2004 round set in, this eventual integration of the Balkan states into 'a foregone conclusion, a strategic inevitability'. One that would have to follow as the momentum of Europeanization would inevitably be overcome by 'the logic and momentum of European integration'.[172]

However, as the EU expanded its boundaries into the Balkans through the inclusion of Slovenia and Bulgaria, it could no longer designate these countries as being part of the same problematic zone as the rest of the Balkans. After all, their inclusion into the EU meant that these countries had at least achieved a modicum of Europeanness, security and modernity. Because of this, the EU needed a new term to designate the problematic zone of countries that were left; these would henceforth be called ''Western Balkans'', a placeholder term for what had earlier just been 'the Balkans'. These straggler states now became the inheritor of qualities earlier ascribed to the entirety of the Balkans, a place they could only step out of through an EU guided Europeanization process.[173] Or, as Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier would say; a country's Europeanness was dependant on the intensity of its institutional relations to the Union and its adaption of its organizational norms and rules.[174] There is however no one single answer to what this compliance to EUropean standards of identity or regulation would encompass, nor is there a singular view as to what would be considered a threat to it.

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[170] Dejan Jovic, Turning nationalists into EU supporters: the case of Croatia, in: Jacques Rupnik, The Western Balkans and the EU: 'The Hour of Europe', *European Union Institute for Security Studies,* Chaillot Papers (June 2011), 41.
[171] Sashenka Lleshaj, Constructing the other within: EU enlargement, nesting orientalism and the Western Balkans, 9.
[172] Balkan Forum, Integrating the Balkans: Regional Ownership and European Responsibilities Discussion paper, *Bertelsmann Foundation and Center for Applied Policy Research and Policy Planning Staff, German Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs,* Berlin, (July 2002), 6.
[173] Sashenka Lleshaj, Constructing the other within: EU enlargement, nesting orientalism and the Western Balkans, 6.
Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 192.
Tanja Petrovic, *A long Way Home: Representations of the Western Balkans in Political and Media Discourses*, 24.
[174] Frank Schimmelfennig, Ulrich Sedelmeier, Theorizing EU enlargement, 501.

It is no surprise then that Balkanism, like its parent Orientalism, is primarily (but not exclusively) a British or French cultural enterprise whose visions may be shared by countries who lack a familiarity with the region[175] Fitting with Vesna Goldsworthy's gradualist approach, when these views are not regularly challenged through 'normal' contacts such as trade relations these views were able to maintain a remarkable continuity over time.[176] In a contemporary perspective this means that, even if over the last decades regular contact has been established between a relatively uninvolved state like Britain and the Balkans, the Balkanist discourse could still endure.[177]

Whereas historic unfamiliarity may lead to Balkanizing perspectives in some EU members, others set themselves apart with long traditions of involvement in the region. Members such as Germany, Austria, and Italy have cultivated an enduring familiarity with the region. Likewise, members such as Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria, and Romania, who have formally been seen through a Balkanist lens makes them far less prone to act on Balkanist projections. Instead, those states that consider the Balkans to be perhaps peripheral but nonetheless near, have proven themselves as positive actors for the region's integration.[178] Although this may intersect with a country's culture-political predisposition to favour enlargement, this is pushed one step further by the active patronaging role that some countries with historical ties take up for the region.

These differences in opinion were already apparent in the Yugoslav War, where one reporter would claim that: 'You supposedly have to be either Austrian or German to believe in the purpose of the conflict as Croatian propaganda presents it: a struggle of democracy versus reactionary communism. The French, British, and Dutch are more prone to critical distancing'. Thus claiming that the Germans and Austrians were more favourably disposed towards the region as opposed to the more objective view from those that were not.[179] This familiarity with the region also translated into more country specific positions, and more often than not a positive disposition towards enlargement to them. Positions it had already actively expressed by the championing of Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic.[180] Likewise, a country like Italy could use its historic familiarity with the region to become a patron towards a Balkan state's accession

[175] Edward W. Said, Orientalism, (Penguin Publishers, 1977) 4.
[176] Hywel Dix, On Balkanism and Orientalism: Undifferentiated Patterns of Perception in Literary and Critical Representations of Eastern Europe, Textual Practice, Vol. 29, No. 5, (2015), pp. 973-991, 974.
[177] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 182.
[178] Jacques Rupnik, The Western Balkans and the EU: 'The Hour of Europe', 26
[179] Erik de Lange, Perception and Policy, *Balkanism and the Dutch intervention in Bosnia*, 48.
[180] Erhan İçener, David Phinnemore, Dimitris Papadimitriou, Continuity and change in the European Union's approach to enlargement, 211, 212.

process. The success of which is similarly seen in the high level of Italian involvement in the case of Albania, something which was also reflected in the President of the European Commission Romano Prodi's positive inclination to the prospect of the accession of Albania.[181] Meanwhile, a country such as The Netherlands whose historical involvement in the region was of a lesser extent, would find its Foreign Minister Hans van den Broek claim 'Those who are familiar with the history of the Balkans know how unpredictable the region is. How things can escalate there'[182] Familiarity did not wholly dispel these Balkanist inspired regionalization, a point that was proven by Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs Wolfgang Schüssel when he declared; ''It will not surprise you that Austria has always been particularly sensitive about developments in the Balkans; we just happen to live in the neighbourhood of this geopolitical earthquake zone''.[183] Through which the minister indicated that while familiarity and involvement may lead to a de-essentialized image of the region, it may also come to increasingly see it as a more imminent threat.

To Europe, these escalations were part of the reason why there is at this point in time, a 'black hole' in the geographic map of the EU. Through the decade of instability, the Balkans had displayed decisively un-EUropean characteristics that, in accordance with institutional constructivist theory this negatively influenced their chances to join the EU. As the EU positioned itself as the epitome of civilization and modernity, the Balkans were offered a way out of their ascribed lot, but only through the pathway that the EU set out for them. Self-perceiving EUropean values to be superior, and those of the Balkans to be inferior, the EU offers a pathway to Europeanization that takes little consideration of the wishes of those on the ground, instead assuming that they are for the good of the people because they come from the EU. Although a country's partaking in these structures is repeatedly emphasized to be out of free will, political-economic necessity drives most of them to accept the EU's firm strategy of conditionality, through which the Union exerts control and imposes its rules and values onto the acceding nation.

3.3 Securitizing the Balkans

If Europe in its own self-definition is synonymous to peace, progress, and civilization, and Europeanization is the process of spreading these virtues to other countries, then what does this say about countries that are deemed to be considered fully Europeanized? In the case of the Balkans, the measure of 'Europeanness'

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[181] Mirela Bogdani, John Loughlin, *Albania and the European Union, The Tumultuous Journey towards Integration and Accession*, (IB Tauris & Co Ltd, 2007), 227.
Derek R. Hall, Representations of Place: Albania, 191.
[182] Erik de Lange, Perception and Policy, *Balkanism and the Dutch intervention in Bosnia*, 17.
[183] Wolfgnag Schüssel, *Europe's Security and the New NATO*, Center for Strategic Decision Research (1998).

that a state is ascribed, stands in direct linkage to that place's perception of peace, progress, and civilization, and through that above all the place's perceived security.

The reason for this lies not necessarily in the Balkan's position outside of the EU – after all, neither Switzerland nor Norway are members, yet are seen as thoroughly Europeanized and are beholden to all the virtues that come with this designation.[184] Instead, the dichotomy between European security and Balkan insecurity comes from some of the core characteristics of Balkanism. As Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans* explained, the Balkans are considered a familiar sight to Europe, one that is recognizable from another age of hypermasculine irrational aggression, unpredictability, impulsiveness and unreliability. With these qualities, the Balkans stand in stark contrast to the noble civilized masculinity that is ascribed to Europe, and by extension to the EU.[185]

In contemporary perceptions are expressed and reinforced by a measure of poverty and backwardness reminiscent of mediaeval Europe (and epitomized by the horse drawn carriage), supposed susceptibility to crime and corruption, enmities on the basis of seemingly inexplicable ancient hatreds, which when combined amount to a region that is always on the edge of chaos, war, and insecurity. It is this cycle of conflict, insecurity, and poverty that keeps the region from following the EU's pathway to break free from its history and achieve progress.[186]

These Balkanist perceptions of insecurity, and their expression in EU policy, align well with Atsuko Higashino's paper ''For the Sake of 'Peace and Security'? The Role of Security in the European Union Enlargement Eastwards, Cooperation and Conflict'', in securitization theory is applied as an influencing factor in the EU's decision to enlarge. The basis of this securitization theory stems from the Copenhagen school of security studies, where researchers like Ole Wæver, Barry Buzan and others were first to describe threats not as objective of subjective, but from stemming from 'speech acts' – the idea that by saying something, something is done. In other words, it purports that the framing of an issue as a security matter requires the rhetorical designation of such by a 'securitizing actor' (who are typically state representatives or the political elite.)[187] Having designated it as a threat, it extraordinary means are enabled that break the normal rules of the political game. This can either result in securitization – the designation of the threat against which countermeasures are available, or desecuritization – the elimination of the threat by its

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[184] Frank Schimmelfennig, Ulrich Sedelmeier, Theorizing EU enlargement, 518.
[185] Alina Curticapean, Bai Ganio and Other Men's Journeys to Europe, 23-24.
[186] European Council, *A Secure Europe in a Better World, European Security Strategy*, PESC 787, 15895/03, Brussels, (8 December 2003), 30.
Atsuko Higashino, For the Sake of 'Peace and Security'? 349.

inclusion into the 'ordinary' public sphere.[188] In this sense, institutional constructivism may affect the securitization of a country by influencing what constitutes a threat by designating what is European (secure) or different and a potential danger. Whereas the former may thus affect accession in more latent ways, securitization is more visible in day to day political affairs.

From the perspective of discourse analysis, this securitizing actor's move to designate something as a threat, and the amount of resonance this has through which it is accepted as a threat, would be dependent on the actor's and public's epistemology, which in the case of the EU, is home to a Balkanist discourse. Higashino states that, as a securitized subject, the EU is empowered with the extraordinary means of enlargement of the Union to desecuritize the threats that the Balkans pose.[189] When combined with Europeanization, this can be seen as a gradual process in which every step closer to EUrope is a step towards desecuritization. Therefore, every increase in integration of a Balkan country into EU structures is seen as a further guarantee of their feeling of insecurity and tensions amongst Balkan states.[190] Whereas if this desecuritization or incorporation fails, the Balkans would pose a threat to the whole of the EU. As Günter Verheugen, European commissioner for Enlargement from 1999 to 2004 stated:

> It is no coincidence; on the contrary, it is virtually a cast-iron rule that we only have peace and stability in Europe where these values have been put into practice and where Europe is already unified or is in the process of unifying. Peace and stability in Europe are the basis for a happy future for all the people of Europe. And if they do not apply throughout Europe, then they are in jeopardy throughout Europe.[191]

In many ways, all the threats that EUrope (or the preceding European Communities) saw in Balkanism manifested itself in the Yugoslavian War. It was an un-EUropean conflict, happening in its geographical boundaries, it was a repeating of its past, in the present.[192] This shock was enhanced as the end of the Cold War it was expected that violent explosive wars were on the retreat.[193] As war erupted on Europe's doorstep, nothing was further from the truth. Shocked as the EUropean powers were, the opening

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[188] Ibidem, 349, 351.
[189] Atsuko Higashino, For the Sake of 'Peace and Security'? 349.
[190] Commission of the European Communities, *Towards a Closer Association with the countries of central and eastern Europe, Communication by the Commission to the Council, in view of the meeting of the European Council in Copenhagen*, 21-22 June 1993, SEC (93) 648 final, Brussels, 18 May 1993, page 2.
[191] European Parliament, *Debate Progress towards accession by the 12 candidate countries*, Günter Verheugen, B5-0786/2000, Strasbourg, (5 October 2000).
[192] Erik de Lange, Perception and Policy, *Balkanism and the Dutch intervention in Bosnia*, 4-5, 45
[193] Ibidem, 20

years of the wars were often compared to the war of 1939-1945, and as the war increasingly spiralled into more chaotic violence, the type of war that was never supposed to return to Europe, repeating that which must never be repeated.[194]

To EUrope the war was a rough break from the Fritz Valjavec's assessment of the Balkans having lost their special status and becoming part of a greater South-East European region. While the region had drifted from the attention of many EUropeans, the war reacquainted them with the Balkans in the most brutal way with a reference to latent memories from the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913. Consequently, they also seemed to pose a dooming prospect for EUrope as the war seemed to presage what would happen if its own multinational project were to fail.[195] As the war showed the region's non-Europeanness through barbaric and violent warfare, it was decisively separated from the Enlargement round of the post-communist countries that regained their autonomy after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989.[196] Instead, it was ascribed to be an expression ''old-fashioned nationalism and ethnic hatred''.[197] From the EUropean perspective, the war showed scenes they thought they had left behind while the Balkans had not. As Larry Wolff stated; ''Statesmen, who once enthusiastically anticipated the unity of Europe, are looking away from the siege of Sarajevo, wishing perhaps that it were happening on some other continent''[198]

The securitization of the Balkans that took place after the war painted the region as a place of 'ancient hatreds' ingrained into local societies.[199] Showcasing the Balkanist dissonance between reality and Balkanist projections, the 'ancient hatreds' were a mere rhetorical screen that obfuscated the war's real causes, namely a mix of nationalism, state sovereignty, regime collapse, international finance, ascending capitalism, and unresolved traumas of World War II – all decidedly modern characteristics.[200] Emphasizing the dissonance between this narrative and local realities, Dimitar Bechev's *Constructing South-East Europe, The Politics of Balkan Regional Cooperation* has pointed out how this narrative of 'ancient hatreds' scantly played a role in local media sources at the time.[201] Furthermore, polled in the autumn of 2008 found that

[194] Ibidem, 56
[195] Andrew Hammond, 'The danger zone of Europe', Balkanism between the Cold War and 9/11, 150.
[196] Helene Sjursen, Why Expand? The Question of Legitimacy and Justification in the EU's Enlargement Policy, 505.
[197] Lord Robertson, Speech by NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson, At the Albanian Atlantic Association, Tirana, 17 May 2001, NATO online library (17 May 2001).
[198] Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe, The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, 3.
[199] Erik de Lange, Perception and Policy, *Balkanism and the Dutch intervention in Bosnia*, 38.
[200] Milica Bakić-Hayden, Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia930.
[201] Dimitar Bechev*, Constructing South-East Europe,* 64.

'only a minority of the respondents believe[d] that a new armed conflict could take place in the coming years'.[202] Neither of which seem to indicate a place destined to be at war over deep-rooted ancient feuds.

As the gradualism and diffuse character of Balkanism from Chapter 2 indicate, the securitizing actors that laid these Balkanist projections onto the Yugoslavian wars primarily came from countries that had the least familiarity to them. However, by designating the region's woes as stemming 'ancient enmities', the Balkans had been characterized as a place that is inevitably bound to relapse into warfare and therefore needed to be desecuritized before its insecurity would threaten the security of the EU. As violence was inextricably wound up with visions of the Balkans, only Europeanization and eventual accession could possibly fix these problems. If not, then the Western Balkans will be in danger of descending into war and chaos'.[203] Characteristically for Balkanism, these projections also contained a temporal dimension, making extensive use of ploys like the region needing help to 'climb out of the dark hole of ethno-nationalism'.[204] The underlying thought to such rhetoric is unmistakable – the Balkans are in a dark foregone age and need the EU to show them the light.

This is not to say that the security structure that was erected in the aftermath to the war was not warranted. With regards to the countries under focus, the EU played a crucial role in rebuilding the Albanian state's capacity after its collapse caused by pyramid schemes (1997) and soothing ethic conflict in North Macedonia through the Ohrid Agreement (2001). Bulgaria meanwhile, although it was in a lesser measure incorporated into the post-war security structure of the SAA agreements, and it was lauded for its assistance to NATO in the Yugoslav War, was similarly stabilized by its prospect of accession and the accompanying assistance through its Europe Agreement.[205]

Although the geopolitical situation did warrant the creation of such a security structure, the rhetoric of 'ancient enmities' does distort the rationale on which it is based by painting it as a region that is inherently drawn to relapse into warfare. Additionally, Balkanism allowed for the securitized threats to be transposed onto the wider region. While in the 1990's it was by no means certain that Albania's anarchy of 1997 wouldn't descend into a drawn out civil war, or that ethnic violence in North Macedonia would not further spiral out of control, both states passed the decade with relatively little bloodshed. Yet, the

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[202] Ibidem, 2.
[203] European Commission, *Communication from the Commission, 2005 Enlargement Strategy Paper*, Brussels, SEC(2005) 1433, COM (2005) 561 final (9 November 2005).
[204] Lucia Vesnic-Alujevic, European Integration of Western Balkans, 42. Citing Council of Europe, 'The Political Situation in the Balkans' (2011).
[205] Irena Mladenova, Elitsa Markova, NATO's Enlargement and the Costs for Bulgaria to Join NATO, *Economic Policy Institute*, (2001) 21-22.

EUropean public's unfamiliarity with the region facilitated a measure of transposal of the Yugoslavian War's securitization onto the countries under focus, in spite of them not being involved in the war. As Todorova describes Europeans had often had nebulous ideas of the individual differences between Balkan states.[206] On account of this hazy perception of the region and the vague differences between them, it was easy to apply characteristics from one part of it to another.[207]

As discussed in the essentialization of the Yugoslavian War into the Balkan War, essentialization allowed securitizing actors to make statements on the entirety of the region on the basis of occurrences that happened to only a part of it.[208] Take the then Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen for example when, on 3rd of July 2002, he stated; Just as we thought that nationalism, aggression and war had become unthinkable in Europe, we became witnesses to the brutal conflicts in the Balkans.[209] Likewise, a 2002 Commission report on the SAA would claim that 'the range of problems facing South-East Europe is enormous - a geographical categorization that designates the entirety of the region as an area of instability in which it incidentally includes Bulgaria without it being part of the SAA structure.[210] Returning to the tension between Europeanness and Balkanism, the securitization of the Balkan region infused the countries with un-European characteristics that, in accordance with institutional constructivism, would be non-conducive to EUropean attitudes towards its accession to the EU.

As a region that is seen to be inherently drawn to conflict due to 'ancient enmities' the Balkans would always pose a threat to EUrope for the possibility that refugees, crime, or even war itself could spill over.[211] But the Balkans are seen to hold the potential to cause even more problems for the EU. Whereas it has already been mentioned how its barbarous warlike disposition spelled the EU's future should the latter's project fail, the Balkans have also been painted as the reflection of the EU's credibility on the world stage. Filling of the EU's backyard, the Balkans are a place to which - much like the 2004 enlargement group - the EU owes a special responsibility to bring it into fold. More so than in this 2004 group, the Balkans are considered to be a 'dark side within' due to its recent associations with warfare and instability. This means

[206] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 73.
[207] Ibidem, 119.
[208] Ibidem, 186.
[209] Atsuko Higashino, For the Sake of 'Peace and Security'? 351.
[210] European Commission, *The Stabilisation and Association process for South-East Europe – First Annual Report*, SEC(2002) 339, COM(2002)0163 final, (26 March 2003), 9.
[211] European Council, *A Secure Europe in a Better World, European Security Strategy*, PESC 787, 15895/03, Brussels, (8 December 2003), 9.

that here, more than anywhere else, the EU has to prove its transformative powers to itself, and to the world.[212]

Over the last decade, this impetus to secure the Balkans has been strengthened in the mindset of the EU as it is increasingly seen as an area of international competition.[213] Confronted with increased involvement from Russia, Turkey, and China, the EU is challenged to showcase the attractiveness of its own model and other country's willingness to transform in its example. If this were to fail, then the EU would not only be seen to fail in in the Balkans, but would also find its credibility challenged on the world stage.[214] In this power competition, the EU paints itself as a benefactor to the region, granting itself the role of benevolent goal of Europeanizing and thereby civilizing the Balkans. Its competitors on the other hand are painted as more conniving, being unable to offer the same civilizing perspective, but rather playing into uncivilized urges.[215] Fitting with EU self-perceptions of being able to progress through history where others are bound to repeat past mistakes, only the EU can provide a path for the Balkans out of its (a-historic) 'cycle of conflict, insecurity and poverty'.[216] If it fails to do so then the Balkans would fall prey to populism, Euroscepticism[217], and benign foreign influence – a narrative which is strongly reminiscent of historic conceptions of the Balkan people as passive subjects who were 'were incapable of efficient and independent development and that Russia would inevitably manipulate them'.[218] According to Said, these Oriental characteristics of manipulability and proneness to violence carry a strong element in alleged

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[212] European Commission, *Communication from the Commission, 2005 Enlargement Strategy Paper*, Brussels, SEC(2005) 1433, COM (2005) 561 final (9 November 2005), 2.
[213] Christoph Zöpel, The Future of 20 Million People in the Six Western Balkan States. A key Question for Europe's Geopolitical Future, *Foundation for European Progressive Studies*, March 2018, 20.
[214] Jeta Goxha, Albania-EU Relationship and the Course towards the European Integration, *European Integration - Realities and Perspectives*. Conference Proceedings, (2016), pp. 421-422.
[215] Agata Palickova, Turkey, Russia and China covet Western Balkans as EU puts enlargement on hold, *EurActiv*, 24 June, 2019, (website accessed on 17 July 2020), https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/turkey-russia-and-china-covet-western-balkans-as-eu-puts-enlargement-on-hold/
[216] European Council, *A Secure Europe in a Better World, European Security Strategy*, PESC 787, 15895/03, Brussels, (8 December 2003), 2.
[217] European Parliament, *Debate Progress towards accession by the 12 candidate countries*, Günter Verheugen, B5-0786/2000, Strasbourg, (5 October, 2000).
With a footnote: this while in 2001, the social democrat Günter Verheugen was himself accused of a ''tragic misuse of his position'' by former Czech Prime Minister Václav Klaus, when Verheugen told him that an election victory of Klaus' right wing party over the country's social democrats would be a setback to the EU accession process. – David Cronin, Verheugen accused of meddling by former Czech PM, *Politico*, 4 December 2014. https://www.politico.eu/article/verheugen-accused-of-meddling-by-former-czech-pm/ (accessed 1 July 2020)
[218] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 102.

biological determinism in them.[219] This means that, unless this subject is not effectively guided, it is automatically prone to revert to actions deemed threatful by the EU.

Fitting with EUropean self-perceptions of carrying a special responsibility for its region, the EU positions itself proactively regarding these perceived threats in the Balkans - both those domestically made and those caused by foreign malign interference. To this end it has been the initiator of international cooperation initiatives such as the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe which sought a long-term approach to conflict prevention through regional dialogue.[220]

In spite of these structures, the region is always seen to be in danger of backsliding, this is prominently present in in terms of internal security and stability, and in its possible repercussions to the neighbourhood (as was featured prominently in the Commission's assessment of North Macedonia around 2014 and 2015.[221] But it also features in grander historical projections - when France assumed the Presidency of the EU President Nicolas Sarkozy stated that Paris supported the accession of the Balkan countries to the EU , ''as this is the way to bring peace to the region where one world war started and where tensions still run high''.[222]As Higashino argues, the ultimate option the EU has in its arsenal to counter such a return to characteristics that constitute a security threat (such as Balkanism) is to incorporate them into the EU. [223] Only through this accession would the Balkan country be fully desecuritized, a position worded by *The Economist* as: "Despite resistance in some quarters, EU policy-makers seem to have decided that it is better to have these countries inside the club rather than causing trouble outside''.[224]

The EU is keen to emphasize the benign nature of its enlargement plans in the region, for example emphasizing how even the prospect of enlargement has ''resolved centuries-old conflicts, settled border problems and defused minority issues''.[225] In spite of such illustrious words, the EU's actions are by no

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[219] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 207.
[220] Bodo Hombach (Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact for South-eastern Europe), *Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe: A New Perspective for the Region*, 2012.
[221] European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Document, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Report 2015, Communication From the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*, COM(2015) 611 final, SWD 212 final, Brussels, (10 November, 2015).
[222] Tanja Petrovic, *A long Way Home: Representations of the Western Balkans in Political and Media Discourses*, 78.
[223] Freerk Boedeltje, The Other Spaces of Europe, 11, 12.
[224] Geoffrey Pridham, Securing Fragile Democracies in the Balkans: The European Dimension, *Romanian Journal of European Affairs*, Vol. 8, No. 2, (June 2008) 8.
[225] European Parliament, *Debate Progress towards accession by the 12 candidate countries*, Günter Verheugen, B5-0786/2000, Strasbourg, (5 October 2000).

means altruistic but must also be seen as countermeasures designed to ensure its own protection against outside threats. Crime and corruption, subjects which both feature prominently in European Commission country reports on Albania and North Macedonia (the latter word featuring respectively 102 times and 77 times). This focus seems to be primarily based on the threat that these woes hold to the stability and security of the EU. As the 2003 European Security Strategy mentions;

> ''Europe is a prime target for organised crime. This internal threat to our security has an important external dimension: cross-border trafficking in drugs, women, illegal migrants and weapons accounts for a large part of the activities of criminal gangs. It can have links with terrorism. Such criminal activities are often associated with weak or failing states (…) All these activities undermine both the rule of law and social order itself. In extreme cases, organised crime can come to dominate the state. 90% of the heroin in Europe comes from poppies grown in Afghanistan – where the drugs trade pays for private armies. Most of it is distributed through Balkan criminal networks.[226]

Strikingly, once states are inside the EU, they are seen to lose the necessity for the same level of monitoring, thereby exemplifying their desecuritized status.[227] Indeed, it has been argued that all prospective EU members are considered to be a juvenile country, one that must undergo a probationary period before it is allowed to partake in the EU as a full member.[228] That is not to say that these countries are then at the same level as the EU's 'core' countries. Even inside the Union, newly acceded states are consigned to regulations and standardizations that need to be fulfilled before membership rights, thereupon bringing a gradual hierarchical classification between the member states. Bulgaria, for example, still has limits on the freedom of movement and has not been allowed admission to either the Schengen Zone or the Eurozone.[229] This would therefore seem to indicate that the desecuritization through enlargement is more strongly influenced by the desire to bring increased security to the EU, than it is a benevolent wish to bring peace and prosperity to surrounding countries.

3.4 Conclusion

It has been repeatedly emphasized that the accession process to the EU is a process that is influenced by a multitude of factors. Most prominently these pertain the closure of the chapters of the acquis, a process

[226] European Council, *A Secure Europe in a Better World, European Security Strategy*, PESC 787, 15895/03, Brussels, (8 December 2003), 5, 6.
[227] Eva-Lena Kurz, *The European Self-Image and Identity in Relation to the Western Balkans*, 63.
[228] Andrew Graan, On the Politics of "Imidž": European Integration and the Trials of Recognition in Post conflict Macedonia, 844.
[229] Hartmut Behr, The European Union in the Legacies of Imperial Rule?, 251.

aimed at the political and policy alignment of the acceding country o the standards of the EU. But the accession process is not just about meeting technical criteria, it is also about a political willingness to interpret these criteria as fulfilling requirements to start or finish any part of the process.

Balkanism and other discursive regimes can play a pivotal role in this evaluation. To help explain how, the theory is dissected into two vectors, each of which explains a vital part of what Balkanism entails. First of these is the theory of Institutional constructivism, a theory which proclaims that when a country is considered to be more 'Europeanized' it is easier for countries to bring up the political will to incorporate this country into the EU. This is seen to represent the question of whether a Balkan country is considered to be an 'other', a 'dark side within', or close enough to shed its classification as Balkan and be allowed closer alignment to the EU. This rhetoric can be traced back to the use of narratives that seek to lay claim to the Europeanness of a country along with appealing to idealistic ploys inherent in European self-identification that ask for 'unity of the whole continent of Europe'.[230]

This Institutional constructivism also directly influences the second method of political analysis, namely that of securitization. Applied due to the strong tendencies of Balkanism to perceive the region of violence from which threats are emanated to the rest of Europe, securitization is used to analyse the discursive creation and conservation of the Balkans as a threatful place. As the EU defines itself as a place of peace and security, then a country that is perceived as prone to violence is considered to be more Balkan and less European. Through this, it operates in unison with institutional constructivism to inhibit or conduce a country's incorporation into the EU.

Together, the two form a spectrum between a perceived Europeanness and Balkanness. If placed on the side of Balkanness then that means that the EU will be prompted to desecuritize the country and make it more peaceful. As this quality is inherent to Europeanness, that means that to desecuritize a country is to Europeanize it while further securitization means that the country is less European, which in turn influences its chances of acceding to the EU on the basis of institutional constructivism. Judging from this spectrum, individual countries and through them the EU shape policy based on projections that stem from a discursive regime.

Deeply rooted in a self-definition as a region of being at the forefront of modernity the EU has taken up the 'mantle of civilization' while the Balkans are consistently delegated into an a-historic

[230] European Commission, Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission Plenary Session of the European Parliament Strasbourg, Speech/00/352, (3 October 2000).

dimension of backward violence. Owing to its self-ascribed superiority, the EU seeks to extend control over region by implementing its own 'superior' rules over its neighbours through a process of conditionality. The goal of which is to''promote a ring of well governed countries to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean with whom we can enjoy close and cooperative relations''. If a country is trusted to enact these rules it is set on a path of Europeanization, and as it inches closer to the EU's standards, it also starts to become less securitized. Attributing success to EU rules and conditions, the EU is able attribute success to its own efforts, and failure to the other.[231] As the EU is at the forefront of modernity and civilization, this also means that the EU sees itself as having a special responsibility, namely to absorb other European states into its own structures in a process that has been labelled as 'soft imperialism'.[232] Through this control, the EU also hopes to secure these countries from the dangers they pose to themselves, but above all to the EU itself.[233]

Arguing on the basis of Said's Orientalism, this power to judge the Balkans on the basis of the EU's discursive regime also grants it the authority to describe, teach, rule, and dominate the place.[234] The result of which is a modus operandi that presses a three-dimensional region with large differences between it into a two-dimensional framework based on Europeanness and security which may skew the way that developments on the grounds are seen.[235] In doing so, it also singles out alignment and accession as a prerequisite for the region's enduringly peaceful future,[236] while leaving their eligibility up to the interpretation of the EU. This regionalized and essentialized approach thereby forms an inhibition to cater to differences that would be clear if a gradual perspective of the region were taken. As in the case of the SAA negotiations, the approach by the EU leaves little room for manoeuvring of the candidate country, allowing few possibilities to tailor the process to that country's specific needs.[237]

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[231] Dorian Jano, From 'Balkanization' to 'Europeanization': The Stages of Western Balkans Complex Transformations, *Centre International de Formation Européenne*, Vol. 3, No. 349, (2008) pp. 55-69, 59.
European Council, *A Secure Europe in a Better World, European Security Strategy*, PESC 787, 15895/03, Brussels, (8 December 2003), 10.
European Parliament*, Debate Progress towards accession by the 12 candidate countries*, Nicholas Bethell, (COM(1999) 501 - C5-0024/2000 - 1997/2179(COS)), Strasbourg, (3 October 2000).
[232] Bohdana Dimitrovova, Imperial re-bordering of Europe: the case of the European Neighbourhood Policy, 254.
[233] Freerk Boedeltje, The Other Spaces of Europe, 11, 12.
[234] Edward W. Said, Orientalism, Penguin Publishers, 1978, 3. Cited in: Zrinka Blazevic, Rethinking Balkanism, 87-88.
[235] Freerk Boedeltje, The Other Spaces of Europe, 11, 12.
[236] Lucia Vesnic-Alujevic, European Integration of Western Balkans, 18.
[237] Kamen Velichkov, Bulgaria's EU Accession Negotiations: Achievements and Challenges, date unknown, 3

4. Country profiles

Having established how Balkanism may be at least partially dissected through institutional constructivism and securitization and through that applied to the accession processes of Balkan countries, it is time to bring the theory into practice. To this end, the following chapter puts this to the test through the case study of three countries: Bulgaria, North Macedonia, and Albania. Between them, the countries have strongly differing modern histories. Taking a gradual and diffuse approach to projections on the region, these different histories may result in them acquiring a different status in EUropean perceptions. Therefore, every Chapter begins with a contextualization of these countries relations to the EU.

Besides these differences there are also rough similarities as all three have gone through a period of communist state rule, have rejected this rule in the early 1990's, and were largely uninvolved in the Yugoslavian Wars that befell on some of their neighbours. In spite of this non-involvement, all three encountered their own issues which would weigh on their chances to accede to the European Union. As this thesis argues, these issues could be seen through a lens of Balkanism by de-Europeanizing the country or securitizing it. Owing to the theories of institutional constructivism and securitization theory, this leads to the worsening of their chances for their incorporation into the EU. While according to the same theories, if a country is seen as more European, and is moving closer to desecuritization, their chances of incorporation increase.

These analyses are conducted on a country to country basis. After establishing a context of the developing relationship between the target countries and the EU, they are analysed on the basis of a narrative of inclusionary Europeanization, exclusionary securitization, and the domineering power relations that shape their positioning. As Bulgaria was the first of the three to make meaningful progress towards accession, it is the first to be researched. Being in an earlier position also meant that Bulgaria was included in an enlargement group mostly composed of non-Balkan countries. This allows this subchapter to go into the question of Balkan exceptionalism in the context of the wider EUropean enlargement into post-communist Europe. As the accession process of Bulgaria offers a baseline of these differences, the analyses on North Macedonia and Albania use it as a reference point that differentiates the specificity of their processes as manifested in the SAA to the 'normalcy' of the Bulgarian process and its Europe Agreement. These countries' strongly differing post-war experiences warrant their separate analyses in terms of contextualization and the development off their supposed Europeanness. However, their inclusion into the SAA (an agreement which emphasizes security) means that they are combined into one Chapter in which

they are separate up to the point that their SAA signed, but are increasingly analysed as a group and a regional approach thereafter.

4.1 Bulgaria

4.1.1 A short history of Bulgaria's relation to the European Union

As it was the first of the three focus countries to accede to the European Union, Bulgaria forms the baseline from which the other countries – North Macedonia and Albania, can be analysed. The difference in circumstances between the countries first asks for a historical contextualization of Bulgaria's accession process. Another factor that helps Bulgaria in forming a baseline, is its inclusion into an enlargement group of countries (the Helsinki) that were outside of the Balkans. This begs the question in what way Bulgaria was treated differently from the other states, and whether Balkanism may have been an influencing factor in this. This leads to the final assessment of Balkanist influence on Bulgaria's accession process by measuring it along the vectors of the Europeanness and institutional constructivism, and its securitization that either pushed the country away from this path or conduced its accession.

Out of the three countries that are researched, Bulgaria was the only one that was aligned to the Soviet Union. Due to its relatively small size and positioning on the far South-Western end of the Soviet Union's sphere of influence, it never featured as heavily in European representations of its Cold War opponent. Nor was there much need to report on uprisings and dissent as there was in countries like Hungary, Czechoslovakia, or Poland – for Bulgaria was seen as the most faithful and most orthodox Soviet Republic in the Warsaw Pact, even going as far to deserve the name 'the sixteenth republic' (as an elusion to the fifteen Soviet Republics). Like Todor Zhivkov, Bulgaria's communist leader for much of its existence, said; "'The Soviet Union and Bulgaria breathe with the same lungs and the same Blood flows in our veins''.[238]

That these words were not just in the imagination of a loyal communist leader of a near satellite state was evidenced by the events surrounding the Bulgarian overthrow of communism. Although its timing was congruent with the rest of the bloc in transforming in 1989 after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the first multi-party elections proved that neither a clean break with communism nor the instalment of a reform-minded government was in store. Such suspicions aligned well with established EUropean historical thinking over Russia's special influence over the Balkans, something that earned Bulgaria in particular the

[238] David Binder, Going Back: Bulgaria, 20 Years Later, *The New York Times*, 8 December 1985, (website accessed on 18 July 2020), https://www.nytimes.com/1985/12/08/magazine/going-back-bulgaria-20-years-later.html

name of ''Russia's oldest ally''.[239] The implications of Bulgaria's failure to leave its communist past behind quickly became apparent during the second half of the 1990's when Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia were invited to enter into negotiations with the EU over an Europe Agreement, while Bulgaria (and its Romanian partner in enlargement) were passed over.[240] In spite of the country still being able to deposit an application membership just before the 1995 EU Council Summit in Madrid its position as outlier in it had already been established.[241] Although it was successful in closing an Association Agreement in 1993, and it managed to become a part of the EEC group of enlargement, it was placed in the *Helsinki Group* (named after its respective 1999 EU Council Meeting), one group behind the so called *Luxembourg Group.*

This position as an outlier in the enlargement group provided the Balkan state with few favours but brought it plenty of woes. Whereas the *Luxembourg Group* could start their negotiations in 1998, the Helsinki Group had to go through a longer screening process and wait until 2000 for its accession negotiations to begin. During this time, the reforms it made in accordance with the Association Agreement were much lauded by EU governments. The success of EU conditionality in this area was proved by its direct triggering of reforms in the country and its ability to set the timetable for doing so.

This was reflected in the country's economic development where Bulgaria was able to bring about a large shift in the country's economic focus. By 1997 this amounted to a share by the EU of 43% of Bulgaria's exports and 37% of its imports, a tripling of import and a doubling of volumes since 1990.[242] Although seemingly impressive, this was significantly lower than other post-Comecon countries who saw their share of trade increase to around, or above 50%, though this could in part be explained by geographic proximity.[243] Eventually, Bulgaria proved unable to shake off its status as laggard of the CEEC group as it, and Romania were passed up on the opportunity to join the EU in 2004 with the other former Comecon countries. The predominant reason for doing so was that the Commission was dissatisfied with the adoption of the necessary reforms and that the country lacked the judicial and administrative capacity to implement

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[239] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 102
Jason N. Dittmer, *European Re-Union: Representations of Eastern Europe in NATO and EU Expansion*, Dissertation, Florida State University, (2003) 231.
[240] Dimitris Papadimitriou, Eli Gateva, Between Enlargement-Led Europeanisation and Balkan Exceptionalism, 156-157.
[241] Kamen Velichkov, Bulgaria's EU Accession Negotiations, date unknown, 3.
European Council, *Madrid European Council, Presidency Conclusions*, 15 – 16 December 1995, DOC/95/9 (16 December 1995), 19.
[242] Stanimir Alexandrov, Latchezar Petkov, Paving the Way for Bulgaria's Accession to the European Union, *Fordham International Law Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 3, (1997) 597.
European Commission*, Regular Report From the Commission on Bulgaria's Progress Towards Accession*, (1998) 6.
[243] Walter Mattli, Thomas Plümper The demand-side politics of EU enlargement, 553, 554.

and enforce the acquis.[244] In an effort to both shaming and pushing the government into compliance while simultaneously not totally dissuading it, it was decided that Bulgaria and Romania would not be allowed to accede to the Union until 2007.[245]

4.1.2 The Europeanization of Bulgaria

Staying on its proposed path of reforms, Bulgaria was indeed able to become a member of the European Union in 2007. Yet, this three-year gap proved to be capable of widening the pre-existing deviations in enlargement path from the other enlargement countries. This was noticeable by the onset of enlargement fatigue, but also in country-specific circumstances.

Too much frustration from the Bulgarian government, it was upon its membership application, immediately subjected to more stringent conditionalities in their negotiations with the EU. Furthermore, upon the latter's insistence, and with the Bulgaria's widely condemned treatment of its Turkish minority in the 1980's still fresh in people's minds, the country was also made comply with a specific 'human rights clause' that explicitly referenced the protection of minority rights.[246] At the time, these rights were already criticized as being ill-defined and with based on criteria without equivalence in EU law or practice while the EU was itself lacking in authority and experience to effectively monitor the country's human rights record.[247] Thus leaving much room open for interpretation and the assessment's affection by Balkanist discourse on inherent regional ethnic tensions, an assumption that had after all been proven right in the country's neighbourhood.

Instead, the effect of Balkanism may in fact have been harder felt in latent forms which do not feature in Commission papers. For in spite of the Commission's insistence on a country's own responsibility in following reforms to speed up its enlargement process, the politically charged perception of a country may still let their influence be felt in the EU Council. In the case of Bulgaria's accession to the EU this was especially apparent in the advocacy role that countries could play in promoting and an applicant's accession. In the CEEC group, this meant that Germany steadfastly advocated for the accession of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic – countries in which it not only had a large potential economic gain, but

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[244] European Commission, *2004 Regular Report on Bulgaria's progress towards accession*, COM(2004) 657 final, SEC(2004) 1199, Brussels, 6 October 2004, p. 5

[245] Dimitar Bechev, Bulgaria and the EU: The Role of Conditionality Before and After Accession, *International Centre for European Studies*, (June 2019), 25.

[246] Dimitris Papadimitriou, Eli Gateva, Between Enlargement-Led Europeanisation and Balkan Exceptionalism157, 160.

[247] Iavor Rangelov, Bulgaria's Struggle to Make Sense of EU Human Rights Criteria, *Open Society Institute* (1 October 2001).

also centuries of historical intertwinement and cultural familiarity. The same was said of Sweden and Denmark's championing for the Baltic states, and even France's role in conducing Romania's entry. Only Bulgaria would find itself lacking in such a patron. Greece, the country's sole neighbour, opted to lobby for the accession of Cyprus instead.[248]

The lack of cultural-historical ties to the rest of Europe aligns well with the Balkan's position of the 'dark side within'. From the viewpoint of institutional constructivism, Bulgaria was missing some of the critical commonalities that it might have employed to promote its 'Europeanness'. Having been ruled by the Ottoman empire for 500 years meant it could not lay claim to a shared history with Europe by having been part by a firmly entrenched European empire - a narrative-strategy that proved effective in the case of Slovenia and Croatia, drawing from their Habsburg past. Similarly, its Orthodox Christian religion meant there was scant ground for the historical development of religious ties and its Slavic language cut off linguistic ties such as they were employed by Latin speaking Romania. In many ways, Bulgaria's lack of patronship is a manifestation of Balkanism; it was a recognizably European state, but with critical differences that set it apart from the rest.

In a diplomatic display of 'nesting Orientalisms', these ties were cultivated by the CEEC countries by emphasizing their own connections to Europe, while lambasting the lack of ties of other countries. Taking EU enlargement processes as the ''quality assessor'' of a country's Europeanness the more successfully reforming countries were able to positively promote themselves. But in an effort to define themselves as more European, the CEEC countries also employed negative strategies by actively 'otherizing' other countries, painting them as more Oriental than themselves. This also happened amongst the CEEC countries themselves, most notably against Bulgaria – the group's laggard. Bulgaria, meanwhile, tried to deflect such accusations by performing the same trick of 'nesting Orientalisms' against its Balkan neighbours. In effect, the EU accession processes that were meant to re- Europeanize countries led astray by Soviet Oriental Russianness, effectively proved a divisive factor that caused the creation of new borders and hierarchies across the continent, much to the detriment of the Balkans.[249]

As mentioned, Bulgaria managed to deflect the worst of the repercussions that stemmed from this process of nesting Orientalisms through careful and consistent political messaging. As countries to its West

[248] Dimitrova, Rilka Dragneva, Bulgaria's road to the European Union: Progress, problems and perspectives, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, Vol. 2 No. 1, (2001) pp. 79-104, 94.
[249] Sashenka Lleshaj, Constructing the other within: EU enlargement, nesting orientalism and the Western Balkans, 5, 6, 7.

started to engage in the Yugoslav Wars, the whole Balkan region was (re)-essentialized as one of backward bloody warfare, Bulgaria was able to make its discursive exit from this geographic association. The country's early closing of an Association Agreement and start of Accession process proved useful in this regard as it classified these countries as being part of 'South-Eastern Europe', instead of the Balkans. This was coupled with displays of open hostility towards being grouped with other Balkan states. Seeing themselves as being more advanced on the hierarchical ladder of EU accession, Bulgaria felt it should be treated differently from the post-Yugoslav republics and Albania. The narrative was that where these countries had shown the dark side of the Balkans, Bulgaria itself was the example of a good Balkan state.[250] Whereas the others were abound with ethnic tension, Bulgaria peacefully resolved the outstanding issues with its Turkish minority.[251]

Likewise, it displayed pro-active alignment with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. While it was obliged to conform to it do so through Article 2 of its Europe Agreement which stated that 'will contribute to the rapprochement of the Parties' positions on security issues and will enhance security and stability in the whole of Europe'[252], Bulgaria went above and beyond to align itself with the EU's foreign policy in order to paint itself as a proponent of peace and stability in its neighbourhood. Displaying this commitment, it provided logistical support in NATO's 1999 Kosovo intervention, and became a part of SEECP the regional policy of Bulgaria in South-East European Cooperation Process. The country used these instances to assume a mantle of exemplary European citizens and strengthen its links to EU institutions. At the same time however, it was extremely careful to disassociate itself from being a part of this region.[253]

Contrary to the standard EU lexicon that called for an improvement of regional cooperative structures, the necessity for Bulgaria to disassociate itself from the region actually led to a breakdown of regional ties. As the EU held different relations to the various Balkan states, it proved difficult to establish an overarching regional policy. In the case of Bulgaria this was displayed by Simeon of Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha's ceasing of attempts to mediate in North Macedonia's ethnic strife, and the Bulgarian veto a

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[250] Dimitar Bechev, Carrots, sticks and norms: the EU and regional cooperation in Southeast Europe, *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, Vol. 8, No. 1, (April 2006), pp. 27-43, 37.
[251] Dimitrova & Rilka Dragneva, Bulgaria's road to the European Union, 90.
[252] *Europe Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Bulgaria, of the other part*, Official Journal L 358 P. *0003 – 0222, CELEX : 21994A1231(24)* (31 December, 1994) *Title 1 Politi*cal Dialogue, Article 2.
[253] European Commission, *Regular Report From the Commission on Bulgaria's Progress Towards Accession,* (1998), 39.

Greek proposal to establish a permanent secretariat to the SEECP.[254] Thus, lacking this policy, regional cooperation between the Balkan states proved to be institutionally difficult. In effect, while the EU's attempts to promote regional cooperation delivered the opposite result wherein Bulgaria would actively disassociate itself from its neighbours in order to distinguish itself from them.[255]

4.1.3 The securitizing of Bulgaria's EU accession

In spite of all its attempts to disassociate itself from Balkanist characteristics, Bulgaria still found itself securitized as a part of it. This securitization came up gradually and was inextricably linked to the war that was happening on the country's doorstep. Especially the 1999 Kosovo intervention proved crucial in this regard. As the intervention was rhetorically legitimized by a defence of universal human rights, the Balkans were re-emphasized as possible perpetrators against these rights.[256] Through regionalization, these were equally applied to Bulgaria. As the country was undergoing economic woes as a result of the wars that were happening on its doorstep, the region's poverty and inherent susceptibility to violence was increasingly securitized.[257] It was part of a region with problems which, 'on the threshold of the 21st century, Europe cannot tolerate'.[258] Following the example of its Yugoslav neighbour, Bulgaria was suspected of being in danger of collapsing under the weight of its historical memories, and being in danger of susceptibility to being drawn into the spiralling crisis in the region.[259] At the bottom of this spiral, Bulgaria would have the potential to become a place emanating threats to the EU, as NATO Secretary General Lord George Robertson stated; ''Afghanistan is a safe haven for terrorists precisely because it does not have a viable state structure. It is a "black hole". That is why NATO is engaged in South-East Europe, to prevent such

Dimitar Bechev, From Policy-Takers to Policy-Makers? Observations on Bulgarian and Romanian Foreign Policy Before and After EU Accession, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2, (2009), pp. 210-224, 217.
Dimitar Bechev, Carrots, sticks and norms, 33

[255] Dimitar Bechev, Carrots, sticks and norms, 28.

[256] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 191.

[257] Dimitrova, Rilka Dragneva, Bulgaria's road to the European Union, 80.

[258] European Council, *European Council Berlin, Presidency Conclusions 14-15 March 1999*, Part III – Statement on Kosovo, (15 March 1999) 10.

[259] Dimitar Bechev, From Policy-Takers to Policy-Makers?, 214
Dimitrova, Rilka Dragneva, Bulgaria's road to the European Union, 97.

"black holes" from emerging on our doorstep''.[260] The 'only exit strategy out of this devil's circle of ethnic hatred and civil war'' was the perspective for EU accession.[261]

Such fears were institutionally expressed in the country's 1993 Europe Agreement, which saw the special inclusion of a special 'Bulgarian clause' , a clause that provided for a suspension of the agreement in case of a violation of human rights, or democratic principles. Although it was never used, and the clause was eventually incorporated in other Association and Europe Agreements as well, it showed a special scepticism by the EU towards the chances of the new democratic regime.[262] This scepticism was further displayed when Bulgaria's prospects for accession became more real. Coupled with the post-2004 enlargement fatigue, calls for conditionalities and more robust monitoring mechanisms grew louder in Brussels. This led to the inclusion of extra safeguard clauses, relating to the internal market, and the cooperation in criminal and civil matters and continuing until well after the accession itself had been completed.[263] This translated itself into special immigration fears that could be retraced in the special restrictions enacted onto the country. Coupled with the post-2004 enlargement fatigue, Bulgaria found itself targeted by specific restrictions to the freedom of movement for their citizens.[264]

Another area in which Bulgaria was especially securitized was in the field of crime, and especially corruption. As mentioned, this criminal threat was not just regarded as a threat to domestic instability, but above all as a threat to EU security.[265] While Balkanist projections meant that the country would be seen as inherently susceptible to corruption, real life practice would do little to dispel that image. Corruption was seen as an especially poignant problem in the case of Bulgaria, a distrust which meant that, in an unprecedented move, Bulgaria (and to a lesser extent Romania) were subject to especially close monitoring during the accession process. A practice that was later institutionalized in the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism, an institute intended to observe and guide the countries to resolve their respective

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[260] George Robertson, *Speech by NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson at the Summit on the Contribution of New Democracies to Euro-Atlantic Security*, Sofia, 5 October 2001, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, (2 December 2014).

[261] Joschka Fischer, Rede des Bundesministers des Auswärtigen, *Joschka Fischer, zur Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte an dem Nato-geführten Einsatz auf mazedonischem Territorium zum Einsammeln und Zerstören der Waffen, die durch die ethnisch albanischen bewaffneten Gruppen freiwillig abgegeben werden*, Berlin, 29. August 2001, Debatte der 184. Sitzung des Deutschen Bundestages, Bulletin 53-2 (29 August 2001)

[262] Dimitrova, Rilka Dragneva, Bulgaria's road to the European Union, 82.

[263] Dimitris Papadimitriou, Eli Gateva, Between Enlargement-Led Europeanisation and Balkan Exceptionalism157, 158.

[264] Dimitrova, Rilka Dragneva, Bulgaria's road to the European Union, 97.

[265] European Council, *A Secure Europe in a Better World, European Security Strategy*, PESC 787, 15895/03, Brussels, (8 December 2003), 5, 6.

outstanding issues.[266] Annual Commission reports payed much attention to this fight against corruption and would devote a large part of their reports to combatting it.

These problems were later compounded with issues surrounding Bulgaria's geographic position at the border to Turkey, in which it was feared that a corrupt and ineffective police force might make for a porous EU border towards the Middle East. Despite large scale professionalization[267], fears about the country's ability to police its border resurfaced in the context of the 2015 refugee crisis[268] in which the Bulgarian authorities and populace were condemned for being either incapable, overly violent, or prone to ethnic hatred in their treatment of the refugees, it would seem that Bulgaria is the European Union's most violent land for transiting refugees. Owing to the ultimate fear being that the refugees would spill over into the rest of the EU, there was little political condemnation over these actions.[269] These continuing suspicions over the ability of the Bulgarian state to root out corruption and adhere to perform its state functions while regarding human rights have increased reservations within the EU with regards to the accession of other post-communist states which might also be considered premature.[270]

4.1.4 Conclusion

Bulgaria's pathway to EU accession from the viewpoint of Balkanism may best be described as the country being 'like a quiet pupil stuck in a corner with troublemakers'.[271] Since the fall of its communist regime, the country made a transition to democracy that was remarkably smooth when compared to its neighbours. Owing to the relative ease with which this major process took place, the country was able to get an earlier head start on its attempts at joining the European Union. Having managed to enter the Helsinki group, it still found itself chastised by its peers over its supposed lack of Europeanness.

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[266] European Commission, *Regular Report From the Commission on Bulgaria's Progress Towards Accession*, (1998) 36.
Dimitar Bechev, Bulgaria and the EU: The Role of Conditionality Before and After Accession, 40.
[267] European Parliament*, Debate Progress towards accession by the 12 candidate countries*, Nicholas Bethell, (COM(1999) 501 - C5-0024/2000 - 1997/2179(COS), Strasbourg, (3 October 2000).
[268] European Council, *European Council Meeting, Presidency Conclusions*, Brussels, 15 October 2015, EUCO 26/15, CO EUR 10, CONCL 4, (16 October 2015), 2.
[269] Andrew Connelly, Europe's most hostile port of entry, Bulgaria puts out its own welcome mat for migrants, *Politico,* 29 February 2016, (website accessed on 10 August 2020), https://www.politico.eu/article/bulgaria-threat-to-refugees-migrants-human-rights-dangerous/
Elizabeth Dickinson, The Next Frontier in Europe's Migrant Crisis? Bulgaria. *Politico*, 7 June, 2015, (website accessed on 20 July, 2020), https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/06/bulgaria-europe-migrant-crisis-118719
[270] Graham Avery, Enlargement policy in perspective, in: Rosa Balfour, Corina Stratulat, EU member states and enlargement towards the Balkans, Epic Issue Paper No. 79, (July 2015) 14.
[271] Dimitrova, Rilka Dragneva, Bulgaria's road to the European Union, 81.

In turn, this led Bulgaria to differentiate itself from its own region, trying to emphasize its European credentials it aimed to shed the name of Balkan and the associations that came with it. It was counteracted in this attempt by the simultaneously worsening situation in Yugoslavia. Unable to be completely disassociated from its region, Bulgaria too inherited some of the Balkanist qualities that the war reemphasized. This securitization played a part in the adoption of special clauses to its agreements with Europe and subsequently influenced its delayed accession to the EU. In spite of these problems, it managed to accede to the Union, in part because it was able to define itself against the states engaged in the Yugoslav Wars on its doorstep, and because it was able to indulge the member states with help in broader concerns such as supporting them in their campaign in Kosovo. Through these actions, Bulgaria was gradually desecuritization and able to slowly drift away from Balkanist associations. As proof of its continued connection to the other Balkan states, Bulgaria's poor post-accession track record proved an inhibiting factor to the possibility of other Balkan states to accede.

4.2 Albania and North Macedonia

Albania and North Macedonia do not share the most peaceful of histories as the two have been on opposing sides of several conflicts. Likewise, the two countries have gone through very different historical developments in both before and after the Second World War. In spite of this, in the context of enlargement they have ended up being grouped together. In this combination, the two states' accession application was approved by the European Council on 24 March 2020. To analyse how Balkanism has played a role in getting them to that point, it is first vital to underscore the differences between the two by describing the historical development of their relations to the EU. Institutionally treated as one category of analysis by the EU, the securitization of the two countries is first analysed on an independent basis and then in the common securitization in the form of the Stability and Association Agreement. This coupling and decoupling serve to prove the hypothesis that in spite of their differences, the two are viewed through an EU lens that is influenced by Balkanism. This lens itself is subsequently analysed through the vectors of the countries' perceived Europeanness and securitization.

4.2.1. A short history of North Macedonia's relation to the European Union

As opposed to its afore analysed neighbouring country of Bulgaria, North Macedonia was, for the most part of its history, not associated with the Soviet Union but with the 'Third Bloc' that was Yugoslavia. In this capacity, North Macedonia was able to hold reasonably well established economic connections to both Western Europe, and to the Soviet dominated Comecon.[272] This meant that through its Yugoslav ties, the

[272] Mikalo Jovanovic, *Yugoslav Trade With EEC and Comecon Countries*, date unknown.

relation between North Macedonia and other states had already been established, even before the country acquired its independence. When, in 1991, in the early years of the Yugoslavian Wars, the then Socialist Republic of Macedonia held a referendum on the question of whether it should break off from the Yugoslav state. This resulted in an overwhelming vote for independence by 96.46% of the 75.72% of the population. [273] As the Yugoslav state did not follow this up with armed repercussions, it would be the only Socialist Republic to secede without any bloodshed.

Although the Commission was quick to give its positive opinion on the recognition of the country,[274] and Skopje was equally quick to send a permanent representative to the EU in response(1992), the establishment of full diplomatic relations would take another three years. This was primarily due to a conflict over the name and national symbols of the new-born country with neighbouring Greece. Only after this was (unsatisfactorily) resoled, was the country able to establish full diplomatic relations to the EU. This led to the first agreement between the two countries being signed in 1998.[275] This would be followed up by a Stabilization and Association Agreement in 2001, with the accompanying honour of being the first country in the region to do so.[276] After the establishment of ties, the country became known as an 'Oasis of Peace' in the region, one that was attested to and lauded for by its role in providing protection for refugees that were fleeing from the Yugoslav Wars. This image would decisively change as, concurrent with the signing of its SAA, the country was beset by an insurgency from its Albanian minority that was met with police, military and paramilitary response.[277]

After armed clashes between government forces and Albanian militias, the international community, with heavy involvement from the EU, arbitrated an agreement between the two opposing sides. The Ohrid Agreement, as it was called, included political decentralization, stronger rights for Albanians in the country, and EU development funds.[278] A military/police mission was set up to ensure the

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[273] Aristotle Tziampiris, The Macedonian name dispute and European Union accession, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol 12, No. 1, (2012) pp. 153-171, 153.
[274] Steven Blockmans, *Tough Love: The European Union's Relations with the Western Balkans*, 116.
[275] Mladen Karadzoski and Artur Adamczyk, Macedonia and Her Difficult Neighbours on the Path to the EU, *Yearbook of Polish European Studies*, Vol. 17, (2014) 211.
European Council, *Madrid European Council, Presidency Conclusions*, 15 – 16 December 1995, DOC/95/9 (16 December 1995), 7.
[276] European Council, *European Council Stockholm, Presidency Conclusions*, 23-24 March 2001, Annex III, Declaration on FYROM, (24 March 2001), 12.
[277] Andrew Graan, On the Politics of "Imidž": European Integration and the Trials of Recognition in Post conflict Macedonia, 846, 847.
[278] Steven Blockmans, *Tough Love: The European Union's Relations with the Western Balkans*, 198.

country's stability, first by NATO, but quickly taken up by the EU.[279] During this period, the EU was heavily involved in the ensuring the continued stability of the country through the Stability and Association Agreement, through which it also encouraged economic reforms and the country's partaking in regional stability programs.[280]

North Macedonia's partaking in these programs culminated in the submission of a formal application by the country for accession to the EU in 2004.[281] Bilateral disputes with Bulgaria, but above all with Greece, hindered further progress to this end and was even subjected to backsliding under Nikola Gruevski's government and its antiquization policies (attempts at establishing a connection between modern and ancient Macedonia through the initiation of cultural most prominently agricultural projects).[282] It would take until 2018-2019 for the Agreement for Friendship, Good Neighbourly Relations and Cooperation, and the Prespa Agreement to resolve the country's issues with Bulgaria and Greece respectively. After another hang-up due to a Franco-Dutch-Danish veto, the country was officially granted Candidate Status in 2020.

4.2.2 Europeanization of North Macedonia

The question of the perceived measure of Europeanness of North Macedonia and Albania is a prominent display of two important factors of Balkanism, namely ambiguity, and the concept of the 'Dark Side Within'. Of these two, North Macedonia can be seen as the embodiment of Balkan ambiguity, while Albania is the portrayal of a radical outlier, which is nonetheless still recognized to be in Europe.

This concept of North Macedonian ambiguity is set out by Ryan Gingeras' paper named ''Between the Cracks: Macedonia and the 'Mental Map' of Europe''. In it, Gingeras explains the inherent paradox to the country's position inside Europe, where it is at once amongst the first lands to be included in the idea of Europe during the days of Alexander the Great, and concurrently in the periphery of Europe in the form of the Balkans, and even the periphery of that.[283] The first time that Macedonia came to the attention of Western Europe was in the context of the Ilinden Uprising of 1903, when it was still a territory in the

[279] European Council, *European Council Brussels, Presidency Conclusions*, Brussels 20-21 March 2003, 8410/03, Polgen 29, Western Balkans, (5 May 2003), 36.
[280] European Council, European Council Göteborg, 15-16 June 2001, SN 200/1/01 REV 1, Annex II, Declaration on the Former European Council, *European Council Göteborg*, Göteborg 15-16 June 2001, SN 200/1/01 REV 1, Annex II, Declaration on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (16 June 2001), 20.
[281] Aristotle Tziampiris, The Macedonian name dispute and European Union accession, 158.
[282] Ibidem, 156.
[283] Ryan Gingeras, Between the Cracks: Macedonia and the 'Mental Map' of Europe, 342.

Ottoman Empire.[284] With Albanians remaining loyal to the Ottoman Empire, and Macedonians fighting a bloody insurgency against them both, it was unclear to spectators in Europe where the allegiance of the territory really was. The ambiguous place that region took up in European perceptions would epitomize earlier established perceptions of Macedonia as a border zone, a disputed and unclassifiable territory that always seemed to fall between the cracks.[285] This falling between the cracks aligns well with Todorova's claims on the Balkans being a place of imputed ambiguity.[286]

Ambiguity seemed to still plague the self-identification when it achieved its independence. To the North, Greece disapproved of the country's attempt at claiming the symbols of ancient Hellas, to the East, Bulgaria recognized the state's independence, but refused to recognize it Macedonian as a separate ethnic nation with its own language, instead arguing that they were a subgroup of Bulgarians. To the East, many Albanians saw the country as a part of Greater Albania, a point of view which found sympathy amongst Albanians in North Macedonia itself. Ethnic Macedonians meanwhile have shifted narratives between being the proprietor of Ancient Macedonia, or inheritors to Ilinden Uprising.

The difficulty of this position continuously negatively affects the young nation's international standing as it would lead to Greek and Bulgarian countermeasures against its attempts to enter the arena of global politics. In conjunction with the resistance arising from its immediate neighbours, the country would also find itself victimized by efforts by the 2004 Enlargement Group who were defining their own Europeanization in contrast to the Orientalism of the Western Balkans.[287]

This ascribed orientalism may have done little to define the country in the first decade of its independence, in which it was known to be an 'oasis of peace' to the region. Indeed, judging from the scant attention of European Council Conclusions during this decade, which were more occupied with Yugoslav Wars, the country may have been more defined by its peripherality. This changed however when North Macedonia became embroiled in its own ethnic violence, an episode which although of limited scope in itself, would arouse (well founded) fears, of a repeat of vile ethnic violence.[288] The increased securitization

[284] Ryan Gingeras, Between the Cracks: Macedonia and the 'Mental Map' of Europe, 341.
[285] Ibidem, 341, 342.
[286] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 17.
[287] Sashenka Lleshaj, Constructing the other within: EU enlargement, nesting orientalism and the Western Balkans, 5, 6, 7.
[288] Kristen Ringdal, Albert Simkus, Olga Listhaug, Disaggregating Public Opinion on the Ethnic Conflict in Macedonia, *International Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 37, No. 3. (Fall, 2007) pp. 75-95, 76.

of the country would spell ill for Macedonia's claims to being a peaceful European nation, eligible for future EU enlargement.

Although ethnic violence subsided (with notable backslidings in times of tension) the country's conflicting views on its national identity still stood in the way of its Europeanization. This was not much helped by Gruevski's antiquization projects which served to emphasize the country's ties to ancient Macedon, while disregarding its Albanian citizens. As numerous neo-classical buildings and statues were erected, the capital of Skopje earned the dubious fame of being named the 'Capital of Kitsch' by The Guardian in 2014. Exemplifying the country's position as a border zone, the article read;

> Long a forgotten corner of Europe, the former Yugoslav republic has gone into overdrive since 2010, erecting huge government and civic buildings as well as hundreds of statues in the heart of its capital (…) But now they can go in less than five minutes from drinking a Turkish coffee among people and architecture that wouldn't be out of place in a traditional city of the Middle East, to being surrounded by faux-classical European architecture and imagery.[289]

This characterization of North Macedonia as a faux-pas in an effort to Europeanize would instead emphasize the country's Balkan credentials which, in true Balkanist fashion was above all met with ridicule and anger by Greece, and by extension the rest of EUrope.[290] With the rapprochement efforts to Greece from the government of Zoran Zaev government, the process was started to slowly remove these monuments to irredentism.[291] With the conclusion of these historic treaties to its neighbours, and the subsequent endorsement of Europeanization by the European Council, North Macedonia may on a new path towards Europeanization.

4.2.3 A short history of Albania's relation to the European Union

Of all three countries under research in this thesis, Albania represents the most tumultuous path in its post 1990 developments towards the European Union. The reasons for this can already be found in the country's communist heritage, one that would chastise the country's history for decades to come.

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[289] Kit Gillet, How Skopje became Europe's new capital of kitsch, *The Guardian*, 11 April 2015, (website accessed on 23 July, 2020), https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2015/apr/11/skopje-macedonia-architecture-2014-project-building

[290] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 69, 72, 104, 112
Vangeli, Anastas, Nation-building ancient Macedonian style: the origins and the effects of the so-called antiquization in Macedonia, *Nationalities Papers* Vol. 39, No.1, (2011) 26.

[291] Deplinthing a potentate, The tricky politics of tearing down statues of Alexander the Great, 19 *The Economist*, March, 2020 (website accessed on 21 July, 2020), https://www.economist.com/europe/2020/03/19/the-tricky-politics-of-tearing-down-statues-of-alexander-the-great

Contrasting both Bulgaria and North Macedonia, who both had various degrees of connection to the outside world, Enver Hoxha's Albania was popularly known to be Europe's 'hermit state' that eschewed outside contact for as much as it could. This gradually worsening seclusion would start in the post-World War II period, when Western European states rebuilt their economies, and Soviet States rapidly industrialized in a planned economic fashion, Albania withdrew first from its Soviet allies, and soon after also its Yugoslav allies. The country retreated into a functional autarky, in which domestic and international trade and enterprise were fully monopolized by the state. [292] The state shunned the outside world up to such a measure that the country had limited access to receive images, ideas, and other information and its dissemination amongst the public was more limited still, even by the standards of other communist countries. In terms of international cooperation, the country rejected the involvement of international development organizations, with the UN being the only organization that it would not abandon.

This level of autarky and withdrawal would be Albania's worst heritage for when it finally transitioned to democracy in 1991, and the subsequent outing of the Communist party from government after elections in 1992. Coming out of its isolation, the country found itself suffering from such low economic development that made it into Europe's poorest, and scant connections to either regional or global economy, institutions, and states.[293] [294] This caused the first years of internationalism to be characterized by a rapid learning curve in socialization to the outside world. This would also lead to its first connection to the EU in 1992, when it signed an economic agreement with the bloc.[295]As the US was preoccupied with the resolution of the Yugoslav Wars, the development of primarily fell under the prerogative of the EU.[296]

In this capacity, the EU provided generous EU grants which made it the highest per capita beneficiary of EU assistance.[297] Furthermore, with nearly no pre-existing trade relations, economic alignment meant that the EU would amount to 92% of Albania's imports, and 82% of its exports by 1998, while (showcasing the miniscule size of its economy) the latter accounted for 0.03% of the EU's imports

[292] Ailish M. Johnson, Albania's relations with the EU: On the road to Europe?, *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, Vol 3, No. 2 (2001), pp. 171-192, 172.
[293] Derek R. Hall, Representations of Place: Albania, 172-173.
[294] Derek Hall, Albania in Europe: Condemned to the periphery or beyond?, *Geopolitics*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (2001) pp. 107-118, 112.
[295] Jeta Goxha, Albania-EU Relationship and the Course towards the European Integration, *European Integration - Realities and Perspectives*. Conference Proceedings (2016), pp. 421-422, 424.
[296] Derek R. Hall, Representations of Place: Albania, 175.
[297] Derek Hall, Albania in Europe: Condemned to the periphery or beyond?, 114, 115.

and 0.08% of its exports, making Albania the most EU-trade dependent country in the Balkans.[298] While at the start of the decade the country was considered to be in an 'advanced state of relationship already established with the Union', and in 1992 closed an Cooperation and Trade Agreement which included an evolutionary clause referring to the objective of an Association Agreement when conditions are met[299], the unfurling economic and humanitarian crisis in the country meant that these conditions were not forthcoming as the country became increasingly securitized over its internal woes.[300] As German diplomat Peter Schubert stated: ''11 years after the beginning of the transformation, Albania is still in a state of societal fermentation. Without a harmonic bond of all aspects of political, economic, social, and cultural development, the transformation can be slowed down or even cut back.''[301]

The severity of this situation was massively exacerbated by the collapse of a pyramid scheme that was unknowingly promoted by the government. As a large part of the population lost their livelihoods, many of the state functions collapsed, leading to the looting of state assets such as army bases and throngs of refugees , exacerbating the exodus the country had already experienced since 1992. A predominantly WEU mission under Italian leadership was sent to restore order to the country, while EU involvement was limited to an advisory mission.[302]

Any progress that had been made towards an association agreement was out of the question now as the momentary descent into anarchy practically nullified Albania's perspective for EU membership.[303] This situation dramatically changed soon after as the Kosovo conflict burst in 1988-1999 in which Albania was able to confirm its unequivocal support for the West. This speeded up the country's NATO alignment while EU membership on the basis of the Treaty of Amsterdam and the 'Copenhagen Criteria' arose.[304] Though sternly reprimanded over its lacklustre actions against organized crime and corruption, the country still managed to sign an SAA in 2006.[305] Continuously plagued by corruption, it

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[298] Derek R. Hall, Representations of Place: Albania, 186-187.
[299] European Commission, *Commission Defines Principles For Future Contractual Relations With Certain Countries in South-Eastern Europe*, Press Release, (2 October 1996).
[300] Derek Hall, Albania in Europe: Condemned to the periphery or beyond?, 114, 115
Mirela Bogdani, John Loughlin, *Albania and the European Union,* 116
[301] Peter Schubert, Reflexionen zur Politischen Kultur in Albanien, *Südosteuropa: Zeitschrift für Gegenwartsforschung,* No. 10-12 (2001), pp. 461-471, 461.
[302] Derek R. Hall, Representations of Place: Albania, 177-178.
[303] Jeta Goxha, Albania-EU Relationship and the Course towards the European Integration, 425.
[304] Derek Hall, Albania in Europe: Condemned to the periphery or beyond?, 114, 115.
[305] Steven Blockmans, *Tough Love: The European Union's Relations with the Western Balkans*, 257.

would take until 2014 for the Commission to grant the country a Candidate status,[306] after which it had to go through 6 years of judicial reforms until the Council would endorse it together with North Macedonia.

4.2.3 Europeanizing Albania

'Nobody anywhere understands my wonderful Albanians!'[307]

With Bulgaria doing its best to present itself as an exemplary Europeanized Balkan state, and North Macedonia as an ambiguous border zone, the spotlight falls to one of the most Oriental places of the Balkans, namely Albania. This embodiment of 'the other within' rests upon three pillars; its part-Islamic heritage, low level of economic development, and its half-century of isolation from much of Europe. Combined with a unique language, unrecognizably distinct from any other in Europe, the region was perpetually condemned to be on Europe's periphery for most of its history. [308]

Albania acquired its troubled place in the waning days of the Ottoman Empire, in a time where most of the Balkan states were developing clear-cut secessionist movements, Albania remained a pro-Ottoman bastion in the Balkans. This was in part due to its majority Islamic population, one of the country's main differing factors from 'European normalcy'. The Europeanness that may be derived from this, is found in the definition of the EU as a predominantly Christian 'club'. As Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, a contributor to the (ultimately failed) European Constitutional Treaty would state: '(Europe) had three sources of identity: Greco- Roman philosophy and law, Enlightenment Humanism and …Judaeo- Christian religion'. These unifying factors were deemed so fundamental that not even the great schism of 1054, the protestant reformation, nor the secularization of 18th century enlightenment could undermine it. That these values still hold truth is attested to as even today, some EU member states are noticeably hesitant to even start accession negotiations with the secular, but Muslim majority state of Turkey as it is thought that it could not easily integrate into Western culture. This opposition to a Muslim majority country joining the EU bodes ill for Albania. Even though Albania is of a Sunnite or Bektashi denomination which are known as one of its more secular forms,[309] its Islamic heritage has led to recurring cultural ties to countries in the Middle East that are considered by Europeans to be at the very heart of Orientalism. The awkward position this holds

[306] European Council, *Council Conclusions on Albania, General Affairs Council Meeting*, Luxembourg, 24 June 2014, 143354 (24 June 2014).
[307] Rose Wilder Lane, The peaks of Shala. (Chapman and Dodd, 1922). Cited in: Derek R. Hall, Representations of Place: Albania, 161.
[308] Derek R. Hall, Representations of Place: Albania, 161.
[309] Mirela Bogdani, John Loughlin, *Albania and the European Union,* 32 - 34.

towards integration into the EU was accentuated by Albanian Prime Minister's public declaration of himself as a Catholic, rapidly followed by a courting of Pope Francis in 2014.[310]

Like its predominantly Islamic denomination, Albanian culture did little to bring the country's relationship closer to the EU. This troubled status can be retraced to the time it spent as a part of the Ottoman Empire. As one of the best integrated Balkan lands in the Empire, Albanians were a staple source of recruits for the Ottomans which meant that they could count on the same measure of Orienalisation, both by its Balkan neighbours, and by Western Europe.[311] Owing to this heritage, the country was late to start considering itself as being markedly separate from the Ottomans, something that Albania's Balkan peers had done a long time before. This outlier position would find Albanian lands subjected to expansionist ambitions by newly independent Balkan states, as a result of which, its identity was established above all in opposition to its own neighbourhood.[312]

This made the country markedly different from its own Balkan neighbours, as they considered their own national identity to be built in part by their common struggle against the Ottomans (and by extension the Albanians). In effect, this meant that whereas the 2004 Enlargement Group would define themselves in opposition to the Balkans, many of the Balkan countries would in part define themselves in opposition to Albania.[313] Meanwhile, Albania itself has tried to de-orientalise its own culture by emphasizing its Illyrian roots that preceded Christianity and Islam.[314]

This threatened state well contextualizes the country's later isolationist tendencies as they were displayed in the second half of the 20th century. This 'detachment' from Western Europeanism would be the second one after 500 years of Ottoman rule, but much more stringent.[315] This was especially true for its relations to the outside world. Relations to the Western world soured almost immediately after the end of the war in relation to the 1946 Corfu Straits incident and diplomatic relations were completely severed up until 1991. In this vacuum encouraged by the Cold War, Albania became known as an especially sinister, xenophobic, and unknowable country.[316] Even when the country opened up to the world again, it served it

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[310] Krithika Varagur, Albania gets religion, Resurgence of faith in the formerly communist country is raising fears of foreign influence, *Politico*, 15 October 2019, (website accessed on 23 July 2020), https://www.politico.eu/article/albania-religion-islam-mosque-muslim-catholicism-church-secular-state/
[311] Ryan Gingeras, Between the Cracks: Macedonia and the 'Mental Map' of Europe, 350.
[312] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 170.
[313] Milica Bakić-Hayden, Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia, 924-925.
[314] Atdhe Hetemi, Orientalism, Balkanism and the Western Viewpoint in the Context of Former Yugoslavia, 323-324.
[315] Mirela Bogdani, John Loughlin, *Albania and the European Union,* 31-32.
[316] Derek R. Hall, Representations of Place: Albania, 172-173.

few boons to the country's 'Europeanness'. Prominent episodes such as those of the cargo ship Vlora, which in 1991 brought some 20.000 desperate Albanian refugees to the shores of Italy, were detrimental to the country's chances of being seen as an upcoming European state. Not much later, these images were joined by those of the anarchy of 1997, and the coming of Kosovar refugees in 1999, of whom some 423.000 would seek shelter in overcrowded refugee camps in Albania.[317] These scenes which in European eyes were only familiar coming from countries that were deemed Oriental, meant that the country's Europeanness, which was already in dispute, was removed from it even further and instead found itself increasingly securitized.

4.2.4 The securitization of North Macedonia and Albania's accession processes to the EU

On the face of it, Albania and North Macedonia have few things in common. Whereas the former endured its communist era in relative connectedness to the outside world, the other was completely closed off. Likewise, while North Macedonia spent its first years of independence in relative peace, its Western neighbour experienced one traumatic upheaval after another. It would not be until the ethnic tensions at the turn of the century that North Macedonia was confronted with the possibility of its own ethnic conflict, a danger that Albania on the other hand had managed to evade.

In spite of these differences, the two would find their prospective paths towards the EU, they were bound to another as one enlargement group and were treated in one EU Policy towards the Western Balkans, most prominently represented in the SAA. Compared to Bulgaria's Europe Agreement (1995), the SAA was primarily focussed on maintaining security and preventing a reactivation of armed violence within and between states, leading to their institutional securitization.[318] Another essential part of this policy is that the countries that fell under the agreement were not ensured of a path to EU membership, although this was explicitly stated to be a condition on the way to this goal.[319] This resulted in a much more convoluted path towards the obtainment of the status of Accession State than was the case for Bulgaria. To see why both countries deviated from this 'classic path' towards a Europe Agreement, it is important to elaborate on the way they had been securitized before they signed their respective SAA's.

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[317] International Crisis Group, Albania Briefing: Albania – The Refugee Crisis, *Crisis Group*, 11 May 1999, (website accessed on 25 July 2020), https://reliefweb.int/report/albania/icg-albania-briefing-albania-refugee-crisis

[318] Vesna Bojicic-Dzelilovic, Denisa Kostovicova and Elisa Randazzo, EU in the Western Balkans: Hybrid Development, Hybrid Security and Hybrid Justice, Security in Transition: An Interdisciplinary Investigation into the Security Gap, *Human Security Study Group*, (2016), 4.

[319] European Council, *European Council Brussels, Presidency Conclusions,* 14/15 December 2006, 16879/1/06 REV 1, (12 February 2007), 3.

Judging from this perspective of Balkanism-inspired securitization, North Macedonia proves a case in point to the non-linear development that securitization processes can take. Having been described as an 'oasis of peace' in the region, the country seceded from Yugoslavia relatively peacefully whereas other parts of the former federation became engulfed in brutal warfare. Averting this brutal warfare for much of the 90's did not mean that the country escaped unscratched by securitization as is evidenced in its conflict with Greece. This was explicitly stated in a court case brought before the European Court of Justice by the European Commission after Greece imposed economic sanctions onto newly independent North Macedonia (whereby it raised itself as a protector over a European country in which it had no jurisdiction). In the court case, Greece accused the North Macedonia of promoting irredentist propaganda with the goal of ethnic unification (the kind of which was concurrently happening in Bosnia). Whereupon the Commission claimed:

> As regards the existence of serious international tension constituting a threat of war, the Commission considers that that, too, has not been established. While it does not deny that there is a war in the Balkans which may spread, it does not accept that the conduct of the FYROM complained of by the Hellenic Republic, taken as a whole, can reasonably be regarded as a threat of war. [320]

Although the Commission did refute the accusation of warlike ambitions, it heavily implied the inherent instability of North Macedonia and its possibility of becoming involved in the ''war in the Balkans'' that would prove emblematic to the framing of the country's issues from the perspective of wider problems in 'the Balkans'. Through these early securitizing obstructions, the country found itself set back in trying to establish closer relations to the EU as it struggled to be recognized over its name by other states.[321]

The country's real securitization would come following the conflict in Kosovo, which started in earnest in 1998. As the country became host to masses of Kosovar refugees of predominantly Albanian ethnicity, many Western countries (and the North Macedonian government itself) became deeply concerned by the prospect of a destabilization in the country.[322] Stating that, ''without the help of the

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[320] European Court of Justice*, Order of the Court, ORDER OF 29. 6. 1994* — CASE C-120/94 R, Commission of the European Communities, Hellenic Republic (29 June 1994), 8.
[321] Andrew Graan, On the Politics of "Imidž": European Integration and the Trials of Recognition in Post conflict Macedonia*,* 846, 847.
[322] Astri Suhrke Michael Barutciski Peta Sandison Rick Garlock, *The Kosovo refugee crisis An independent evaluation of UNHCR's emergency preparedness and response*, United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, February 2000, VII, X, 10, 91, 102.

international community, peace would have no chance in Macedonia''.[323] The dangers that this posed were inextricably intertwined with the fresh memories of the Yugoslav Wars, and most specifically the ''mass retaliation and butcheries'' that went with a ''barbaric civil war''[324] such as that in Bosnia. Taking this regional point of view, the Commission could thus state that

> Every country is now a democracy. […] But that progress has not been without setbacks. The resurgence of violence in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia shows the fragility of the region, and how easily parts of it can slip back into crisis.[325]

Thus, by regionalizing the conflict into the frame of a wider *Balkan* conflict, would enable it to speak of a *resurgence* of violence in spite of there having been no such violence before. This regionalization of the conflicts that were happening outside its borders meant that the characteristics of that conflict -such as the horrors of the Bosnian War- could also be transposed onto North Macedonia under the guise of 'not repeating past mistakes'.[326]

Although the implementation was successful, the wider ramifications to the securitization of North Macedonia were implicitly present. As a multi-ethnic Balkan state, North Macedonia was considered to have the potential to be the domino stone of instability that would plunge Europe into violence. It was feared that this time, the war ''could bring unforeseen consequences to the entire region, to Kosovo and Albania, the Yugoslavian Federation and Bosnia-Hercegovina, but also on Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey, and with that indirectly also NATO and the EU''[327] would comprise Bulgaria, Albania, and perhaps through Greece – also NATO and the EU. [328] In this light, the NATO-EU intervention which resulted in the 2001 Ohrid

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[323] Joschka Fischer, Rede des Bundesministers des Auswärtigen, *Joschka Fischer, zur Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte an dem Nato-geführten Einsatz auf mazedonischem Territorium zum Einsammeln und Zerstören der Waffen, die durch die ethnisch albanischen bewaffneten Gruppen freiwillig abgegeben werden*, Berlin, 29 August 2001, Debatte der 184. Sitzung des Deutschen Bundestages, Bulletin 53-2 (29 August 2001).
[324] Joschka Fischer, *Rede des Bundesministers des Auswärtigen, Joschka Fischer, zur Fortsetzung des Mazedonien-Einstaz der Bundeswehr vor dem Deutschen Bundestag*, Berlin, 22 October 2002, Bulletin 84-2 (23 October, 2002).
[325] European Commission, *The Stabilisation and Association process for South-East Europe – First Annual Report*, SEC(2002) 339, COM(2002)0163 final, (26 March 2003), 4.
[326] Emel Akçali, EU's competency in conflict resolution: The Cases of Bosnia, Macedonia (FYROM) and Cyprus examined, Paper to be presented at the ECPR Joint Session Workshop Nicosia, (24-28 April 2006), 19.
[327] Joschka Fischer, Rede des Bundesministers des Auswärtigen, *Joschka Fischer, zur Beteiligung bewaffneter deutscher Streitkräfte an dem Nato-geführten Einsatz auf mazedonischem Territorium zum Einsammeln und Zerstören der Waffen, die durch die ethnisch albanischen bewaffneten Gruppen freiwillig abgegeben werden*, 29. August 2001 in Berlin, Debatte der 184. Sitzung des Deutschen Bundestages, Bulletin 53-2 (29 August 2001).
[328] Macedonia, Next Domino?, *The Economist*, 5 March 1998, (website accessed on 20 July 2020), https://www.economist.com/europe/1998/03/05/next-domino
Macedonia and its Kosovars, *The Economist*, 6 May 1999. (website accessed on 20 July 2020), https://www.economist.com/europe/1999/05/06/in-the-balance

Agreement, could be presented as the West successfully staving off the faith of Bosnia-Herzegovina.[329] In Macedonia, Europe could claim to have found the ''decisive recipe for success'' through ''military strength on the one side, and a political perspective on the other''.[330] This political perspective was given shape not long after the reasonably successful implementation of the Ohrid Agreement, after which North Macedonia signed its SAA with the EU (2004) wherewith the country of ''the final conflict stemming from the bloody collapse of Yugoslavia, the last domino to fall'' became the first country in the region to join the EU's association pact.[331]

But whereas North Macedonia would find itself increasingly securitized over domestic and regional security threats, Albania would be a showcase model of a country that would reach new depths of perceived threats, before it could slowly work towards desecuritization. For while North Macedonia was a small state in the middle of the Balkans, without the baggage that a history of independence can bring, Albania's image was already firmly established when it abandoned communism and it was a decisively threatening one. As mentioned, the secrecy in which the country shrouded itself gave it the reputation in the West of an especially sinister, vile country, even for the Communist bloc. It was after all, the country that had abandoned both the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China for their supposed liberalisation. Albania thus emerged as the last Stalinist Soviet republic along with the paranoia, secret police, prison camps and collective punishment that came with it.[332]

Upon the overthrow of the autocracy, Albanians realized the impoverishment and inadequacies of their country compared to their neighbours. This would lead some 10% of the population to flee, to Greece, and Italy, a frenzy that would lead to much chaos and violence. Whereas the first of these refugees were greeted and welcomed by local and national media as 'deserving' political refugees, after a few months they had already been securitized as threatening illegals who were best to be detained in camps and sent back to Albania. With war erupting in 'the Balkans', Albania was one of the sources of instability that was closest to Europe's 'core'. From there it emanated threats of Islam, terrorism, crime and illegal migration cross the sea thereby making the Adriatic as a whole a front line that was in need of securing.[333] With the negotiations on the creation of the Schengen-zone underway, these fears over Albanian refugees were

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[329] Steven Blockmans, *Tough Love: The European Union's Relations with the Western Balkans*,85.
[330] Joschka Fischer, *Rede des Bundesministers des Auswärtigen, Joschka Fischer, zur Fortsetzung des Mazedonien-Einstaz der Bundeswehr vor dem Deutschen Bundestag*, Berlin, 22 October 2002, Bulletin 84-2 (23 October, 2002).
[331] Macedonia: EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fule assesses Macedonia's progress on way towards EU membership, *Reuters*, (2 October 2012).
[332] Derek R. Hall, Representations of Place: Albania, 161-162.
[333] Tanja Petrovic, *A long Way Home: Representations of the Western Balkans in Political and Media Discourses*, 47.

transposed onto the rest of Europe, warning that; ''If Italy were in Schengen the Albanians who have been landing in Brindisi in recent weeks would have an open road to Munich or Hamburg''[334] Seeing the Albanian refugee crisis as a hotbed for violence and criminality, one Italian party leader suggested that the 'Albanian refugees "should be thrown back into the sea. And when they fire on our forces of Order their ships should be sunk" while another parliamentarian opted for shooting the smugglers, ''or rather torpedoing their motorboats''.[335]

These initial shocks to its international image were hardly winded down as the decade progressed. On the contrary, when the pyramid schemes of 1997 led to state collapse, Albania's place as the most Oriental state in the Balkans seemed to be well established. In this capacity they were portrayed as the 'ideal Balkan type – violent, independent and at times untrustworthy', forming a perfect bridge between the characterizing nineteenth century travel writing, and modern day Balkanism as it appeared in Robert Kaplan's 'Balkan Ghosts'.[336] In this epitomized form, the dangerous, unorderly, economically backward, in a past temporality Albanians were seen to be either criminals or victims.[337] Especially the latter characteristic would prove durable when it came to the Albanian's international representation. Often driven to the circuit due to a lack of law and order and dire economic conditions, Albanians were overrepresented in crime and corruption statistics both at home and abroad – a heritage that would haunt the country's hopes for EU accession for decades to come.[338]

Indeed, the problems arising from the country would provide it with a string of setbacks to its ambitions to EU rapprochement. This became especially apparent when in 1996, the already cautious talks over a classic EU Association Agreement were cut off due to the country's economic collapse.[339] This changed radically when Albania proved its unequivocal Western alignment through its support for NATO in the Kosovo conflict. In a course of actions reminiscent of Bulgaria's supportive stance during much of the

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[334] Goldsworthy, Vesna, *Inventing Ruritania, The Imperialism of the Imagination*,48.
[335] Pivetti: Albanesi? Buttiamoli A Mare, *La Repubblica*, 28 March 1997 (website accessed on 6 August, 2020, translated using Google Translate) https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/1997/03/28/pivetti-albanesi-buttiamoli-mare.html
Andreotti: ''Silurare gli scafisti albanesi'', *La Repubblica*, 2 August, 2000, (website accessed on 6 August 2020, translated using Google Translate) https://www.repubblica.it/online/cronaca/clande/andreotti/andreotti.html
[336] Stephanie Schwander-Sievers, Albanians, Albanianism and the strategic subversion of stereotypes, *Anthropological Notebooks*, Vol. 14, No. 2, (2008), pp. 47–64, 47.
Derek R. Hall, Representations of Place: Albania, 167-168.
[337] Stephanie Schwander-Sievers, Albanians, Albanianism and the strategic subversion of stereotypes, 58.
Derek R. Hall, Representations of Place: Albania, 167.
[338] Derek Hall, Albania in Europe: Condemned to the periphery or beyond?, 110, 111.
[339] Jeta Goxha, Albania-EU Relationship and the Course towards the European Integration, 425.

Yugoslav Wars, Albania's support was seen as the country taking responsibility for neighbourhood stability through strict alignment to NATO strategies.[340] Having proven its support, the country was put on a path towards NATO membership, and was given the long erm prospect of EU membership. This perspective was subsequently solidified in the start of SAA negotiations in 2003, which were agreed upon and signed in 2006.

With both North Macedonia and Albania having signed their Security SAA's, the two became part of a structured EU regional approach. Designed to offer a 'European perspective' to a countries deemed ineligible for a Europe Agreement, the country would come to encompass all the Balkan states that had lagged too far behind to be included in the Luxembourg or Helsinki accession groups which led to the 2004 and 2007 enlargement rounds. Whereas most of the countries that were left behind owed their faith to the active conflicts or the aftermath of it that endured on their territories, Albania was passed over due to its domestic chaos and economic ruin, while North Macedonia was blocked by Greece over the naming issue and later on over fears over the escalation of ethnic tensions.

Although the EU repeatedly emphasized that countries that had signed a SAA would be judged on their own merits, the agreement also had a fundamentally regionalising character because – ''they who know the developments in the Balkans, certainly also know that everything there is connected''.[341] . The idea is to treat these countries as pre-accession candidates without the obligations to open the negotiations on the membership until they are found to be fit by the Commission on their individual merits.[342] This can be seen for example in the Albania's SAA, a document that was modelled on that of North Macedonia and Croatia, with a number of provisions added to reflect Albania's specific situation. One of the agreement's basic tenants which related to the 'Stabilization', was to call on Albania to enact measures aimed at preventing future tensions between the individual Western Balkan states, and the dismantlement of factors that led to instability. The agreement's second pillar the 'association' was meant to economically develop the country, offering its people a future.[343]

Whereas on one side these SAAs were predominantly of a developmental nature, they also contain elements that point towards attempts at desecuritization. In the pillar of 'association' this mostly translates

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[340] Derek Hall, Albania in Europe: Condemned to the periphery or beyond?, 114, 115.
[341] Joschka Fischer, *Rede des Bundesministers des Auswärtigen, Joschka Fischer, zur Fortsetzung des Mazedonien-Einstaz der Bundeswehr vor dem Deutschen Bundestag*, Berlin, 22 October 2002, Bulletin 84-2 (23 October, 2002).
[342] Aida Gugu, Main Features of Stabilization and Association Agreements and the Differences with Europe Agreements, *Policy Documentation Center*, 2003, 4, 5.
[343] European Council, *Signature of Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the EU and the republic of Albania*, Press Release, Luxembourg, 12 June 2006, 10389/06, (12 June 2006).

to the creation of sufficiently promising circumstances that would dispel people from engaging in crime, migrating to the EU, or, in the worst case – both. It is in this attempt at regional stabilization where essential images are formed of the Balkans which strongly resemble Balkanist discourse. Already in the European Commission's first annual report this regionalization and amalgamation of characteristics became apparent. For example, from the very start of the report it would state that 'In 2000, following a decade of turmoil in the Balkans', 'the range of problems facing South-East Europe is enormous', and 'Western Balkan countries have experienced difficulty in developing a culture where respect for the law governs all aspects of political and economic life'.[344] As a region that was characterized and essentialized as volatile, the region was also made a part of a global (in)security framework wherein it formed an explosive mix together with Islamic terrorism.[345] Lucio Caracciolo, the editor of *Limes*, an Italian journal of geopolitics would even state that;

> Various criminal networks destabilize the region by, among other things, collaborating with various cells of Islamic terrorism, primarily pan-Balkan and Bosnian ones. This creates waves of Balkanization. (…) When these migration flows move through the black holes of the Balkans, they expand and turn into a destabilization factor which also includes terrorism. (…) The merging of migration flows and terrorism strengthens the danger of infiltration by Al-Qaeda and its embryos in Bosnia and Albania into Italy. Similarly, Muslim terrorists nonchalantly use banks in the Balkans to cover their financial operations. Owing to these factors and the proximity of Western Europe, the Balkans form an ideal logistical base for Osama and his brothers.[346]

The regionalization of these countries' issues as being part of a greater Western Balkan problem means to tread on the same dangerous grounds that Todorova challenged when she asked ''*Why does the war need to be Balkan?*''.[347] Indeed, by grouping these countries together, they would find themselves sharing each-others worst characteristics. Regionalized in a group of countries that was recovering from the Yugoslav Wars, North Macedonia was included in a region whereof it was said that 'war added to enormous economic and social transition problems in most parts of the region. All of these countries have had to start developing modern state institutions from scratch or from a very low base''. Likewise, it would

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[344] European Commission, *The Stabilisation and Association process for South-East Europe – First Annual Report*, SEC(2002) 339, COM(2002)0163 final, (26 March, 2003).
[345] European Council, *Declaration by the heads of state or government of the European Union and the President of the Commission, Follow-Up to the September 11 attacks and the fight against terrorism*, Brussels 19 October 2011, SN 4296/2/01 REV2, (19 October 2001).
[346] Tanja Petrovic, *A long Way Home: Representations of the Western Balkans in Political and Media Discourses*, 48
[347] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 186.

be said that ''we cannot forget how fragile the stability in this region is, how deep the aftereffects of the Balkan War's wounds still reach''[348] and ''The European Union and Member States have intervened to help deal with regional conflicts and to put failed states back on their feet, including in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and in the DRC''.[349] This while, in both respects the 2001 insurgency did not lead to ramifications on North Macedonia that were anywhere near comparable to those regions hardest hit by the Yugoslav War. On this same note, an annual report by the Commission would state that 'Others are finding it enormously difficult to make headway against the twin obstacles of inter-ethnic obstruction'[350] even though ethnic tensions played a minor role in Albania's domestic problems and the country was mostly uninvolved in conflicts that affected ethnic Albanians in North Macedonia and Kosovo.[351] The result was that in an attempt to desecuritize the wider region, countries were in fact securitized over issues which did not weigh up to the reality of their domestic situation.

In spite of these seemingly Balkanist distortions, desecuritization efforts proved largely successful when it came to Albania and North Macedonia. Especially the latter seemed successful in this regard as already in 2006, the European Council and Commission decided the country deserved to be awarded the candidate country status over its substantial progress in the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement and in meeting the Copenhagen Criteria.[352] Likewise, as Albania recuperated from its 1997-1999 crises, it too was considered to be less of a threat than before, a merit which allowed to reap the benefits of association to the EU. Its measure of desecuritization was markedly less successful than that of its neighbour to the East. Although economic growth picked up and the state apparatus was restored with help from the EU, corruption and crime were still rife, and politics polarized and confrontational.[353] Additionally, the

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[348] Johannes Hahn, Krisen zu bewältigen ist Stärke des Kontinents, in*: … schon Zeus liebte Europa, Von Ostarrichi bis in die EU*, Verein zur Dokumentation der Zeitgeschichte (15 April 2019) 51.

[349] European Council, *A Secure Europe in a Better World, European Security Strategy*, PESC 787, 15895/03, Brussels, (8 December 2003), 8.

[350] European Commission, *The Stabilisation and Association process for South-East Europe – First Annual Report*, SEC(2002) 339, COM(2002)0163 final, (26 March 2003).
Footnote to the source: While the Report does make heavy use of regionalizing terms, it also states that ''the process needs to be tailored to the needs and specific conditions of the individual countries and that the proper balance needs to be struck between stabilisation and association''

[351] International Crisis Group, The State of Albania, Cris is Group Report Europe & Central Asia, *Crisis Group*, 6 January 1999. (website accessed on 22 July 2020), https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/balkans/albania/state-albania

[352] European Council, *European Council, Presidency Conclusions*, Brussels 15/16 December 2005, 15914/1/05 REV 1, (30 January 2006), 7.

[353] European Commission, Olli Rehn, *Speech by Mr Olli Rehn Member of the European Commission, responsible for Enlargement ''Deeds must follow words – Albania moves towards implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement''* Address to the Albanian Parliament, Speech/05/680, Tirana, (11 November, 2005), 15.

increasingly salient role by Albanian mafia's abroad, along with its reputation for secrecy and violence, did much to maintain corruption and crime as prominently recurring issues in Albania's accession to the EU.[354] These factors would continue to slow down the country's EU accession process and other efforts of international cooperation.[355] So when the Council of Europe agreed to grant visa-free travel to the citizens of Serbia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia, it would explicitly exclude Albania (and Bosnia Herzegovina).[356]

Whereas closer alignment and compliance to EU standards led to the desecuritization of the two countries' biggest threats to the Union namely those of regional destabilization, civil war, etc.[357], these achievements would always be in danger of backsliding in the case of the Balkan states. This became most apparent in the case of North Macedonia under the rule of Nikola Gruevski. As the regime cracked down on media freedom, and the antiquization campaign fuelled discord with Greece, the country found strong condemnation from European Commissioner for Enlargement Štefan Füle who even warned that the country could lose the Commission's recommendation to start accession negotiations.[358] On that same note, countries showed fears over Albania's nationalist aspiration for a Greater Albania, a fear that was immediately regionalized when Albania was being told to '' Albania to stop fanning nationalist sentiment in the Balkans (…) warning that nationalist rhetoric in the run-up to a June election risked destabilising a hard-won but still fragile peace in the region.[359] Although the EU thought of itself as having prevented a bomb explosion that would rival the Bosnian War, the bomb would be merely dormant and could still go off. As an Austrian booklet on the country's 10-year membership anniversary recalled; ''we cannot talk about Iran,

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[354] Mark Townsend, Kings of cocaine: how the Albanian mafia seized control of the UK drugs trade, *The Guardian* (13 January, 2019) (website accessed on 11 August, 2020) https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/13/kings-of-cocaine-albanian-mafia-uk-drugs-crime
Tweede Kamer*, De Europese top d.d. 6 mei 2020) Verslag van een notaoverleg*, Tweede Kamer vergaderjaar 2019–2020, 21 501-20, nr. 1538, Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, (19 May, 2020).
European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Document, Albania 2019 Report,* COM (2019) 260 final, SWD 215 final, Brussels (29 May 2019), 36.

[355] Andrew Rettman, EUobserver Albania to become EU 'candidate' but urged to fight corruption, progress other accession negotiations mixed, *EUobserver*, 24 June 2014.

[356] Susan Houlton, EU proposes scrapping visas for Albania and Bosnia, *DW*, 27 May 2010. https://www.dw.com/en/eu-proposes-scrapping-visas-for-albania-and-bosnia/a-5615353

[357] European Commission, *Joint press statement following the tenth meeting of the Stabilisation and Association Council between Albania and the EU*, Brussels, (14 November 2018).

[358] 'Frustrated' Füle cancels visit to Macedonia, *Euractiv*, 15 February 2013. (website accessed on 23 July 2020), https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/frustrated-fule-cancels-visit-to-macedonia/
Fühle heads to Macedonia 'at critical juncture, *Euractiv*, 1 March 2013, (website accessed on 23 July 2020), https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/fule-heads-to-macedonia-at-critical-juncture/

[359] Benet Koleka, Hepinstall, Germany tells Albania to stop fanning nationalist fires, Reuters, (22 February, 2013), (website accessed on: 8 August 2020) https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-albania-nationalism/germany-tells-albania-to-stop-fanning-nationalist-fires-idUKBRE91L0Q720130222

Iraq, etc when there are timebombs ticking in our own neighbourhood, in Kosovo, in Macedonia, and other places. [360] Due to the conditionality inherent to EU relations, moving away from the Europeanizing process of compliance to the SAA automatically means to move away from the Unions bountiful benefits which will ultimately hurt the SAA country's citizens.[361] Always referring back to the conflicts of the 1990's, European sources would remain fearful that as Balkan citizens became discontented, they would have the potential of ripping open old wounds and revert to warfare.[362] To this end, only membership to the EU could consolidate end ensure the sustainability of the country's reforms.[363]

Even when the prospective accession countries moved in the direction of conformity to the SAA, different types of securitization came to the foreground. While the European Commission was positive to bring the Western Balkan states into the ''European mainstream''[364], the Council proved a difficult factor. For while the EU wished to keep both countries on track to reform and secure them from unwanted influence from foreign competitors, it was found politically difficult in several countries to put these countries who were deemed not sufficiently Europeanized on track to EU membership. This left the prospective members in perpetual limbo; as they were 'approaching Europe', they were also seen to pose new dangers – for the countries who had been decisively outside the Union, were now standing on its doorstep.[365] Remarkably, this is in contradiction to Higashino's assessment that a country's pathway to accession is part of a desecuritizing move. Instead, when countries inch closer they can apparently also be securitized over other issues, ones that come with a country's pathway to the EU.

In spite of continued fears over putting countries not sufficiently Europeanized on the pathway to the EU, would see some landmark progress being made. Most noticeably, North Macedonia for the most part solved its bilateral issues with Greece and Bulgaria, while Albania enacted though judicial reforms aimed at tackling corruption and crime.[366] This led to a renewed and invigorated push to start negotiations

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[360] Paul Lendvai, *10 Jahre Österreich in der Europäischen Union, Gemeinsame Erfahrungen – Gemeinsame Perspektiven*, Bundesministerium für auswärtige Angelegenheiten, (2005) 90.
[361] Fühle heads to Macedonia 'at critical juncture, *Euractiv*, 1 March 2013, (website accessed on 23 July 2020), https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/fule-heads-to-macedonia-at-critical-juncture/
[362] ''Frustrated' Fühle cancels visit to Macedonia, *Euractiv*, 15 February 2013. (website accessed on 23 July 2020), https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/frustrated-fule-cancels-visit-to-macedonia/
[363] European Commission, *Štefan Füle*, *Speech: Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: important to move towards European integration*, Speech European Parliament Plenary Session, (5 February 2014)
[364] European Commission, *Enlargement - the EU keeps its doors open for South-Eastern Europe, speech to the European Economic and Social Committee*, Brussels, Speech/07/21, (18 January 2007).
[365] Tanja Petrovic, *A long Way Home: Representations of the Western Balkans in Political and Media Discourses*, 48.
[366] Pierre Mirel, European Union-Western Balkans: for a revised membership negotiation framework, *Foundation Robert Schuman*, European Issue No. 529, (September 2019).

with both countries. France and The Netherlands however would express their reluctance to do so by vetoing the matter, a position that was further articulated in an interview with French President Emmanuel Macron. Reiterating North Macedonia's ambiguous position, he judged the country's chances positively, stating that; ''it's small, it's changed its name and that's a real historic achievement. It doesn't frighten anyone''. Albania however, was clearly not sufficiently desecuritized to be considered for inclusion. Rather, the reason for its inclusion was that; ''that if we don't open up to Albania, we'll inflict a terrible trauma on the region. There are Albanian-speaking communities everywhere. If you humiliate Albania, you will destabilize the region in a lasting way''. According to Macron, the true feelings of the EU leaders was ''ask them tomorrow whether they want to open the door to Albania. Half of them will say no''.[367]

Macron's speech displayed how, after two decades of reform, North Macedonia had been sufficiently desecuritized to be considered for EU accession, while Albania decisively was not. The latter was still regarded as too corrupt, prone to violent outburst, too different to start its accession negotiations, altogether – in other words, it was considered too Balkan. The fears that this view displayed were also apparent in the president's vision for the future. Presented in a French government non-paper (an unofficial discussion paper), the President insisted on a principle of reversibility for the accession, thereby displaying a deep-rooted scepticism to the sustainability of the reforms in the Balkans.[368]

While securitization inspired by Balkanism was employed to deter enlargement, it was also used to promote enlargement. In an interview with *Die Welt*, German Minister of State for Europe Michael Roth would employ some familiar ploys to substantiate these arguments. For if the EU would not live up to its promises, then it would do 'serious damage to the EU's credibility', meaning that its repercussions could be felt the world over. More than its credibility, Roth agreed with Macron that any setback in the Balkans could result in a return to violence, although his words were pointed not at Albania, but at North Macedonia, where – ''a resurgence in nationalism, a re-opening of healed wounds and ethnic conflicts''. Further aggravating this, an EU that broke its promises to these countries could find that ''it leaves the field

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European Commission, *Commission reports on progress made by Albania and North Macedonia, European Neighbourhood Policy And Enlargement Negotiations* – European Commission, (2 March 2020) Website accessed on: 4 August, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news_corner/news/commission-reports-progress-made-albania-and-north-macedonia_en

[367] The Economist, Emmanuel Macron in his own words (English), The French President's interview with The Economist, *The Economist*, 7 November 2019, https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-in-his-own-words-english

[368] Non-Paper, *Reforming the European Union accession process*, Government of France, (1 November 2019).

open to other actors such as Russia, China or Turkey whose primary interest is certainly not to bolster democracy and the rule of law''.[369]

In trying to promote the start of the accession process, Roth would effectively repeat many of Macron's arguments, but come to a different conclusion. Whereas Macron thought that these states, which were standing on the EU's doorstep, had to wait a little longer and work a little harder, Roth would want to let them take on step further to make sure they would not take a step back. However, their arguments for doing so were not markedly different – but to stabilize countries which were prone to instability, and to avert a repeat of history that brought out the worst of this instability. So far, on the spectrum between Europeanization and securitization, both North Macedonia seem to have progressed beyond their past difficulties to have started their accession negotiations to the EU on 23 March, 2020.

4.3 Chapter conclusion

As has been repeatedly stated, the three countries that are researched here were not chosen over what they have in common, but rather over how they differed. Indeed, all three had very different experiences during communist rule, which subsequently heavily formed the European image about them. This also shined through in their de-essentialized discursive descriptions. While North Macedonia was at first the embodiment of the ambiguity that shrouded most Balkan states in European eyes, as a type of ''everycountry', Bulgaria was distrusted over its close association to Russia inching closer towards an Eastern Europeanism. This position as a part of an Eastern(ad Central) European group of countries was also reflected however in Bulgaria's inclusion in the narrative of countries whose accession was spurred on by a drive to right the wrongs that stemmed from the 'myth of Yalta' through the unification of Europe. Lastly, Albania, the hermit state of Europe, a remnant of totalitarian Stalinism and with a predominantly Islamic heritage, was more heavily Orientalized.

These differences In perception all had a latent effect on these countries' EU accession procedures. Whereas Bulgaria was able to distancing from its Balkan neighbours helped it from being included in regionalized securitization structures by the EU, North Macedonia, through its ambiguous position was able to become an 'oasis of peace' in the Western Balkans and become one of the early front-runners in this region's alignment to the EU. Albania meanwhile, would from an early point on be chastised over the threats that emanated from its borders. As the 1990's unfurled North Macedonia and Albania were

[369] Michael Roth, *The Western Balkans: ''Burying heads in the sand would be the wrong thing to do now''*, Interview in Die Welt, (5 November 2019).

increasingly securitized over their internal problems, In the former's case over the 2001 insurgency, and in the latter's over the 1997 pyramid scheme crash. These evens proved detrimental to these countries attempts at cultivating closer connections to the EU as the bloc's perception of the region was de-Europeanized and policy became more focussed on dismantling the perceived threats that these countries posed to the Union.

The situation of all three countries was exacerbated by the Yugoslav war that was unfolding outside their borders. In the case of Bulgaria, this was influence was mostly rhetorical as the country was made out to be part of a region that was in danger of descending into state failure and becoming a 'black hole' like Afghanistan from which threats could emanate to the EU. These condemnations over being a part of their region were even more hard felt in North Macedonia and Albania. There, both countries were made subject to strategies that sought to counteract threats which were disproportional to these countries' situations. However due to their Balkan credentials, both countries were seen as holding the potential to repeat the worst episodes of the Yugoslav Wars. The result of which was a policy whose goals and methods were skewed by projections that strongly resonate with Todorova's Balkanism, exerting negative influence onto these countries' accession processes to the EU. Country specific projections meanwhile served to exacerbate these projections, as was the case in Albania, or served to somewhat mitigate them, as they did in North Macedonia.

5. Conclusion

Much has changed since Maria Todorova wrote her book *Imagining the Balkans* in which she explored Europe's history of thinking about the Balkans. The region whose name in the 1990's stood equal to barbarous wars based on incomprehensible ancient hatreds has been largely at peace since 2001. Since then, entire generations have grown up without having known war, but still feeling the scars of it. To feel these, their country did not even need to have been included in these wars. One of these aftereffects was a pathway to EU accession that was much more convoluted than many of the other post-communist states. How could Todorova's Balkanism explain this difference? In other words – how can Balkanist discourse influence the EU accession processes of Balkan countries?

Answering this actually means to go beyond Todorova's work, and take inspiration from others. Whereas her work proved to be a baseline to many other takes on European perspectives of the Balkans, hers and most of these other studies are of a predominantly static nature – exploring the various facets of the discourse and finding its resonance throughout history. Although the founder of discursive studies Michel Foucault provided that these discourses are able to hold a great measure of stability through time, he above all emphasized their dynamic nature. Created through social interaction and finding resonance with a public that would accept or deny it into their system of knowledge – their episteme. To Europe, Balkanism is part of this episteme that prescribes knowledge about the Balkans. But it is not the only one.

As Todorova describes, the Balkans are a crossroads, a place where ''different cultures, languages, traditions and even civilization'' meet. [370] With this meeting of civilizations, it has also a meeting place of histories, where the medieval Orthodox kingdoms and the Byzantine Empire were followed by Islamic Ottoman rule, liberated to become fiercely independent states, and subsequently brought under Communist rule in an atheist, Slavic, Soviet bloc. All of these have left impressions and perspectives of the Balkans in the episteme or Europe. Through Reinhard Koselleck's ideas on how history is made up of layers, it is argued that each of these perspectives is connected to a different discourse pertaining to one of these experiences. When Fritz Valjavec argued that the Balkans had moved beyond their special regional classification to become a part of a greater South-East European region, this brought the Balkans closer to ''Eastern Europeanism'' – a theory set out by Larry Wolff. Susceptible to change through grand historic developments, the fall of communism and the following Yugoslav Wars caused Todorova's Balkanism to gain saliency over the region's Eastern Europeanism.

[370] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 57.

Characteristically of discourse studies like these, the region to which the discourse is applied to is homogenized and essentialized to a few characteristics. The Balkans are no different – as Kathrine Fleming stated the assumption is that: ''Balkan countries are more or less interchangeable with and indistinguishable from one another, that there is a readily identifiable typology of politics and history''.[371] In following with Edward Said's Orientalism, this claim on essentialized knowledge is in itself a tool to exert power over the region. [372] Thus, to name a place 'Balkan' contributes to the maintaining of the illusion of separation between the EUropean self and the Balkan other.[373] Simultaneously, the designation of these places polarizes the distinctions between them, with the Westerner becoming more Western, and the Balkan becoming 'more Balkan'.[374] This essentialism was subsequently criticized by the likes of Milica Bakić-Hayden and Diana Mishkova, who showed how various countries in Europe and Balkan states held specific opinions of one another. Arguing that this too is a part of a layered approach, these de-essential layers provide specific perspectives that can exist next to those of the region. It is through the influencing of these specific perspectives that a Balkan state may counteract the unwanted characteristics that are attributed to it through the essentialist regionalization of the entire Balkans.

How could this discursive layered structure be applied to a political process like that of EU enlargement? While recognizing that it may have an effect, the authors mentioned before offer few tools or examples on how their theories could affect politics. Instead, the tools for the application of this discursive theory is sought in political studies. Especially theories which pertain to the influence of discursively constituted influencing elements are compatible for this purpose. Identity and security represent these factors par excellence and are respectively represented in institutional constructivism and securitization theory. Institutional constructivism proposes that the more a country is perceived as 'European' the easier it is to accede to the EU. Securitization theory, when applied to enlargement, purports that, if a country is securitized and thereby deemed a security threat the EU is prompted to remove this threat through incorporation into the Union. These two theories are interlinked. As the EU sees itself as the embodiment of peace, security, and civilization, then a popular discourse that describes a region as being particularly prone to danger, is subsequently considered to be less 'European' and is instead readily securitized as a threat. Resulting from this is a spectrum between the perception of a place's Europeanness

[371] Katherine E. Fleming, Orientalism, The Balkans, and Balkan Historiography, 1218.
[372] Edward W. Said, Orientalism, Penguin Publishers, 1978, 3. Cited in: Zrinka Blazevic, Rethinking Balkanism, 87-88.
[373] Erik de Lange, *Balkanism as Historiography, Development of Debate and* 16.
[374] Edward W. Said, Orientalism, (Penguin Publishers, 1977), 45-46.

and its perceived threat whereby a shift towards the former means an easier way to EU accession while the latter means the opposite.

This spectrum bode well in the case of the 2004 enlargement round, wherein the EU was spurred on to enlarge to Eastern European states who were seen European kin that had been 'captured' by the myth of Yalta. Meanwhile, the Balkanist qualities that regained their saliency as a result of the Yugoslav Wars showed a completely different picture that proved quite the opposite to the self-definition that EUrope ascribed to itself. Through the contrast between these Balkanist qualities and EUropean self-definition, the EU is able to assume a posture of superiority in which the countries that deal with it are expected to bring merits, while the Union itself can remain non-conciliatory.[375] This is especially apparent in the Stability and Association Agreement (SAA). A framework of cooperation designed specifically for the Balkan region, (except for Bulgaria and Slovenia). Containing a strategy of firm conditionality the Agreement moves to bring the Balkan state to align to the EU – i.e. to adopt the Union's superior values. While the Balkan wide application of these SAA's meant that the EU's approach to the region had a strongly regionalizing character. Judging from its position of self-ascribed superiority and the acceding country's inferiority, the benefits that this holds for the citizens country is most often taken for granted while the terms are dictated not on the acceding country's terms but rather for it. [376]

How does the application of Balkanist discourse to these political theories translate into political practice? This thesis has considered the application of these theories in the relations between the EU and Albania, Bulgaria, and North Macedonia. Of these, Bulgaria deviates from the other two in that it has managed to sign a Europe Agreement and was able to be included in the 2004 enlargement group, although its accession was belated to 2007. This position outside of the institutionalized regionalization of the SAAs and many of the regionalizing terms that came with it. However, this did not wholly disassociate Bulgaria from the rest of the Balkans. Instead, the country was oftentimes grouped to be part of the same problematic zone that was the Balkans. Disassociating itself from this connection was part of a concerted effort in which the country had to otherize itself from its neighbours and reject any permanent forms of institutional regionalization. When it finally did accede, it exemplified the general reluctance and distrust in the state's competences through the inclusion of special clauses and instruments to check it. However, it also proved the inherent desecuritization that is coupled with a state's accession to the EU. This even had

[375] European Commission, *Communication from the Commission, 2005 Enlargement Strategy Paper*, Brussels, SEC(2005) 1433, COM (2005) 561 final (9 November 2005), 6.
[376] Andrew Graan, On the Politics of "Imidž": European Integration and the Trials of Recognition in Post conflict Macedonia, 844.

the rhetorical effect of the creation of the term 'Western Balkans' to refer to the straggler states who came to inherit the qualities of the entire Balkans. Thus underlining that, although the EU could encroach on the Balkans, the states there would have to leave their Balkan name at the door to accede as the qualities associated to the Balkans, and to the EU, were inherently incompatible.[377]

Whereas Bulgaria had the political freedom of movement to play into, there were few chances for such leeway in the cases of Albania and North Macedonia. The former's history of isolation had imbued it with characteristics that were decisively Oriental and 'other', through which it became a country uniquely associated with non-European and threatening qualities. North Macedonia on the other hand was very much the embodiment of the 'Balkan everycountry', a place of ambiguity that was quite under the radar of EUropean observers until its 2001 insurgency, an event which led it to be highly securitized as well. On this path, both countries became part of an EU regional approach that sought to above all stabilize the region of instability that was the Western Balkans. Classified and securitized into this zone of problems, both countries became subjected to strategies and rhetoric designed for problems in which they had no part. Meanwhile, both countries were consistently suspected of backsliding in the steps that they had made to Europeanization. Owing to their Balkanist essentialization this backsliding would always hold the danger of these countries repeating the horrors that befell Bosnia-Herzegovina. Struggling to shake off this essentialized perspective, both countries were confronted with a path full of obstacles on their way to start EU membership negotiations. In spite of this, both countries showed how through close alignment to the EU and painstaking domestic reforms, they were able to start their accession procedures at the start of 2020.

Are the Balkans doomed to remain essentialized to Balkanist qualities and, through that, be kept at arm's length from the EU? If Todorova's take on the Balkans is followed, then the ascribed characteristics that she describes of a barbarous Balkan and a civilized EUrope will remain incompatible, making EU accession unlikely. However, as time passes and familiar associations fade into the background to make room for new ones (or refurbished old ones) as the saliency that EUrope attributes to the various layers that describe the Balkans may well transform as they have done before. After the Second World War, Fritz Valjavec deemed that the Balkans had transcended their special status and were part of a greater whole. Certainly, if some of the EUropean countries that have been traditionally aloof of the region were to

[377] Sashenka Lleshaj, Constructing the other within: EU enlargement, nesting orientalism and the Western Balkans, 6.
Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 192.
Tanja Petrovic, *A long Way Home: Representations of the Western Balkans in Political and Media Discourses*, 24, 51.

establish more intensive relations to it, then discourses that they hold would have the potential to see the region in a more de-essentialized light. The same goes for Balkan states – if they are able to distance themselves from the essentialist Balkanist projections through an active policy of Europeanization then they may well have the chance to accede to the EU. However, if conflict were to re-erupt in any of the states, then the process might be repeated and countries like Albania Bulgaria and North Macedonia may again be included in a re-emphasis of Balkanist characteristics. .

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