# A LONG WAY HOME

*Representations of the Western Balkans in Political and Media Discourses*

TANJA PETROVIĆ

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# A LONG WAY HOME:

*Representations of the Western Balkans in Political and Media Discourses*

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Ljubljana, July 2009

## I. INTRODUCTION

"The so-called unification of Europe appears to be carried out with little thought," wrote Jelica Šumič Riha and Tomaž Mastnak in 1993 in an introduction to the special issue of the *Filozofski vestnik* journal of philosophy entitled *Questioning Europe*. Later in the text they draw attention to the fact that "it is not for the first time that Europe is uniting, yet this has never been marked by such a poverty of ideas and lack of reflection" (Mastnak and Šumič-Riha 1993, 7).[1] At that time, their critical attitude towards Europe was primarily determined by the bloody events in former Yugoslavia, which Europe had failed to prevent, among other things by not supporting efforts to democratize Yugoslavia. As one western diplomat who dedicated part of his career to the Balkans stated, "The Europe in Maastricht did not hear calls for help from the Europe in Sarajevo" (Gentilini 2007, 51). During the years that followed, it was primarily academics who took a critical attitude towards certain practices of EU institutions and EU-related discourses created on the national and supra-national levels (cf., e.g. Burgess 1997, Mastnak 1998, Zielonka (ed.) 2002, Velikonja 2005, Armstrong and Anderson (eds.) 2007 etc.). By contrast, the two most "vociferous" EU-related discourses – these are political and media discourses – continue to demonstrate a serious lack of reflection.

In the introductory text mentioned above Mastnak and Šumič-Riha go on to explain Slovenia's position in relation to Europe: "Up until three years ago, we were 'outside' because we lived in a communist country. In Slovenia, as in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and the Baltic States, asserting that we were Europeans meant criticizing communism and the imperial structures imposed on us. We accepted the European identity game only to realise that, in the end, we could only lose. When communism collapsed, we continued to be excluded from the Europe in which we live culturally, politically, economically, historically. Europe had needed communism more than we did; and when we freed ourselves from it Europe kept us in the position of the Other, only the reasons for that have changed: ideological and political considerations are being succeeded by racial ones" (Mastnak and Šumič-Riha 1993, 7–8).

1 For more on the history of European integration projects, see Šabec (2006, 203–217) and Toplak (2003).

Slightly more than a decade after this text was published, on May 1, 2004, Slovenia became the first (and for the time being the only) former Yugoslav republic to join the EU. By joining the *large European family*,[2] it finally *escaped the Balkan curse*, as a journalist for the Spanish daily *El Pais* wrote (quoted in Velikonja 2005, 8), and, according to dominant explanations by Slovenian and foreign politicians, *returned home, to the company of western European nations, to where it has always belonged, by virtue of culture, history and civilization*.

Yet the fact is that neither its break with the Balkan and Yugoslav past nor its *return home* were final or unequivocal, in much the same way that the end of communism and accession to the EU of East European, Balkan and former socialist countries did not completely eradicate the dominant patterns of exclusion. What their accession did enable, though, was the reconfiguration of power relations and roles, and with it the creation of a new basis for exclusion. Today, when, ideologically, *Europe* as a notion or idea has been almost completely equated with the EU,[3] membership in the EU is the main instrument of legitimization in the processes mentioned above: those that are already within the EU can include or exclude, while those that still strive for membership, who are *on their way to Europe*, or those who do not have the option of membership at all (the EU's neighbors), are excluded. Mitja Velikonja called this discursive practice in which the notions of Europe and European are equated with the EU "the 'original sin' of the new Eurocentrism (...) Under the pretence of simplification, abbreviation or eloquence (*eu*loquence?), the two terms are simply equated – the political and economic unit appropriates the geographical and historical name of the entire continent" (Velikonja 2005, 17). In this, "the very process of accession to the EU actually shows how *non-European* countries may be transformed into European ones. 'Eusurpation' of the terms *Europe* and *Europeanism*, particularly during the period of *entry*, or the period of *accession* (depending on the position of the speaker, i.e. whether he/she comes from

2 In this text, italics are used for notions/terms and quotations that I consider explicitly ideological and which are the subject of my analysis. The same applies to the designation *Western Balkans*, which in my opinion is not neutral.

3 This kind of equating goes so far that it also affects purely geographical notions that should be neutral. After Bulgaria joined the EU, the Austrian daily *Der Standard* wrote that Europe had acquired a new sea (*Das Neue Meer Europas* [Europe's New Sea], *Der Standard*, January 4, 2007). In spring 2009, the Slovenian Tourist Organization's billboards in Belgrade advertising holidays in Slovenia featured a photo of Portorož and the slogan *The nearest European sea*.

a future or existing member state), divides the European countries that geographically belong to Europe into those that *are European* in the political and economic sense (i.e. members of the EU) and those that are *not European*" (Ibid., 17-18). For the Balkan countries, the process of accession to the EU involves radical and manifold changes within various areas of social and political life and the economy: "The preparation for simultaneous entry into the single market and the Schengen system has necessitated in Central and Eastern Europe sweeping changes to monetary policy, fiscal arrangements, capital flows, immigration controls and political and institutional frameworks, including the fulfillment of a number of pre-accession criteria that even the current members are not expected to meet" (Hammond 2006, 13–14; cf. Zielonka 2002, 8).[4] On the other hand, the clear-cut division into EU members and non-members created a situation in which striving for EU membership is a prerequisite for the economic development of aspiring countries and their climb up the European hierarchy.

What is the nature of discourses emerging in this context, and what significance does this context have for both those who shape such discourses and those who are their subject? What can these discourses tell us about the character of contemporary Europe? These are some of the questions I raise in this study.

In trying to answer these questions, I will rely on Foucault's understanding of discourse and his conceptualization of discourse analysis as "the understanding of rules and regularities in the creation/dispersal of objects, subjects, styles, concepts and strategic fields" (Melegh 2006, 21; Foucault 1972). Like Velikonja (2005, 15), I want to draw readers' attention to the fact that "a discursive structure is not only a 'cognitive' or 'contemplative' entity but an *articulation practice* that establishes and organizes social relations" (Laclau and Mouffe 1987, 81). Accordingly, it will sometimes be necessary to look at certain social practices that bear obvious analogies with discourses analyzed in this study, for example, economic relations, immigration control, the treatment of migrant workers from the *Western Balkan* countries etc.

Foucault teaches us that no discourse is completely unrelated to other discourses already articulated and shaped

4 The British historian Timothy Garton Ash wittily observed that the European Union would certainly not be admitted to the EU, as it does not fulfill the democratic standards it requires from new candidates (Horvat 2009, 55).

through history. Only in relation to these past discourses is it possible to understand the meaning of a particular discourse, or *discursive formation*. Accordingly, I will try to relate the discourse analyzed here to discourses with which it "communicates," both diachronously and synchronously.

For Foucault, the main subject of discursive analysis is not the same as that of linguistic analysis, i.e. the rules in accordance with which a particular statement has been made and rules in accordance with which other similar statements could be made; instead, he is concerned with "how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another?" (Foucault 1972, 27). In this study, I explore the circumstances that made possible certain kinds of statements, which are illustrated with the four examples below.

1. *Serbia has to choose between its nationalist past and a European future* (Olli Rehn, European Commissioner for Enlargement, *Delo*, February 10, 2006).[5]

2.

a. When presenting priorities during Portugal's presidency of the EU, Álvaro Mendonça e Moura, Portugal's Permanent Representative to the European Union, stated that *because of its colonial past, Portugal's focus in foreign policy will be cooperation with Africa, and human rights will be in the foreground. 'We cannot simply chase away from the table the countries that violate human rights with which we sit at the same table'* he said. (24ur.com, June 11, 2007).
b. *The Financial Times* quoted Slovenian PM Janez Janša saying that *in the region* [the Western Balkans] *Slovenia has interests that are similar to Portugal's interests in Africa* (*Mladina*, August 4, 2007).

3. *Austria's attitude to Slovenia is similar to Slovenia's attitude to Southeastern Europe* (the Slovenian politician and MEP, Jelko Kacin, *Mladina*, March 14, 2004).

The first statement exemplifies discourse that establishes an explicit contrast between "non-Europe" and Europe based

5 Translator's note: the majority of statements taken from various local media sources have been translated into English from the languages in which they appeared in these sources (Slovene, Serbian or Croatian). Although in some cases this amounts to a translation of a translated statement (originally delivered in English or some other language), it seemed more appropriate to render the statements as they came across in the media texts on which the argument in this study is based, even at the risk of somewhat 'distorting' the original meaning.

on the attitude to nationalism. In this discourse, Europe appears as an area liberated from nationalism and other *residues from the past*. The accession to the EU of the *Western Balkan* countries is in this context presented as a choice between the past and the future. In problematizing this type of discourse, I will deconstruct the perception of nationalism as a non-European phenomenon that is in some way inherent to the Balkan countries, and analyze the dynamics of the relationship between the national and the European, or the supra-national, within the discourse through which identity on the level of the EU is being articulated.

Statements 2a and 2b point to a revival of former (colonial) discursive patterns within the EU context, and the new situation arising from EU membership in which even countries whose history is not marked by colonial expansion can articulate (post)colonial discourses. Accordingly, the relationship between contemporary discourses and historical legacies will be one of the main subjects of my analysis. The statement under 3. also takes over certain patterns rooted in history, except that in this case it is a regional context where several countries share the same historical legacies and use these to negotiate their national interests within the EU.

I will seek answers to these questions primarily within political discourse communicated through the Slovenian mass media. Since I am interested in content produced by leading politicians from the EU and its member states and communicated to citizens through the media, my analysis does not include the official documents of the EU or its political bodies. Occasionally, I will look into the media in neighboring Austria and the countries of the *Western Balkans*. My perception of discourse about the *Other*, which in this case is the *Western Balkan* countries, fully corresponds to the perception of Otherness within contemporary humanities and social studies, where it is understood as a way of defining the self and shaping the image about the self by contrasting it with the Other. Accordingly, this book should be understood as (yet another) book about Europe and its present identity quandary, rather than a book about what has come to be called the *Western Balkans* in the political discourse of today. Most of the material for this analysis comes from various Slovenian sources, because it seems to me that Slovenian public discourse is a "mirror" that well reflects the contemporary processes and identity strategies within a united Europe. It is possible to say that Slovenia

is a point of intersection for the majority of factors that play an important role in Europe's shaping of its (self-)image vis-à-vis the *Western Balkans*. Slovenia is one of the former republics of Yugoslavia, and so far the only one that has became an EU member. It is a former socialist country, as are all the countries of the *Western Balkans*; it has direct geographical contact with the *Western Balkans*, and it was the first country among the "new members" (and the first among the former socialist countries) to hold the EU presidency. Slovenia is also a Mediterranean country, which is another important aspect which plays a part in the ideological construction of European neighborhood and its role of the Other in relation to European identity. Accordingly, it is possible to expect that political statements in Slovenia encompass a whole spectrum of ideological mechanisms that are characteristic of discourses of today's Europe, reflecting its search for identity based on lines of demarcation with respect to the Other. An interesting feature of this process is that Slovenia is simultaneously a protagonist and a subject of demarcation – it is a protagonist by virtue of its membership in the EU, and a subject by virtue of its socialist past and its having been part of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire and Yugoslavia.

Most of the material used in this analysis was collected between November 2005 and July 2008 (after the conclusion of Slovenia's EU presidency); the statements dating from the period after July 2008 are included primarily to show unequivocal continuity in dominant discourses regardless of political changes.[6] The majority of statements quoted here are taken from the print and digital media, with the name of the speaker and the date of publication also provided. Since in most cases I cite statements by leading politicians, the sources provided should be taken as an illustration only, because the same statements were widely quoted in other print and digital media in Slovenia, EU member states, or the countries of the *Western Balkans*.

6 In the Slovenian context, two moments are important – the end of Slovenia's EU presidency and the change of government at the end of 2008; neither event had significant effects on the methods used in the Slovenian political sphere to refer to the *Western Balkans*. As to the wider European context, a review of the statements dating from the periods of the French and the Czech presidencies further confirms that no essential changes occurred in the treatment of the *Western Balkans*, apart from the fact that it is no longer in the foreground (it is not among the priority tasks of presiding countries); whenever the *Western Balkans* is the subject of discussion, discursive patterns remain unchanged.

## II. EUROPE IN SEARCH OF ITSELF

### EUROPEAN IDENTITY?

Europe has long since stopped perceiving itself as being merely a continent bringing together various states and political communities within a shared geographical area. It wants to be something more, so it sees itself as the *cradle of civilization*, a cultural space dominated by *European values*, with communities and individuals sharing the *feeling of Europeanism*, or *European identity*. As Anthony Padgen, a professor of history and political science, writes, "in recent times, postcolonial times, collective identities – at least in the face of opposition – have become commonplace elsewhere. But before the nineteenth century few would have said that they were 'Asian' or 'African' and (...) American (...) Only Europeans have persistently described themselves, usually when faced with cultures they found indescribably alien, to be not merely British or German or Spanish, but also European" (Pagden 2002, 33). At the same time, Europe is marked by numerous internal divisions and historical antagonisms. The European Others were not only alien, distant and very different cultures encountered by Europeans during their colonial ventures, but also many "internal Others" that throughout history, within the perceptions of Europe and Europeanness, were attributed a non-European, not-fully-European or only peripherally European character. Consequently, the contemporary history of Europe has been marked by incessant search for identity. It became particularly intense after the end of the cold war and the disappearance of the clear-cut boundary between "Europe" as perceived by the western part of the continent and the former eastern block or "Other Europe." In the next step, in which the countries of both Europes were united within the political framework of the EU, the questions of the nature and content of European identity, European values, Europeans' beliefs and Europe's border, became inevitable components of political rhetoric and academic debate (Hammond 2006, 6).

Over the past decades, many researchers have dedicated their time to the question of the nature and history of the European idea and the implications of contemporary political and economic processes unfolding on the "old continent." In so doing, they try either to provide a basis for the premise about the existence of European identity, or

emphasize its problematic nature. Let me mention just the most outstanding "attempts at conceptualising the distinct European way of being and acting in the world" in recent years (Ivfersen and Kølvraa 2007): Europe as a normative power (Manners 2002), Europe as a Kantian power (Kagan 2003), Europe as a cooperative empire (Cooper 2002), a cosmopolitan society (Habermas 2003, Beck 2003) or a vanishing mediator (Balibar 2003), Europe as an unfinished adventure, as "something to be made, created, built (...) – a labour that never ends, a challenge always still to be met in full, a prospect forever outstanding" (Bauman 2004, 2).

The issue of European identity and values is inseparable from various attempts to transcend selective national identities[7] by putting into action the ideas of Europe's unification and of Europe as an autonomous political and cultural subject. As the historian Luisa Passerini, writes, "the tradition of a united Europe was centuries old, but the First World War had reduced it to ashes. The many attempts to revive it between the two wars included Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi's Pan-Europe of 1923 and the proposal for a United States of Europe made to the League of Nations by Aristide Briand"[8] (Passerini 2002, 192). Researchers of the history of Europe's unifications emphasize the fact that ideas about integration characterized the most controversial periods and political regimes in European history and that, with respect to the idea of Europe, it is possible to observe "direct continuity (...) from the crusading genocides of medieval Christendom to the systematic extermination of other civilisations by European imperialism to the gas chambers of the Nazis and pogroms of ethnic cleansing of the new nationalisms in the post-Cold War period" (Delanty 1995, 157). Passerini (*op. cit.*, 191) states that "the idea of united Europe had been seized upon by both the Nazis and the Fascists in the period between the two wars, as well as during the war itself," while Gerard Delanty (1995, 114) points out that "the idea of Europe cannot be separated from European fascism and its myth of the unity of Europe. Nor can the idea of Europe be separated from the Nazi Holocaust, which was perpetrated in the name of the cultural homogeneity of Europe." Mastnak (1998, 84–85) writes that the principle of "unity in diversity," which is one

7 For more on the relations of (and tensions between) European (supranational) identity and national identities, see among others Ksenija Šabec (2006) and Marco Antonsich (2008).

8 For more on the early ideas about the shaping of European unions, see Mastnak (1998, 73-89).

of the key phrases in the rhetoric of contemporary European integration, was first articulated by the Nazis: in 1932, in Rome, the "Italian Fascists hosted an ambitious and widely attended international academic conference on Europe. It brought together renowned experts from across Europe to discuss the serious historical crisis that had engulfed the so-called old continent and, in the hope of finding a way to overcome it, 'define the historical and spiritual unity of Europe.' The Nazis saw this as an effort towards the 'revival of Europe,' or its 'rebirth.' They worked towards an organic unity of Europe whose fundamental principle was that every nation (naturally, cleansed from those alien elements that could not be assimilated) should live in accordance with its own 'laws of life.' Based on this platform, various European nations would then form relationships in the spirit of 'genuine chivalry' and approximate an ideal Europe that would be 'diverse internally and united externally.'" Mastnak continues to explain that "in the case of European countries, the current European integration processes, as far as culture is concerned, faithfully follow the model established by the Nazis: a multicultural Europe inside and a united dominion block on the outside" (Ibid., 127; cf. Delanty 1995, 112).

Passerini hence thinks that it is dangerous to link European identity with the idea (and reality) of united Europe, and that discourse on European identity should "keep its distance from political projects and their realization" (Passerini 2002, 195).

On the other hand, the contemporary political reality of Europe is characterized by incessant attempts to link the political and economic integration of Europe with the cultural aspect of *Europeanism*. Although references to European culture and European values are an indispensable "seasoning" in official documents and political speeches of EU officials and politicians from EU member states, in contemporary Europe every attempt at formulating European identity as cultural identity encounters insurmountable obstacles, and for two reasons. One is the still strong dominance of national identities on the European continent and the 19th-century concept of nation, which essentially links culture with territory (Ivfersen and Kølvraa 2007). In his paper for the conference entitled "New paradigms, new models – Culture in the EU external relations" that was held in May 2008 within the framework of Slovenia's presidency of the EU, Gijs De Vries drew attention to the fact that the national cultural centers of EU member states located

outside Europe placed insufficient emphasis on European dimensions, with the Goethe Institute being an exception: although a German international cultural institute, it officially presents itself as a *European cultural institution* (De Vries 2008, 65). The other reason is that every attempt at defining European cultural or civilizational specificities inevitably leads to Eurocentrism and the reproduction of notorious discourses in which Europe appears as an "exporter" of values and bringer of civilization to other parts of the world. Symptomatically, *European values* and *culture* are prominent issues precisely in political discourses related to the role of Europe on the world stage. Despite the dangers of Eurocentrism, for European politicians the rhetoric linking European integration with European identity and cultural values is too attractive to resist: as early as 1973, the nine members of the then European Community adopted the Declaration on European Identity. It placed emphasis on the *responsibilities (of the Nine) with regard to the rest of the world,* which should satisfy *the basic necessity to ensure the survival of civilisation which (the Nine) have in common* (Declaration of European Identity 1973, 118–122, quoted in Passerini 2002, 194). Twenty-five years on, within the substantially enlarged EU, Dimitrij Rupel, then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia and the President of the General Affairs and External Relations Council, speaking at the conference on the role of culture in EU external relations stated that *in its foreign policy, the EU is trying to convey its own experience, its disappointments, challenges, and achievements. In this respect, it promotes intercultural dialogue, wherever it is necessary and possible: in the Western Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus, etc. And as European nations managed to find reconciliation, so will the non-European nations, on the one hand, and European and non-European on the other* (http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Speeches_Interviews/May/0513MZZ_Rupel.html, accessed on March 8, 2009). Rupel defines European culture as supranational and contrasts it with the *backward, national values of a 'deep state:' Democratic reforms contribute to a relaxed atmosphere, freedom and democracy also in the field of culture. Such a perception of cultural life is created and spread by official institutions and formal policies. However, many European countries are still in a period of transition, and authoritarian, hierarchic, dogmatic ideas, contrary to those mentioned previously, remain rooted in their background. At the root of the problem is something I shall call the deep state (…) Behind the*

*formal (democratic) structure there is a system of institutions, groups and pressures which calls for confrontation with the modern world and international solidarity, pushes archaic patterns, and especially undermines the European spirit* (Ibid.). However, references to these same values of *European identity* and *European culture*, as well as the majority of discourses related to the EU, are sometimes used by the same political protagonists to legitimize national interests of individual countries. This generally happens when they refer to relations with neighboring countries or internal political disputes: *European values can be a problem even for well established European states, such as, for example, Austria: in one of its federal states a minority language is publicly and expressly despised – even though it is an official European language. One could also ask oneself (if we may pause for a moment at Slovenia's own doorstep) whether media monopolies and a slow judiciary are in accordance with fundamental European values. And then, is Croatia's unilateral renaming of the Bay of Piran as 'The bay of Savudrija' in accordance with European values?* asked Rupel on one such occasion (Slovenia's EU Presidency, 2008, 5). For Rupel, the admission of Slovenia into the EU is *a "certificate" of overall devotion to European values* (Ibid.), which shows that he makes a direct link between the political project of European integration and the cultural and identity aspects of Europeanism: *There are doubts about common European values also in the West, above all in radical leftist circles and various worker, immigrant, and minority organizations. But the problem lies neither with such organizations nor with full-fledged EU Member States. The problem lies with the countries outside the Union which, on the one hand, have not yet passed the European tests but which, on the other hand, need to become EU members – in the interests of the existing members and their safety* (Ibid.). The former Foreign Minister of Slovenia attributes *Europeanness* and *European values* exclusively to western (West European) societies and their cultural and political systems: *the difficulty* [with identifying with common European values] *arises from an anti-western and intrinsically anti-European political attitude which – in Slovenia – prospered for many decades and which we have been trying to leave behind ever since the first democratic elections and the declaration of independence of the country*. In his opinion, in Slovenia these difficulties are even greater than in other former socialist countries, because *Slovenes lived for decades under the misconception that Yugoslav socialism was better than Soviet socialism. Furthermore, we managed to become entangled*

*in numerous lies and delusions, concerning, for example, the civil war, 'the brotherhood and unity,' non-party self-managing pluralism, social property, non-alignment, and so on* (Ibid., 5–6).

Apart from highlighting culture as a basis for common European identity, there are two other options for its legitimization: to build European identity on the basis of shared European history or on the strong image of the Other which becomes a kind of mirror for European identity – Europe is that which the Other is not (cf. Ivfersen and Kølvraa 2007). As regards the shaping of European identity on the basis of shared European history, the key role is played by the traumatic experience of the Second World War and the Holocaust. "The telos of the European project can therefore be the positive values arrived at through a negation of the bad past, epitomized in the perception of European integration as a peace project" (Ibid.). In this perception, the year 1945 is a milestone year in European history.

Throughout European history, as well as today, "cultural Others" have been a "means" of legitimizing European identity. In fact, it has always been articulated through the attitude towards and in contrast to the Other. The contemporary search for European identity and efforts to give it a meaning may be intense and dedication to the task earnest, but viewed from the historical perspective this idea is relatively new: as Peter Burke emphasized, until the 15th century the name Europe had been used only sporadically; the word had not had any special weight and "for many people it had not meant a lot" (Burke 1980, 23, quoted in Mastnak 1997). Tomaž Mastnak (*op. cit.*, 15) explains this by the fact that "Europe is an exclusivist notion: it has always included only by means of excluding," and that during the period mentioned "Europe" did not play any part in the inclusion/exclusion mechanisms. However, in the mid 15th century, with the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453, "'Europe' began to acquire increasingly explicit emotional tones and mobilizing power, becoming a notion that began to function as a 'bearer of the common conscience of the West'" (Ibid., 16). "Europe as a political community became shaped during the holy war against the 'Turk,' who during the Renaissance became a symbolic image of hostile Muslims." (Ibid., 24; cf. Le Goff 2006, 21). For much of the 20th century, the communist Other was the central Other for Europe. Towards the end of the century, "unable to invoke the threat of communism, the developed West has found a new bogey again in Islam" (Delanty 1995, 150). At

the same time, – this should be emphasized time and again – the already established other European Others – colonial Other, Semitic Other, communist/East European Other – have lost little or almost nothing of their otherness.

## DISCOURSE ON THE *WESTERN BALKANS* BETWEEN BALKANISM AND ORIENTALISM

The Balkans are yet another "cultural Other" in contrast to which Europe can present itself as a cultural ("civilizational") unity. The image of the Balkans as a kind of "internal Other," or "semi-Other," has a special place in this process. In the imagination of Western Europeans, the Balkans are traditionally represented as a European periphery (Luthar and Petrović 2005) and as a "European non-Europe" that stands in explicit contrast to "European Europe."[9] This representation became particularly firmly established during the 19th century and the early 20th century, through texts by various Western European travel writers, administrators and scientists who had direct experience of the Balkan countries and their peoples. It was emphatically rearticulated during the 1990s, when the war and violence that followed the disintegration of former Yugoslavia were interpreted as a manifestation of the typical "Balkan character" of peoples inhabiting this part of Europe.

The interpretation of the origins and reproduction of the Balkans' image in the west strongly draws on Edward Said's concept of *Orientalism*. Orientalism implies "pervasive patterns of representation of cultures and societies that privilege a self-confidently 'progressive,' 'modern' and 'rational' Europe over the putatively 'stagnant,' 'backward,' 'traditional' and 'mystical' societies of the Orient" (Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992, 1; Said 1979). Said emphasizes that, for Europe, the Orient is "one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other" and that it "helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience." Said sees the image of the Orient as an integral part of European civilization and culture, and Orientalism as something that "expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles" (Said 1979, 2). As Bakić-Hayden and Robert Hayden argue

9 The term "l'Europe européenne," which denotes West Europe was used by G. de Reynold (1944-45, 55; quoted in Mastnak 1997: 9, note 1).

(1992, 2), "in the post-colonial world, the language of orientalism still maintains its rhetorical force as a powerful set of categories with which to stigmatize societies that are not 'western-style democracies.'"

Research on the Balkans conducted within the humanities and social sciences during the past few decades is characterized by an accumulation of scholarly works concerned with the mechanisms through which the Balkans, or Southeastern Europe, have been transforming into an "internal Other" within the European imagination, and the manner in which this otherness has been internalized on the part of Balkan societies themselves. Such studies, for example those by Larry Wolf (1994), Maria Todorova (1997) and Vesna Goldsworthy (1998), established the basis for the deconstruction of western discourses through which Balkan societies were orientalized or, to use Todorova's theoretical concept, balkanized.

Many researchers place the mechanisms of discursive shaping of the Balkan Other within the analytical frame of Orientalism (Skopotea 1991, Bakić-Hayden 1995, Močnik 1998, Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992, Miškova 2006, Hamond 2004, 2006). Milica Bakić-Hayden (1995) treats Balkan-related discourse as a variant of Orientalism because "it is the manner of perpetuation of underlying logic (...) that makes Balkanism and Orientalism variant forms of the same kind." In the study entitled *Imagining the Balkans*, the historian Maria Todorova acknowledges the important place of Said's concept in the academic criticism of discursive shaping of the Other and otherness, while emphasizing that "there is overlap and complementarity" (Todorova 1997, 11) between the rhetoric about the Orient and the Balkans; the two are actually similar phenomena, although apparently identical. Todorova's term for the discourse on the relationship between the Balkans and the West is Balkanism. This is a term "used in linguistics to denote characteristics such as the phonetical, morphological, and syntactic, characteristics that define Balkan linguistic union; only occasionally has it had a pejorative meaning" (1997, 193, note 33).[10] According to Todorova, the differences

10 Balkanisms are the traits of the Balkan linguistic league (Ger. Balkan Sprachbund) – the group of languages of the Balkan peninsula which developed a series of common traits on the level of language structure. Although originally the term did not carry negative connotations, today we can increasingly hear warnings that linguistic discourse on the Balkan linguistic league could be interpreted as a form of Balkanism: the focus is on the Balkans as a unified, prototype linguistic league which contributes to the exoticization of the Balkans. Unlike in the West, linguistic associations are perceived as something distant, foreign and exotic (cf. Aronson 2001).

between Orientalism and Balkanism lie in the following: while the Orient is historically and geographically elusive and undefined, the Balkans is a firmly defined entity. The elusive nature of the Orient gives rise to the perception of it as a dream country, a symbol of freedom and wealth and to the idea about flight from civilization. "The Balkans, on the other hand, with their unimaginative concreteness, and almost total lack of wealth, induced a straightforward attitude, usually negative, but rarely nuanced" (Todorova 1997, 14). In Todorova's opinion, the decisive difference lies in the fact that the Orient is the unambiguous Other, while "the Balkans are Europe, are part of Europe, although, admittedly, for the past several centuries its provincial part or periphery" (Ibid., 17). "Unlike orientalism, which is a discourse about an imputed opposition, balkanism is a discourse about an imputed ambiguity" (Ibid.).

The publication of *Imagining the Balkans* secured for the concept of *Balkanism* an important place in debates dealing with the relationship between the Balkans and the West and influenced the shaping of a new, critical academic tradition within Balkan Studies, although the concept of Orientalism did not quite disappear either. The historian Diana Miškova (2006) hence concludes that a dialogue with Edward Said's approach to Orientalism is very productive for Balkan historiography. The anthropologist Elissa Helms (2008, 152), emphasizes the difference between Balkanism and Orientalism within subordination mechanisms: "while Said's orientalism was tied to (histories of) direct western colonization, balkanism was built on much more diffuse and indirect relationships of domination and subordination vis-à-vis 'the west.'" She also argues that in the case of the Balkans, too, "western dominance has been evoked and constructed in relation to the Balkans through the *language* of orientalism" (Ibid., emphasis in original; cf. Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992, 3, Fleming 2000). Andrew Hammond (2006) draws attention to the similarities between the discourse of 19th-century British travel writers' writing about the Balkans and the one through which Great Britain formed the image of its colonies, exposing the obvious continuity between the latter and the discourse accompanying EU enlargement – the two "share a sense of the Balkans as a borderland that requires Western supervision" (Hammond 2006, 8). In her study of the representations of the Balkans in British literature, Vesna Goldsworthy argues that "the process of literary colonisation, in its stages and consequences, is not unlike real

colonization" (Goldsworthy 1998, 2), and that the images of the Balkans in English-speaking countries significantly contributed to the perception of this part of Europe elsewhere around the world. "The current, predominantly right-wing perception is of the Balkans as a contagious disease, an infectious sore in the soft underbelly of Europe, best left to fester in isolation. The opposing, mainly left-wing – but unconsciously neo-colonial – notion is of Balkan conflicts as revolting departures from the ideal of cosmopolitanism which could and should – to everyone's benefit – be solved by mature and responsible powers wielding a big stick and a few small carrots" (Ibid., xi).

One of the important characteristics of orientalist discourse, particularly evident in the case of the Balkans because of its ambivalent nature of the "internal Other," is the ability of this discourse to "divorce from colonial structures" (Fleming 2000, 1224). For this reason, societies that are subject to orientalization may internalize, reinterpret and modify it for the purpose of their internal demarcations and negotiation of their own identity. Milica Bakić Hayden's (1995) concept of "nesting orientalisms" in former Yugoslavia is an excellent illustration of the Orientalist discursive mechanism used by individual Yugoslav nations to present themselves as western/European/superior, and other nations as eastern/Oriental/inferior. Bakić-Hayden and Hayden further emphasize that in former Yugoslavia "a great deal of political rhetoric since the late 1980s has revolved around constructions that claim a privileged 'European' status for some groups in the country while condemning others as 'balkan' or 'byzantine,' hence non-European and Other" (1992, 5). Razsa and Lindstrom (2004) show how under Franjo Tuđman's presidency the Croats distanced themselves from their southern and eastern neighbors, exploiting the same stereotypes about the Balkans that were used by western politicians with reference to Croatia.

The main difference between the discourses of Balkanism and Orientalism, i.e. the difference between the Oriental *unambiguous* Other and the Balkan *half*-Other, has also proved important in the situation that was created when certain countries became EU members while others remained outside the EU. The *Western Balkans* are an ideal replacement for the former Balkan Other (the Balkans as a whole, Southeastern Europe), essential for maintaining this kind of otherness: geographically speaking, the Balkan countries, candidates for EU membership, are *undoubtedly part of*

*Europe* and it is where they *belong historically and in terms of civilization* (these are constant ideological features emphasized by both European and local politicians), but they have a lot of work ahead of them before they can become "European" or part of Europe. On the other hand, within this ambiguous space and within the political, ideological and cultural context "in which some countries' Europeaneity is given, while others have to work for it" (Hammond 2006, 8), discourse on the accession of the *Western Balkan* countries i.e., the region that has been traditionally understood as Europe's periphery in need of supervision, guidance and training provided by the West, appears as an ideal arena for the shaping of a new European Orientalism. This context not only re-actualizes the long-established patterns of colonial discourse (cf. Hammond 2004), but also enables the political elites in countries without a colonial past to appropriate or articulate an openly colonial discourse. However, the appropriation process takes place without reflection and without the "filtering" of such discourse through the sieve of singular, historically determined relationships, as illustrated by Janez Janša's statement quoted above in which he drew parallels between Portugal's attitude towards Africa and Slovenia's attitude towards the countries of the *Western Balkans*: the only criterion and the only legitimization tool is EU membership.

Moreover, reflection, filtering and adaptation of discursive patterns of the new European Orientalism are absent even from the discourses of political elites in the candidate Balkan countries. This can be attributed to the nature of political relations in contemporary Europe: new member states, that is, the former socialist countries that had to "prove" their *Europeanness* before joining the EU, must continue to do so even as EU members, while the perception of advantages gained through membership is more or less openly reduced to economic interests (of both the old and the new members). Accordingly, when rationalizing the significance of "European integrations" in their pre-election campaigns, politicians in the candidate Balkan countries refer to what they expect to have the strongest impact on voters: a higher standard of living, faster economic development, financial support from the EU, visa-free travel etc. Their political rhetoric is characterized by a verbatim reproduction of the rhetoric used by EU officials and leading politicians of member states, as is evident from the statement on a 2008 election poster in Bosnia-Herzegovina.


Figure 1: An election poster from Bosnia-Herzegovina reading, "It's time for European Bosnia-Herzegovina." The statement at the bottom says, "Signing the Stability and Association Agreement is a large step forward on the road to European integration." (Tuzla, September 2008)

If we put things in the context of Dimitrij Rupel's statement quoted earlier, about the "unproblematic" and "problematic" subjects that have difficulties with *European values*, it is obvious that the political elites of the *Western Balkan* countries simply reproduce the discourse coming "from above," without problematizing it or adapting it to the citizens of their countries. Those who do problematize it and draw attention to the disputability of such discourse and relationships echoed by it are – much as "in the West" – various marginalized subjects with only weak socio-political influence: workers, immigrants, artists and their organizations (see also Figure 5), but they, as Rupel has established, "are not a problem."

One could actually conclude that there is no problem at all. Discourse on Europe and on the necessity of becoming an EU member in the countries of the *Western Balkans* is in perfect harmony with the views of EU politicians, a harmony so perfect that their words are simply taken over and repeated (in fact, there are no influential anti-European political parties or politicians in the *Western Balkans*, because the economic dependence on European funds and investment renders these countries unable to afford any such thing).[11]

11 Undoubtedly, loud anti-European advocates in the Western Balkan countries do exist. Such are, for example, the Roman Catholic Church in Croatia, or the Serbian Radical Party in Serbia. However, these subjects are not capable of offering any alternative to EU accession. In the area of concrete political operation, inevitably connected with the economic issues, the dividing line between the political right and left wings has been eliminated when it comes to the viewpoints on accession to the EU. An illustrative example is the Party of Serbian Unity in Serbia, led by Dragan Marković – Palma, who is also mayor of the town of Jagodina. This party is the ideological successor to the party once led by the war criminal Željko Ražnjatović Ar-

This creates a situation in which there is no room left for a dialogue on how European citizens, or peoples living in various part of the continent, understand the meaning of European values. The debate on *Europeanness* thus inevitably remains entrapped in the colonial discourse of western (West European, today EU) domination and is articulated exclusively by "true Europeans," those living inside the EU. The journalist, Ervin Hladnik Milharčič, highlighted this problem when he stated that his question of the past two years – *What will be your contribution to the development of the European idea*? – asked in ten post-communist countries did not receive any sensible answer (*Objektiv*, *Dnevnik*, July 19, 2008, p. 13). In response to the same question, Boris Dežulović, a writer and columnist, described the contribution of Croatia as follows: "Absolutely nothing. Your assumption is that Eastern Europe joined because of the initial idea of a united Europe. The idea about a united and free Europe for the citizens of this continent is no longer mentioned neither in the east nor in the west. We joined so that the EU can discipline unstable regions and that the west can expand its living space. Cheap workforce, car factories and Lego bricks producers" (Ibid.).

kan, although after the parliamentary elections in 2008 it declined to negotiate with the nationalist DSS party led by Vojislav Koštunica and the Nova Srbija Party led by Velimir Ilić, hence enabling the formation of the pro-European government including the coalition "For European Serbia" and the Socialist Party of Serbia. Marković explained his move as follows: "I'm a pragmatic man and an entrepreneur, so I know that patriotism cannot be poured into a tractor. I decided on the coalition with the Democratic Party because of its determination as regards accession to the EU." Similarly, the Radical Party disintegrated because of disagreements over the ratification of the Stabilization and Association Agreement. Even the right-wing politicians carrying the conspicuous burden of the past have become "Europeans" (as they are ironically and half-offensively called in the Serbian print media), for example Tomislav Nikolić, a former radical, and Ivica Dačić, one of Slobodan Milošević's closest allies.

## III. EUROPE INVENTS THE *WESTERN BALKANS*

### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Medieval scholars believed that existence was inseparably linked to a name (Le Goff 2006, 16). In this chapter, I will explore the kind of existence that can be linked to the name *Western Balkans*, the name that is today used ever more spontaneously and without reservation in political discourse as well as other areas.

The term was used as a neutral geographical name in 19th- and early 20th-century literature, and in this usage it survives to this date (cf. Vedriš 2006). For example, in 1897, the English writer H. Thomson published a book entitled *The Outgoing Turk: Impressions of a Journey through the Western Balkans*; in 1928, the London newspaper *The Illustrated London News* wrote about witchcraft in the Western Balkans, and so on. The geographical term *Western Balkans* has been even more frequently used, and it still is, in scholarly works on biology, geography, archaeology and the like, dealing with various phenomena in the western part of the Balkan peninsula. It is possible to recognize the neutral, geographical usage of this name if other matching names for other parts of the peninsula, for example the central Balkans, the eastern Balkans and so on, are (can be) used next to it.

However, it is the political usage that has today prevailed over the neutral, geographical usage. This "newly concocted" political naming denotes the Balkan countries that are not yet EU members. The group comprises all former Yugoslav republics except Slovenia (already an EU member), plus Albania. As Bojinović states (2005, 15, note 20), "it is a political term (in contrast to the Balkans as a geographical notion of a mountain range on the Balkan peninsula), founded by EU in 1998 at the European council in Vienna." Since then, the *Western Balkans* has become one of the key terms invariably used when referring to the processes related to the accession of Southeast European countries, or the foreign policy of the EU and its member states, security in Europe and the like.

In political discourse, the term *Western Balkans* has replaced the term *Southeastern Europe*, which was used during the 1990s to denote the countries plagued by ethnic conflicts. The latter actually functioned as a euphemism for

the Balkans, a name that carried a historical burden and one with which most new countries founded after the disintegration of former Yugoslavia did not want to identify. However, the history of the term *Southeastern Europe* as a neutral alternative for the *Balkans* goes much further back than the last decade of the 20th century. Todorova (1997, 28) states that "after 1918, the term 'Balkan Peninsula,' under attack for some time because of its geographical inadequacy and its value-ridden nature, began to fade away but not disappear, notably in the German language literature." In the words of Mathias Bernath (1973, 142), *Südosteuropa* was to become a "neutral, non-political and non-ideological concept which, moreover, abolished the standing historical-political dichotomy between the Danubian monarchy and the Ottoman Balkans that had become irrelevant." During the 1930s and the 1940s the term was taken over by the Nazis, so it acquired negative connotations, and with a long lasting effect: "*Südosteuropa* became an important concept in the geopolitical views of the Nazis, and had its defined place in their world order as *Wirtschaftsraum Grossdeutschland Südost*, 'the naturally determined economic and political completion' of the German Reich in the southeast" (Todorova 1997, 28).[12]

At the time when the term *Western Balkans* replaced the term *Southeastern Europe*, some protagonists of political discourse objected to it. Wim Van Meurs (2000, 5) argued that the term *Southeastern Europe* is much more appropriate, because it implicitly acknowledges the fact that this region is already *a part of Europe*, and correspondingly, that its problems are *Europe's* problems and that solutions to these problems must be *European*. One among these solutions is the *deepening and the enlargement of the Union*. The name used in political discourses to denote the region occupying the southeastern part of Europe has obviously changed over time, and each new name was a kind of euphemism for the previous term chosen with the aim of eliminating the negative consequences of stereotypization and the ideological burden. The initiators of changes, and the authors of these new names, were the westerners who never pondered the possibility that the problem lay not in the name but in the practices and discourses, again their own, which

12 The interdisciplinary academic tradition of "Südostforschung" should be treated along the same lines. As Promitzer (2003, 184) argues, Südostforschung was transformed "from a discipline of Austro-German national revisionism into a tool of National Socialist geopolitics;" for more on Südostforschung in Germany and Austria, see Kaser 1990, Burleigh 1988, and Promitzer 2003.

burdened those names and made them "unsuitable," "politically incorrect," and undesirable for the citizens of the Balkan countries.

What is the *Western Balkans* and what is behind this naming? Can we talk at all about the *Western Balkan* region, as European politicians often do, in the same way as we refer to other regions of Europe?

Scholarly literature provides countless definitions of the term region, but their common denominator is the description of a region as a territory or an area that is delimited or defined in some way (Johansson 1999, 4, quoted in Todorova 2005, 83). Some scholars emphasize that a region must have its internal characteristics and must be characterized by cohesion if it is to be distinguished from its environment (Ibid.). In the case of the *Western Balkans*, it would be difficult to argue that it is a region in the traditional sense of the word. It is not that the countries of the *Western Balkans* do not have anything in common, but there is nothing that sets them apart from the neighboring countries, except that they are not EU members. If we adhere to Maria Todorova and take historical legacy as an important factor that defines a region culturally, historically and politically, then again it is difficult to define the *Western Balkans* as a unit, since the countries occupying this region share a common historical legacy with other countries in their neighborhood, be it the legacy of the Habsburg Empire, the Ottoman Empire, or the Yugoslav or socialist legacy. The question of what the *Western Balkans* are can be answered only if we invert it and ask instead what the *Western Balkans are not*. The answer is then self-evident: they are not the EU.

Another reason for the concept of the *Western Balkans* as a geographical region being questionable lies in the aspiration of the *Western Balkan* countries to join the EU. The moment all the countries located between Slovenia in the west, Hungary in the north, Romania and Bulgaria in the east, and Greece in the south join the EU, the political term *Western Balkans* will disappear. Each country joining the EU would be detached from the *Western Balkans*, so this political unit, too, would eventually cease to exist.

There is another intriguing detail that puts a question mark over the understanding of the *Western Balkans* as a geographically defined area or region: the term *Western Balkans* lacks a referential scheme necessitated by the adjective "western." There is no Eastern, Southern or Northern Balkans; there is only the *Western Balkans* and Europe, i.e., the

EU. In the lands of former Yugoslavia, where most countries reject their geographical and cultural association with the Balkans, such a categorization inevitably crosses over into domains beyond the strictly political sphere and causes many other doubts and questions. A good illustration of these are the posts by on-line *Delo* readers commenting on the article entitled "Rupel o rešitvi za Zahodni Balkan" [Rupel On the Solution For The Western Balkans] (http://delo.si/clanek/47835, accessed on March 8, 2009): (1) *Yes, we, too, are the Balkans. That is to say, the western one exists, but where are the remaining three sides? At any rate, outside, in foreign countries, we are all crammed into the same pot. We are all brothers and sisters.* (2) *Rupel cannot be a credible actor in resolving the Balkan affairs. First of all he should clarify what the Western Balkan is. It cannot be anything else but Slovenia. Then comes the central, and then the eastern Balkans.* (3) *geographically completely wrong! Do you know where the Balkan border runs (not the western, southern or eastern Balkans but the Balkans???). "Geographically," Slovenia is not in the Balkans! In that case even Italy is the Western Balkans??* The *Western Balkans* is so largely present in political and media discourses in Slovenia that it resonates and becomes the subject of reinterpretation, even within marginal areas of communication, such as graffiti.

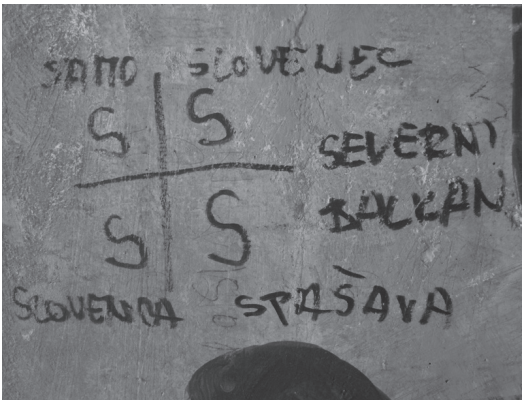


Figure 2: Graffiti on the façade of a kindergarten in Ljubljana, composed of a pun on a notorious Serbian slogan plus the text 'The Northern Balkans'

In truth, the *Western Balkans* is not the only notion within European symbolic geography that lacks spatial correlates. Todorova (2005, 94) writes that in 1997 the US State Department issued an official directive instructing its

embassies to drop the term *Eastern Europe* and refer only to Central Europe, since the former could be found offensive by new democratic states. Todorova emphasizes that this created an interesting situation: there is Central Europe and then comes Russia. "So we have an interesting situation: there is a continent whose name is Europe, which has a center which is not quite Europe, and therefore it's called Central Europe (since we are on the topic of names, we might as well call it Untereuropa); its West is actually Europe, and it has no East" (Todorova 2005, 75). The traditional meetings of Central European presidents also furnish a similar map of Europe revealing an interesting "expansion" of the notion of Central Europe. The fourth meeting took place in 1997 in Piran, Slovenia, and the participants were the presidents of Austria, Czech Republic, Italy, Hungary, Germany, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. The Slovenian Post issued for the occasion a stamp featuring the emblems of Central European countries.


Figure 3: The stamp issued on the occasion of the Fourth Meeting of Central European Presidents in Piran in 1997

In the first decade of the 21st century, the notion of Central Europe substantially expanded towards the east and the southeast. The Ninth meeting in 2002, again hosted by Slovenia, was attended by the presidents of no fewer than 16 "Central European" states: Austria, Bulgaria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Croatia, Italy, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Macedonia, Moldova, Germany, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine. This meeting, too, was commemorated by a stamp and a postal seal featuring a map of the "enlarged" Central Europe.


Figure 4: The stamp and the postal seal issued on the occasion of the Ninth Meeting of Central European Presidents in Bled in 2002

The eleventh meeting was held in 2004, in Mamaia, Romania, the twelfth was in Zagreb, Croatia, and the thirteenth in Varna, Bulgaria. At this meeting, the late Slovenian President, Janez Drnovšek, stated that *the term Central Europe will continue to be a geographical term, but not also a political term. This will be part of the European Union, and Central Europeans inside it will not form a special political entity, because there will be no need for it* (*Delo*, May 19, 2006).

The notion of the *Western Balkans* therefore fulfills two parallel functions, being used as a geographical and a political term. To use the linguistic terminology, the two are not synonymous but homonymous: they do not cover the same area of meaning and their functioning is backed by different ideological mechanisms. Much as in the case of the Balkans, social and cultural uses of the name *Western Balkans* "expanded its signified far beyond its immediate and concrete [i.e. geographical] meaning" (Todorova 1997, 21).

The political term *Western Balkans*, which bears a conspicuous ideological burden,[13] is today much more present in public discourse, and its use has important dimensions that already extend beyond exclusively political or administrative communication purposes. It would be possible to say that the notion of the *Western Balkans*, despite its plainly political connotations and ideological nature (or precisely because of these), has been creeping into other discourses and mental maps.[14] In 2006, Lonely Planet published the *Western Balkans Travel Guide*, which was one of the first serious signs that the term was spreading from the political sphere into the other spheres of life. The *Western Balkans* travel guide covers Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia & Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania; obviously unencumbered with the political burden of the term *Western Balkans*, the authors included Slovenia as well.[15] Although the authors themselves admitted that a more appropriate title would be *Former Yugoslavia and Albania*, they opted for a widely known and extensively used political term. However, the discourse of this guidebook does not completely ignore the established semantics relating to this term: the authors emphasize that this is *the compact region of six republics (with two more possibly on the way)*, which is *after the tumultuous 1990s, ready to welcome visitors again*. They also mention the *region's ethnic complexity,* for which *it is renowned*, and add that *despite its recent history it is far from a bad thing* (Western Balkans 2006, 4).

13 The burden is so heavy that even politicians themselves have difficulties: Karel Schwarzenberg, the Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic, which holds the EU presidency during the first half of 2009, said in a statement for the Serbian daily *Večernje novosti* that *Serbia is an extraordinary country* adding: *to be honest, I don't know why we call the countries in this region the Western Balkan countries* (*B92.net*, December 19, 2008).

14 Maria Todorova defines mental maps as "recipes, forms or schemata into which we fit our impressions in the course of the life-long human attempt to give meaning and order to the world" (Todorova 2005, 64).

15 In the next (2009) edition, Slovenia disappeared from the book.

## IV. *ON THE WAY TO EUROPE:* ACCESSION METAPHORS AND POLITICAL IMAGINATION OF THE *WESTERN BALKANS*

In this chapter I want to show how within political discourse the European continent is divided into "Europe" and "non-Europe," and how the images of the EU, on the one hand, and of the *Western Balkan* countries striving for EU membership, on the other, are created. The most frequently used linguistic tool that helps reinforce these images is metaphor.

Metaphor is the most penetrating linguistic tool used in political discourse. As Thompson emphasizes (1996, 186), "metaphor helps make the central concepts of politics, such as ideology, influence, power etc., more tangible and concrete for the people involved in politics, but also for those directly influenced by it." When used in political discourse, metaphors can fashion new meanings and challenge erstwhile interpretations. Similarly, "metaphors can function as routine idioms in political discourse in ways that deaden political awareness" (Billig and Macmillan 2005: 459; cf. Lakoff 2002, 2003, Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Metaphors expose an ideology that lurks behind texts (Kyratzis 2001, 65). Miller and Fredericks (1990, 68) write that "the use of metaphorical expressions in major policy statements reflects a largely unconscious process whereby implicit beliefs, attitudes and ideological presuppositions concerning the desirability or utility of a course of action are made explicit."

The political discourse of the EU is expressly metaphorical. The Germanist Andreas Musolff studied the dominant metaphors in debates about the EU using a comprehensive corpus of political discourses in Great Britain and Germany. The metaphors, or concepts, pinpointed by Musolff are also present in discourses about the *Western Balkan* countries' accession to the EU. The most frequently used are the metaphor of *family* and those from the conceptual domains of *journey/road* and *edifice/building* (Musolff 2004). However, in discourses about the EU itself, the role of these metaphors within the political categorization and argumentation, and the relations they suggest, are completely different from the roles and relations suggested by the same metaphors when they are used in discourses about the *Western Balkans*.

## EUROPE IS A BUILDING

The metaphor of Europe as a building became very popular in the mid 1980s, after Mikhail Gorbachev used the phrase *common European home* to emphasize the "political vision of a collaborative way of living together for the European nations" (Musolff 2004, 127). Gorbachev's use of this metaphor can be understood as an attempt at including Eastern Europe (or Russia) in the *common European home* (cf. Todorova 2005a, 157). The (*common*) *European home/house* metaphor emphasizing the unity of Europe in the geopolitical sense has long history.[16] Nevertheless, in contemporary European political discourses, the *European house* almost exclusively denotes the EU.

In discourses about the accession of the *Western Balkan* countries, the EU is represented as an edifice that may be either house or fortress, depending on the protagonist. EU politicians and officials frequently refer to it as a house – in the words of Olli Rehn, *Candidate countries are not at our doorstep. There is a long path ahead of them before they can enter our common house* (*Delo*, June 7, 2006). Josep Borrell, President of the European Parliament, stated that the EU is *a house built without plans. Now we have to get back to the basics* (*24ur.com*, February 2, 2006). The *house/building* metaphor is directly related to the expression *building Europe*, which was used by the French President and President of the Council of the European Union during the second half of 2008, Nicolas Sarkozy: *We must profoundly change our way of building Europe, which worries the citizens of Europe* (*B92.net*, July 1, 2008)

The metaphor of Europe as a fortress is not new. It was even used by the philosopher Komensky in the early 17th century, at a time when European awareness had only just been formed (Mastnak 2001, 16). Today, this metaphor is commonly used by those who are "outside the fortress" or by advocates for their rights. It is often used in the criticism of EU migration policy (see the web portal *No Fortress Europe*, http://www.no-fortress-europe.eu, accessed on March 8, 2009). The journalist, Lada Stipanić-Niseteo, writes that *in the case of the EU, the fortress exists in practice although it is abhorred in declarations. This fortress will always open its gates for those who have a lot of knowledge or a lot of money* (*Vjesnik*,

16 As Young writes (1998, quoted in Musolff 2004, 122), it was first used in 1950 by Churchill in the speech in which he argued for the idea of a common European army which would be a message to the world from the *common European house*.

May 23, 2002). Reporting on the EU summit in Thessaloniki dedicated to migration, the Serbian daily *Danas* wrote that *the question asked behind the scenes is whether its migration policy is turning Europe into a fortress* (*Evropa kao tvrđava* [*Europe As A Fortress*], *Danas*, July 20, 2003). The same metaphor appears in art works by EU and worldwide artists that thematize EU migration policy. The photographer, Jure Eržen, entitled part of his exhibition *African Emigrants Before The EU Fortress* (*Delo*, November 8, 2006). Asian Dub Foundation severely criticized it in the song *Fortress Europe*. And it is also denounced in the region which "keeps banging on the wall of fortress Europe": in 2001, Želimir Žilnik made a movie entitled *Fortress Europe*, and in 2008, Igor Marojević's play *Tvrđava Evropa* [*Fortress Europe*] was staged for the Belgrade summer festival. The fortress metaphor also appears in the context of EU border security, to which migration policy is closely related. The Serbian politician, Goran Svilanović, stated that *the Schengen wall is today stronger than the Berlin wall once was* and that it has been turning Europe into a fortress (*Šengenska tvrđava EU* [*The Schengen Fortress EU*], *Danas*, May 19, 2006). MEP Mihael Brejc used the comparison between the EU and the Berlin Wall in connection with the regulation on local border traffic across the EU external borders, pointing out that *if the EU implemented the regulation on local border traffic at its external land borders (…), it could mean a new Berlin Wall* (*24ur.com*, September 16, 2005). Jelko Kacin (at that time head of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee and an observer in the EP), speaking at the seminar on the liberalization of the visa regime, said that *today, the so-called Schengen wall prevents the peers of my children in this region, living in the country which is a stone's throw away, from having a first-hand experience of European democracy in Slovenia* (European Parliament, December 30, 2006). The fortress metaphor is also used in connection with EU monetary policy (cf. the article entitled *Euro i tvrđava Evropa* [*The Euro and Fortress Europe*], *Vjesnik*, June 27, 2002).

Understandably, the fortress metaphor is not present in discourses of EU officials and politicians of its members states, except in response to or denials of such criticism as mentioned above. In a broadcast by the Voice of America, Bertin Martens of the European Commission stated that the EU wants *to prevent creating of new borders. We do not want the EU to become a fortress and to exclude the rest of the world. We want an osmosis with our neighbors* (January 25, 2006).

It is implicitly present in speeches of European politicians when they speak about the protection of citizens that Europe should ensure. At the time when France took over the EU presidency, Nicolas Sarkozy stated that *he expected from Europe to protect Europeans from the risks accompanying mondialization* and that *it is now time to think about what should be done so that Europe will protect its citizens in everyday life* (*B92.net*, July 14, 2008).

However, such explicit articulations of the metaphor of the EU as an edifice are relatively rare in political discourse. The mental image of the EU as an edifice is more forcefully impressed by two other frequently used metaphors referring to the particular parts of a building that separate its interior from the outer world and enable passage between the two. These are the *door* and the *doorstep*. The metaphor *to be at the Europe's/EU's door/doorstep* defines the position of those who are outside the building and strive to enter it, meaning the countries that are undergoing the accession process or are preparing for it. These metaphors are ambiguous, and their meaning depends on which country is at the door or doorstep. In some cases, being at the *EU's doorstep/door* carries positive connotations and means that a country is just about to join the EU. For example, in 1999, the Slovenian Nova Gorica based Regional Chamber of Commerce for Northern Primorska organized a round-table discussion entitled *At Europe's Doorstep* and published a report with the same title with the purpose of informing *the wider public, and particularly local communities, institutions and economies about the current developments within the process of Slovenia's accession to the EU and the possibilities for these environments to use the EU sources*. The journalist Igor Mekina also used the metaphor *to be at the door of the EU* in a positive context when writing about Slovenia's successful economic transition (*Pred vrati EU* [*At the EU's Door*], *AIM*, 2001). Turkey's being *on the EU doorstep* (*Delo*, June 29, 2005) also indicates that its achievements are positively assessed. The statement by Olli Rehn also implies that *being on the EU doorstep* is an advantageous situation (from which the *Western Balkan* countries are still far away): *Candidate countries are not at our doorstep. There is a long path ahead of them before they can enter our common house* (*Delo*, June 7, 2006). By contrast, Jelko Kacin uses this metaphor in a completely different sense when he argues that *the Balkans are not at Europe's doorstep nor are they Europe's courtyard. The Balkans are part of Europe and they deserve to be part of the enlarged European*

*Union* (European Parliament, December 30, 2006). In line with the ambiguous meanings of these metaphors, the EU door is open for some and closed for others. The latter are also at risk of being left in front of the door for ever: as early as 2000, when Slovenia itself was still *at the door*, the Foreign Minister at the time, Dimitrij Rupel, stated: *By all means, what concerns us most at the moment is the opening of the door for new members. According to our information, the EU appears to be planning to open the door towards the end of 2002* (*Mladina*, December 11, 2000). *Europe's door must remain open*, emphasized Slovenian PM Janez Janša five years later when Slovenia had already *crossed Europe's doorstep* (*Delo*, June 5, 2005). During his visit to Macedonia, he expressed *his support for the open-door policy of the European Union and its enlargement to the Western Balkans* (*24ur.com*, February 27, 2007). However, when referring to Croatia, the Slovenian and Austrian media stress the possibility that it may remain *at the EU's door*: *Will Croatia Remain In Front Of The European Union's Door?* (*Delo*, September 26, 2006), *Will Croatia Shut The EU Door On Itself?* (*Der Standard*, April 10, 2006). A similar concern is also expressed in connection with other *Western Balkan* countries and Turkey: *The door would therefore not be closed only for the Balkan partners or Macedonia, which has won candidate status, but for Croatia and Turkey as well, although the accession negotiations are already underway* (*Delo*, September 26, 2006). The Serbian journalist, Slobodan Reljić, writing for the NIN weekly, stated that *the position of the government in Kosovo has been ruined, the verbal support for reforms is increasingly rare, and messages about a plan to leave Serbia outside Europe's doors have begun to come in* (NIN 2724, March 13, 2003); the leader of the GSS party of Serbia (Civic Alliance of Serbia), Nataša Mićić, emphasized at the convention of the opposition parties in Belgrade, on May 26, 2006, that *Serbia got stuck in the past and was stopped at Europe's door*.

The concept of a *shared European house*, from which the Balkan countries are excluded metaphorically by being placed *at the door* or *at Europe's backyard*, has a rather long history in western discourses on the Balkans. Vesna Goldsworthy provides several illustrative examples of such discourses. Harold Spender, in the book *The Cauldron of Europe* (1925), states that *the Balkans remain an open question at the back door of Europe*. The same metaphor was frequently used during the 1990s by western journalists who referred to the war in the territories of former Yugoslavia

as *a war in 'our own backyard.'* In 1992, *The New York Times* wrote that *the blood of the Balkans is seeping under the European door* (Goldsworthy 1998, 8–9). A diachronous look at the conceptualization of *Europe as a house* contrasted to the Balkan countries therefore shows that this metaphor is not a novelty in political discourse. It has been more often used as a "tool" to exclude this part of Europe than it has been used to include it in the shared European space.

### EUROPE IS A FAMILY

In contemporary western European political discourses, the metaphor of family is most frequently used to describe the relations between EU member states (Musolff 2004, 14). The accession of new member states in 2004 and 2007 was represented as a *coming home* of *lost children* into the *fold of the family* (Ibid., 17).

The metaphor of family makes possible, among other things, hierarchization of European states and the paternalism of certain states in relation to others, and on several levels. In the case of the accession of new members in 2004 and 2007, as Velikonja shows in his study of the new Eurocentrism, Europe's paternalism towards newcomers was obvious in the symbolic representations of *accession/entry*. For example "in the cover picture of the brochure *The EU is Here! A Guide for New EU Citizens*, the then president of the European Commission, dressed in a classic suit and wearing a tie with a European pattern, awaits, with his hands wide open, the approaching young woman and man clad in traditional Slovenian costumes and carrying the Slovenian flag. They are surrounded by camera-men and by an audience who approvingly observe this event. This stereotypical duality, i.e. the 'almost Europeans,' 'Ruritanians' in peasant or traditional folk costumes approaching the classically dressed 'old European,' was present in all ten accession countries" (Velikonja 2005, 79). Such a depiction of new members, their "folklorization" and representation as "authentic" (for more on this, see Bucholtz 2003), is also related to the creation of the image of the *Other*. It is precisely through such representations that the hierarchy within *the European family* is being established, the one between the "old," modern Europeans and the "new" ones, presented "as new settlers (usually wearing traditional costumes), who have to climb to reach the elite club" (Velikonja 2005, 81).

The countries categorized as belonging to the *Western Balkans* are still far from *joining the European family*; in their example, too, the paternalistic attitude is conspicuous, but to become members of the *European family* they still have to "qualify" for membership, or *prove their maturity*. The Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik advocates further enlargement of the EU stressing that *the Balkan countries belong in Europe politically and geographically, so they should be given an opportunity to join the European family* (*Delo*, July 4, 2005). *Serbia and all of its citizens are welcome in the European family*, stated the Vice President of the European Commission, Jacques Barrot, in Belgrade, on handing over the detailed plan for the gradual abolition of visas for Serbian citizens (*B92.net*, May 7, 2008). *People in Serbia have a European perspective and Serbia's place is within the European family*, said Javier Solana in an interview for the German daily *Die Welt* (*B92.net*, February 25, 2008).

This kind of representation is connected with the very nature of the accession process, which is imagined as the *road to Europe/the EU*, along which the *Western Balkan* countries should be transformed from non-European to European countries (for more on the road metaphor, see below). They are expected to *become mature* while traveling down this road, turning from irresponsible, immature children into responsible, adult persons. That is how the task of the *Western Balkan* nations and their chances of early accession to the EU was formulated by Miroslav Lajčák, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia and the former High Representative of the international community in Bosnia-Herzegovina: *They are still not mature enough for that, but they must know that we are serious and that the perspective will open for them as soon as they are mature enough* (*B92.net*, February 10, 2009). Figure 5 below shows a reflection on this dominant perception. It is a handwork by a laid-off worker from Zemun, Serbia, which is reminiscent of the stitched cloths that once embellished the walls of Serbian homes. It features young, smartly dressed parents carrying the EU flag and representing Europe, and a baby in the cot symbolizing Serbia (and Montenegro). The text reflects through the prism of irony the EU's dominant attitude towards the *Western Balkan* countries: *To Europe we would like to go, but they don't want 'us:' 'not mature,' you know.*


Figure 5: Handwork by Lenka Zelenović, a single, laid-off mother from Zemun (Serbia); published by the art group Škart (Decision Maker 2008, 34)

The child metaphor was used by Dimitrij Rupel, speaking about the responsibility of Slovenia and the EU towards the youngest Balkan state, Kosovo: *We recognized Kosovo and now we have certain duties. Once we send a child to school, we have to buy school supplies* (*24ur.com*, February 14, 2008). Discourse on countries undergoing the accession negotiations frequently "borrows" from the field of education. The *Western Balkan* countries are represented as students who have to fulfill their tasks, who receive marks for their work and the like. *Serbia will certainly become an EU member, but the date of accession depends on Serbia itself*, said the Austrian Foreign Minister Plassnik, adding that *Serbia must complete its homework to become an EU member* (*B92.net*, July 16, 2008); the European Commission's report on the progress of candidate countries made it clear that Serbia was a *difficult student* (*Vreme*, November 6, 2008, p. 16).

The image of the *Western Balkan* countries as children reproduces and legitimizes the EU's paternalistic attitude: children cannot be fully responsible for their own behavior; therefore, they are irrational and urgently need assistance, supervision and education. This is a general characteristic of colonial discourse and of various metaphorical forms of authoritarian paternalism, which also largely determines the relationships among the countries in the Balkans and the EU periphery. Slovenia, which had itself been a "child" until 2004, assumed the parental role when it joined the EU and now *helps children in the Western Balkans*; Serbia sees Kosovo

as a child that is unable to reach maturity (become a civilized, European country) without its custody etc.

### ACCESSION TO THE EU IS A JOURNEY

The metaphor of *path* or *journey* is one of the main conceptual metaphors defined within the theoretical framework of cognitive linguistics by the scheme: 'departure point–journey–destination/goal' (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 44–45, Zinken 2003, 508, Klikovac 2004). It is based on the fact that "we experience from early on that we have to literally go somewhere to metaphorically reach some goal" (Zinken 2003, 508).

Concrete examples of the conceptual metaphor 'a purposeful act is a journey towards a goal' can be found in political and public discourses in EU member states. These countries travel towards their goals at different speeds and using various means of transport, with some deciding not to embark on the journey at all (*the European train leaving the station without Britain*, was a popular metaphor in 1992, when Britain's signing of the Maastricht Treaty ran into difficulties – cf. Musolff 2004, 30).

Similarly, the political process of the accession of the *Western Balkan* countries is frequently described using the journey metaphor. In this context, the journey metaphor stands in contrast to the static image of the EU as an edifice implying security and protection. To reach the goal – accession to the EU – candidate countries may use different means of transportation, such as a train or a ship. When interviewing the Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel, a journalist for the *Mladina* weekly stated that, at the EU summit in Zagreb, *Croatia has jumped onto literally the last wagon that will move it closer to Europe* (*Mladina*, December 11, 2000). In an article relating to the recommendation of the President of the European Commission and the European Commissioner for Enlargement that Romania and Bulgaria should join the EU on January 1, 2007, the Romanian newspaper *Evenimentul Zilei* wrote that *Romania caught the last train to the EU, as the door will be closed after it* (*Delo*, September 27, 2006). The following is how Hungarian PM, Ferenc Gyurcsány, described Hungary's accession to the EU: *Many of our intellectuals dreamt about it for five hundred years. Our ship is now landing* (*Evropska mesta 2008*, *Dnevnik*, May 3, 2008). A train as a means of transportation may also imply the hierarchical order of countries-carriages – the most successful

candidates are at the front end, while those farthest away from the EU trail behind. *Croatia is at the head of the train. It is not difficult to detect the EU's interests in its integration, as it serves as an exemplary model for all the others in the region*, wrote a journalist for *Dnevnik's* supplement *Evropska mesta 2008* [European Cities 2008], published during Slovenia's presidency of the EU on the occasion of a visit by the mayors of Europe's capital cities.

The journey metaphor includes still another aspect that should not be overlooked. The aspiring EU members, starting the journey as "non-European" countries, must learn, transform and mature along the way, eventually reaching their target destination as fully revamped, European countries. Every adaptation to the pattern of *Europeanness*, which is usually effected through fulfilling the EU-defined conditions, brings candidate countries *one step closer to the EU*: *The Agreement is a new step in the journey of this Western Balkan country* [Macedonia] *towards EU membership* (*24 ur.com*, April 1, 2004). For candidate countries, the journey to the EU is *long, difficult, and full of obstacles: A difficult journey awaits Croatia which today obtained the status of an EU Associate Member* (…) *For the Račan government, a much more difficult obstacle on the journey to the EU will be relations with Italy* (*24ur.com*, October 29, 2001). One peculiar feature of the road/journey metaphor applied in discourses on the *Western Balkan* countries' accession to the EU is that the completion of the journey does not necessarily imply the attainment of the goal set beforehand: the entry into the *common European house* at the end of this journey/process is not guaranteed, but the very *Europeanness* with which the candidate countries become impregnated along the way should be enough to ensure their sense of fulfillment. Commenting on the preconditions-based strategy, which imposes reforms on candidate countries in exchange for "the European perspective," Olli Rehn said that *the journey is at least as important as the goal* (*Delo*, February 10, 2006). The journey may therefore turn out to be not merely long, but even endless.

Furthermore, the new members' *entry into the European house* does not necessarily mean that the journey has been completed, nor is it unequivocal proof of their *Europeanness*, particularly in the case of countries that belong to the "other," post-socialist Europe. This shows that the old patterns of *otherness* in Europe reproduced through Orientalist and Balkanist discourses have not disappeared with the arrival of new patterns introduced by the ideology of

*europeanism*. This fact is frequently echoed in the discourses of political representatives of the Balkan and East European countries. When the European Commission recommended that Bulgaria and Romania should join the EU on January 1, 2007, the Bulgarian Foreign Minister Ivajlo Kalfin stated that Bulgaria *had succeeded in realizing what it has strived to achieve for seventeen years*, adding that *Sofia will now have to convince other European countries that it is worthy of EU membership* (*Delo*, September 26, 2006). On the same occasion, the Romanian President, Traian Basescu, stated that *Romania has ahead of it a long journey from the accession to the EU to its real integration into the large family* (*Delo*, September 26, 2006). That some European countries consider themselves more European than other countries, and that this perception does not change with the attainment of EU membership, is even more directly expressed by the title of an article that appeared in one Bulgarian newspaper after the publication of the positive report on Bulgaria's accession to the EU: *Europe Accepted Us but Is Concerned That We Will Rob It* (*Delo*, September 27, 2006).

## AT THE WALLS OF EUROPE

In the words of Maria Todorova, "before America became the new antemurale Christianitatis in the wake of 9/11, this was one of the most important European mental maps which in different periods shifted from one to another European region or nation: Spain, France, Italy, Hungary, Austria, Germany, Poland, Romania, Croatia, Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Russia, the Balkans, Slavdom, Central Europe, etc. have all been saving Europe. And this was not something confined to journalistic or purely political rhetoric but has been very much part of the scholarly discourse as well" (Todorova 2005, 76).

The *antemurale Christianitatis* discourse has a long tradition in the Balkans. The countries in the European periphery use it as a tool to emphasize that they are *European*, moreover, that they *protect* Europe and its culture from "*the Turks*" or *Islam*. The image of the *bulwark* protecting Europe, as Ivo Žanić has established in the case of Croatia, is both complementary to and entwined with the related images of the *crossroads* and the *bridge between civilizations* often used by the Balkan countries to present themselves (Žanić 2005, 36). The bulwark supposedly protects *civilized Europe* from *barbaric Turks*, while at the same time constituting the

border between civilization and wilderness, between Europe and non-Europe. The *antemurale Christianitatis* discourse in the Balkan context thus becomes a means of producing the *nesting orientalisms* described by Milica Bakić-Hayden (1995): each country sees itself as a part of Europe and its protector, regarding its border (ordinarily, it is the south-eastern border) as a demarcation line between *Europe* and the land of *barbaric*, *uncivilized* and *oriental* peoples. Slavoj Žižek (1993, 236) points out that in former Yugoslavia "every actor (…) endeavors to legitimize its place 'inside' [Europe] by presenting itself as the last bastion of European civilization (…) in the face of oriental barbarism." This type of discourse can be found in practically all former Yugoslav republics. With the borders of the Southeast European countries now becoming the EU's frontier, the *antemurale Christianitatis* metaphor is being revived and the long-established discourse on the "barbaric and uncivilized Muslims" supplemented by new discourses on organized crime, terrorism, drug smuggling, human trafficking and illegal migration.

The Slovenian variant of the *antemurale* discourse is related to myths of *defense against "Turkish" incursions* during the Middle Ages in the territories of what is today Slovenia. These were created through the works of "various intellectuals, primarily historians and literary writers" (Kalčić 2007, 82). During the 1980s, which was the time of Slovenia's *Europeanization*, the image of a bulwark protecting Europe from the undefined barbaric Balkans and a much better defined non-European communism became even more widespread. As the anthropologist Špela Kalčić argues (*op. cit.*, 85), "in Slovenia, the evocation of Christian roots, meaning the heroic aspect of the *antemurale Christianitatis* myth, has again become a convenient political tool (…) at the beginning of the 1990s and through the preparations to join the EU, when the memory of Slovenian lands heroically 'withstanding pressure from the south-east and maintaining contact with the civilization and culture of western Europe' (Simoniti 1990, 196) was rekindled." Slovenia (much like all newly-formed nation-states in the territory of former Yugoslavia) legitimized its right to EU membership using the argument of its historical *defense of Europe against the "Turks:"* it not only deserved membership by virtue of its merits from medieval times, but EU membership is its natural right because of its *thousand-year old belonging to Europe* (briefly interrupted in the 20th century) (Lindstrom 2003). Accordingly, by joining the EU, Slovenia *returned*

*to where it always belonged* (for more on the *returning home* discourse, see below).

The *antemurale* myth has also been one of the constant traits in Croatia's shaping of national identity following the gaining of independence, and its ideological role is similar to that it played in Slovenia (cf. Žanić 2005, Lindstrom 2003). As Duška Knežević Hočevar showed in her field study, the *antemurale* myth has become naturalized on the present-day Slovenia-Croatia border, too: the chairman of the Žumberak cultural and art association based in Novo Mesto (Slovenia) stated that "nearly all the Association's members, approximately 150, were of Uskok descent because 'even at that time they [the ancestors] had already defended the entire Europe against the Turks.' Now, they – their descendants – would continue the tradition of their forefathers by defending the European Union along the forthcoming external EU border" (Knežević Hočevar 2007, 215).

The Serbian variant of the *antemurale* discourse was forcefully revived by Slobodan Milošević. In his notorious speech at Gazimestan, on June 28, 1989, he said: *Six centuries ago, Serbia heroically defended itself here, in Kosovo Polje. However, at the same time, it also defended Europe. At that time, Serbia was a bulwark of Europe and it protected its culture, religion and European society as a whole. Therefore, today it seems not only unjust but also unhistorical and completely absurd to question Serbia's belonging to Europe. Serbia has been continually in Europe, now and in the past. In its own way, of course.* The occasion on which Milošević referred to this 14th century defense of Europe against the Ottomans was the 600th anniversary of the battle of Kosovo Polje. The same metaphor would be used and the same role of the Serbs emphasized later, during the 1990s, except that this time the *enemies at the walls* would be different. The journal *Duga* published an article stating that *the truth about Kosovo and Metohia has not changed much over time, so that even today Muslim fundamentalism, persistently knocking at the door of Kosovo and Metohia, is trying to reach Europe. It is hard to believe that Europe is not aware of this. Even those in Europe who do not hold Serbia close to their hearts know very well that this old Balkan state represents the last barrier to the ongoing onslaught and aggression of Islam* (quoted in Bakić-Hayden 1995, 926). Dragoš Kalajić, a Serbian poet and painter, wrote in 1994: *The fact of an Islamic onslaught on Western Europe by peaceful means, the means of mass immigrations, threatening to turn European nations into national minorities within their own*

*states, only accentuates the importance of the Serbian struggle for the overall defense of Europe, European culture and civilisation* (quoted in Bakić-Hayden 1995, 925).

This statement is reminiscent of discourses now often used by extreme right politicians in Western Europe, which indicates that the *antemurale* discourse, although legitimized by referring to wider interests or defense of Europe as a whole, is profoundly nationalistic and arises from particular national interests. The same picture is conjured up when such discourse is used in the context of EU enlargement to the *Western Balkans*, except that in this case the protection of Europe from the *Turks/Muslims* is replaced (or supplemented) by concerns about security, crime, drug smuggling, human trafficking, illegal migration, terrorism etc. Therefore, in discourses used within the context of candidate countries' accession to the EU, the *Western Balkans* has been equated with, or rather relocated to the area south of the European continent, meaning the "third world." This has produced a situation in which the region called the *Western Balkans*, although geographically situated in the southeast of Europe, is increasingly being pushed by the shapers of "European" discourses, for ideological reasons, towards the south, outside the symbolic borders of Europe. A very illustrative example of how such an image is created by combining discourses on European otherness, Islam, terrorism, crime and illegal migration is the following passage, whose author is Lucio Caracciolo, the editor of *Limes*, an Italian journal of geopolitics: *Italy's borders continue to be exposed to pressure, with internal pressure exerted from the east and maritime pressure from the far south-east. 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. Pressure from the east is exerted by Russia and the countries bordering it (Ukraine, Transnistria, Moldova, the Black Sea, Caucasus), and it extends towards the heart of the Balkans (Bulgaria, Romania, inner Macedonia, Serbia and Bosnia), reaching our side of the Adriatic across former Yugoslavia and Albania. The south-eastern flow originates in Northern Africa and the Middle East and merges with Turkish criminal movements (…) Migration by people of African origin targets primarily our islands, whence it is easier to cross over to the European continent. 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* (Caracciolo 2004, 24). Europe's feeling of threat (it is usually individual EU member states that feel threatened) became particularly intense in the 1990s when (Western) Europe became fearful of "hungry masses" on its southern and eastern gates (Goldsworthy 1998, 13). *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*, said one German politician (*Independent*, April 19, 1997, p. 16, quoted in Goldsworthy 1998).

In political discourse directly referring to the accession of the *Western Balkan* countries, these countries are simultaneously *on their way* to Europe and *in front of the building*, or *at its door* or *doorstep*. For those inside the building, this situation poses a potential danger or threat against which the shared European building should protect itself. In other words, apart from the meanings mentioned above, *to be at the EU's doorstep* may also mean *to be dangerously close*. The text on the web page of the Office for Narcotics of the Slovenian Ministry of Health stated that *(Southeastern Europe) is a region "at the doorstep" of expanding Europe, which is still involved in the flow of vast amounts of illegal drugs travelling to the markets of Western Europe, one consequence of which is the increase in organized crime* (http://www.uradzadroge.gov.si, accessed on January 10, 2007).

As has already been emphasized, discourse on the protection of Europe from those *at its door,* although referring to shared European interests and values, is vitally subordinated to national interests, as Caracciolo's text above clearly shows. This became obvious at the time of the EU or Schengen area enlargement and the resulting "shift" in the EU frontier. On May 1, 2004, when ten new members joined the EU, Austria introduced a new border regime at its border crossings with new member states. On this occasion, the Austrian Minister of Internal Affairs ensured the public that in so doing *Austria has not opened the door to "imported crime" but, on the contrary, improved its border security* (*Dnevna Mladina*, January 20, 2004).[17] Many Slovenes perceived

17 The ensuring of "better border security" at the time of the expansion of the Schengen area became an acute issue in Austria and it was not limited to verbal expressions alone. According to *Mladina* (December 24, 2008, p. 17), towards the end of 2007 the inhabitants of the Austrian border village of Deutschkreuz became alarmed

this statement as still another confirmation of Austria's colonial attitude and another insult from their northern neighbor,[18] although virtually the same discourse could have been heard in Slovenia a decade earlier when the nature of the border between the two newly-constituted states, Slovenia and Croatia, was defined. The view that this border should be strictly controlled prevailed during the early 1990s, and it was justified by the need to prevent illegal immigration, smuggling and similar criminal offenses. This was placed in the context of the EU and its expectations. The then Secretary at the Ministry of Internal Affairs stated that *by introducing thorough control of the border with Croatia and Hungary, Slovenia fulfills the expectations of Europe. Gradually, but without hesitation, Slovenia must secure for itself the reputation of a new European state fully capable of controlling the waves of illegal immigration into Western Europe* (Šimunič 1995, 2, quoted in Knežević Hočevar 2007, 208).

### EUROPE IS THE FUTURE

Unlike the metaphors discussed so far, which mainly facilitate the spatial conceptualization of representations concerning the accession of the *Western Balkan* countries to the EU, the next representation involves the concept of time. Time is divided into the past and the future in relation to a certain point that belongs to the present. The linear image of time flowing from the past towards the future, supported by accompanying metaphorical processes, calls to mind the idea of progress: whatever belongs to the past is reactionary, backward and undeveloped, while the notions of development and progress are associated with the future. Such a perception made possible statements within political and media discourses in which the *Western Balkan* countries' accession to the EU is portrayed as their *opting for*

at the prospect of "crime coming from the East:" "villagers hired personal guards to patrol the village streets between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. because they no longer felt safe. At the same time, the Austrian government dispatched 1 500 troops to its border regions, although these same regions were protected by 2000 police officers." Only half a year later, their fear proved to be groundless, as the number of undocumented immigrants and the crime rate declined.

18 This is confirmed by the comments in *Dnevna Mladina* at www.mladina.si: (1) *The yodellers will never see us as equal members of the EU and will always come up with some new trick to annoy us.* (2) *The Austrians still hallucinate about the Austro-Hungarian empire "Tempi pasati, meine Bauern, tempi pasati. Fuer immer!"* (3) *They'd like to be "something more" but they've always been, they still are and will always be only highlanders speaking poor German. The Germans cannot stand them (as has been confirmed many times), and to be honest, not only the Germans. But they continue to dream, dream, dream … in broad daylight. These losers will have to be pulled down from the clouds, and without parachutes* (accessed on December 23, 2006).

*the future* (and as the *final break with the reactionary past*); this type of discourse is supported by the spatial metaphor of *progress along the road to Europe*. EU officials and Slovenian politicians continually repeat that the *Western Balkan countries should be offered the European perspective* or *the European future*, and talk about these countries *taking the European course*, *choosing the European course* and the like. Accession to the EU is here presented as the only option for *the Western Balkan countries to rid themselves of the burden of the past and destructive nationalisms, and turn to the future*. The editor of the *Dnevnik's* special edition entitled "Evropska unija in države jugovzhodne Evrope" [The European Union and the Countries of Southeastern Europe] stated in the editorial that *the countries of Southeastern Europe are missing an extraordinary opportunity to rid themselves quickly of the burden of the past and take better advantage of the strategically and geopolitically important placement in Europe* (EU *in države JV Evrope*, *Dnevnik*, January 17, 2009, p. 5). The notions linked with the EU in this discourse are *the future, progress, stability,* and *health*, and conversely, non-inclusion in the EU is related to the *past, instability, chaos, nationalism* and *disease*, meaning the traits that in discourses of Balkanism are traditionally associated with the countries of the Balkan peninsula.[19] The EU is therefore both a precondition for normality and the prescriber of normative requirements for qualifying as normal. On January 28, 2008, on the day when the Council of the European Union was discussing future cooperation with Serbia, the *Guardian* published an article by Olli Rehn entitled *Balkans on the Mend* (Rehn 2008).[20] Among other things, it says that *[p]eople in the Balkans face a stark choice this year: their region could either finally resolve its outstanding problems from the wars of the 1990s or fall back into instability and extremes of nationalism. The first option would take them forward towards stability, prosperity and European integration. But many commentators believe the second is inevitable*. While in this text, the term *Balkans* is actually used to denote the countries of the *Western Balkans*, it is also possible to

19 Todorova deals with the relation of nationalism and modernity and place of nationalism within the ideological division of Europe into West and East Europe (including the Balkans) in her article *The Trap of Backwardness* (Todorova 2005a); for more on the criticism of essentialist explanations of nationalism in East Europe, see also Balibar (2004), Hassner (1991), and Hobsbawm (1991).

20 The same metaphor of cure/mending was used by Dejan Steinbuch, a columnist for the free newspaper *Žurnal*, in an article entitled *How To Cure the Serbs Of Nationalism*. Among other things, he wrote: *Therefore, I think that it is high time we cured our Serbian friends of nationalism and helped them on their way to the future* (*Žurnal*, February 23, 2008, p. 18).

observe another typical usage of the terms *Balkans/Balkan* to refer to the wars in former Yugoslavia: "characteristics of the extraordinary Yugoslav situation were externalized and, in a totally unwarranted fashion, were rhetorically sold to the political class and to the broad public as Balkan" (Todorova 2005a, 153).[21]

The Balkans can therefore *mend themselves, become normalized and escape growing nationalism* only by becoming part of the EU, only by *becoming Europe*. What is kept concealed when painting such a polarized picture of the two worlds is the contemporary reality of the EU, with many of its members confronting growing nationalism, racism, xenophobia, strengthening of extreme right political forces and similar "horrors" – in short, the phenomena that are attributed exclusively to those countries that have a *lot of work ahead of them* before they can be called *European* and before they can join the *big European family*. Similar patterns can often be found in discourses of European officials and Slovenian politicians. Rehn, for example, stated that Serbia must *choose between its nationalist past and European perspective* (*Delo*, February 10, 2006), that it is *important that Serbia should materialize its European perspective*, and that *today's step is a sign of shift from the nationalist past towards the European future* (*24ur.com*, June 13, 2007). During his visit to Macedonia, Janez Janša emphasized that *Slovenia is convinced that the Western Balkan countries belong in the common European family; the European perspective is the only realistic perspective for the progress of the countries in the region* (*24ur.com*, February 27, 2007, article subtitled *Evropa je edina realna perspektiva za Makedonijo* [*Europe is the only realistic prospect for Macedonia*]).

This type of discourse proposes the following "time map" of Europe: the EU's present is the *Western Balkans*' future, with the latter now living not in the present but in a past governed by nationalistic myths. The image in which the reality of the *Western Balkans* is not the reality of the present but of the past makes the transformation of these countries indispensable and the difference between Europe (the EU) and the *Western Balkans* explicit, thus preventing

21 The marketing approach that (unjustifiably) uses this strategy can also be found where it shouldn't be present: in professional academic literature. In 2004, the American linguist Robert Greenberg wrote a book published by Oxford University Press entitled *Language and Identity in the Balkans*. A look at this study shows that it treats (in a quality and in-depth manner) only the issue of the history and disintegration of the Serbo-Croat language rather than wider Balkan linguistic phenomena or traits.

us from perceiving the similarities between the two parts of the continent. Such discourse is not characteristic only of politics and the media, but can also be encountered in academic and other spheres. Maria Todorova's (2005a, 155) name for the phenomenon where, viewed from the western perspective, "the non-westerner is always living in another time, even when he is our contemporary" is chronic allochronism.

The political discourse described above is the embodiment of the widespread representation of the Balkans as a special region with inherent traits, characterized by an explicit tendency towards myths and an obsession with the past. In the opinion of the German historian Holm Sundhaussen (1999), these myths include "the myth of 'golden' pre-Ottoman period, the myth of the 'Turkish yoke,' the myth of the pure and organic nation, the myth of national rebirth, the Kosovo-myth, the haiduk-myth, and the victimization myths." In her criticism of this type of perspective on the Balkans, Todorova emphasizes that in the case of Western Europe the same could be said about "the 'golden' myth of antiquity, the myth of the Dark Ages, the myth (and practice) of the Nüremberg laws of the 1930s and *ius sanguinis*, the myth of Rome (as in Italian national ideology, with the myth of the Roman Republic, the Roman empire, and the Papacy), the myth of the battle of Poitiers (both the one in the eighth, and the one in the fourteenth century), the myth of the Walküren, and the myth of a fortress besieged by enemies" (Todorova 2005a, 153).

## V. "NESTING COLONIALISMS": AUSTRIA, SLOVENIA AND DISCOURSE ON THE *WESTERN BALKANS*

The long-established image of the Balkans as a periphery that has to be supervised and administered and that needs continual assistance from the European centers of power was emphatically revived during the EU expansion to the east and southeast of the European continent. In political discourse, the accession process in the *Western Balkan* countries is not represented as merely a road that these countries have to travel and along which they are to be profoundly transformed: to implement the transformation, they need *assistance* and *guidance* along the road. Jelko Kacin emphasized that *the EU should use all of its accumulated knowledge, expertise and financial support to steer the Balkans on its determined journey towards Brussels* (EP, December 30, 2006).

Such "tutelage" provided by EU states during the accession process creates the impression that this region is "at a lower level on the evolutionary scale" and cannot "progress by itself, but requires external guidance to avoid slipping into the mistakes of the past" (Hammond 2006, 19). The idea that some kind of colonial administration in the Balkans is indispensable to maintain peace and enable the development of the entire European continent was frequently echoed in journal articles, essays and pseudo-academic literature dating from the 1990s. Andrew Hammond (*op. cit.*, 20) gives a number of examples of such discourse: for Robert Carver (1998), the only solution for endless unrest in Albania is *European-enforced order and industry,* and a reinvigoration of *the centres of ultimate power* that pertained in *the old colonial days*. In his book *Balkan Ghosts* (1993), which is today cited as an example par excellence of Balkanism, Robert Kaplan states that *only western imperialism – though few will like calling it that – can now unite the European continent and save the Balkans from chaos*. Writing during the early 1990s, Michael Ignatieff, a Canadian, saw the absence of great powers as the reason for conflict in the Balkans, saying that *in the Balkans populations find themselves without an imperial arbiter to appeal to. Small wonder then, that, unrestrained by stronger hands, they have set upon each other for that final settling of scores so long deferred by the presence of empire*. In an article written for the *Guardian,* Julian Borger stated that *a 'benign colonial regime' was necessary for democratic development in Bosnia*. As Rajko Muršič (2007, 91)

pointed out, the idea that the supervision of the Balkans is necessary is related to its image as a "'crossroads' or 'contact zone.' Only such places produce not clearly defined notions for building of the well-defined discourse of hegemony. Yes, if somewhere is the place where things are not yet settled, then 'our' way of organisation is worth defending and Our order (or, simply Our way) has to be developed further and strengthened. It is easy, because the border zone of instability has always been understood as the bridge or a crossroads" (cf. Todorova 1997, 15).

The approaches employed by the "international community" in the wake of the war in former Yugoslavia to administer first Bosnia-Herzegovina and then Kosovo, display many colonial traits, as pointed out by the researchers who studied the discourse of the main political bodies within the international administration (cf. Majstorović 2007, Tatlić 2007/2008). These discourses, in which the "international community's mission" is explicitly represented as a *mission civilisatrice* – its representatives have to use a series of measures to *teach* the Balkan nations democracy and respect for law – operate in synergy with both the long-entrenched images of the Balkans as a region urgently needing colonial control, and new exclusion mechanisms introduced by the EU accession process. The democratization process necessitating some kind of colonial administration is a prerequisite for the *Europeanization* of the Balkan countries (Majstorović 2007, 630).

"Mentorship," "tutelage," *showing the way to the* EU or providing assistance to the *Western Balkan* countries undergoing the accession process are the tasks of the EU as a whole, but they also, and perhaps to a larger degree, constitute an area where the roles of individual countries within the EU are being redefined. In this redefinition process, their political representatives employ various – possible and impossible – discursive tools. In June 2007, just before Portugal assumed the EU presidency, the Portuguese Permanent Representative to the European Union, Álvaro de Mendonça e Moura, stated, when listing the priority tasks of Portugal's presidency, that because of its colonial history, *Portugal's focus in foreign policy will be cooperation with Africa, and human rights will be in the foreground. 'We cannot simply chase away from the table the countries that violate human rights with which we sit at the same table'* (*24ur.com*, June 11, 2007). Several months later, at a time when Slovenia was in the midst of preparations for taking over the EU presidency from Portugal,

the *Financial Times* quoted Janez Janša, Slovenian PM at the time, as saying that *in the region* [the western Balkans] *Slovenia has interests that are similar to Portugal's interests in Africa* (*Mladina*, August 4, 2007).

The two statements illustrate the ideological and discursive mechanism which I call *nesting colonialisms*, drawing on the concept of *nesting orientalisms* developed by Milica Bakić-Hayden and Robert Hayden. Its typical feature is "a tendency for each region to view cultures and regions to the south and east of it as more conservative or primitive" (Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992, 4; cf. Bakić-Hayden 1995). Although Orientalism and colonialism are largely intertwined and overlapping notions, I think that in the context of the EU the term *nesting colonialisms* is more suitable, primarily because the history of colonial or other expansionist ventures is a prerequisite for using this mechanism. In the shaping and reproduction of Orientalist discourse, the aspect of the former involvement of the one who orientalizes in the affairs of the one who is orientalized is not necessarily present. In addition, I want to draw attention to the essentially colonialist processes both within the area of discourse and outside it through which the *Western Balkans* are relocated away from Europe and placed into the "third world." This is not to say that *nesting colonialisms* do not exploit the typical means employed in producing the Oriental Other. Among these, I should emphasize the Orientalist idea about the necessity of supervision, administration and education of the Other, and the relation between the knowledge of the Other and subordination that are at the center of Said's (1979) concept of Orientalism.

On the level of discourse, one "signal" of *nesting colonialisms* is the use of analogy, or drawing of a parallel between the interests and political conduct of a country with a history of colonial expansion, and the interests and political conduct of a country with no such history (in our example, Slovenia). The said analogy is not only a "signal" or denotation of a discourse of *nested colonialisms*, but its essential characteristic and even its prerequisite, since in many cases such an analogy is the only basis for designating as colonial the attitude towards some region outside the EU. This also holds true of the statement of the Slovenian PM quoted above. It shows that political representatives of states with no colonial legacy can also shape colonialist discourses. This is made possible by a context in which EU membership functions as a basis for inclusion and exclusion and

creates a shared "repository" of discursive patterns available to the EU member states to produce the discourse of Otherness when referring to those who are not part of a united Europe. As a rule, these patterns are exploited by the states whose *Europeanness* is not unequivocal, regardless of their being EU members.

## "NESTING COLONIALISMS" AND THE ROLE OF HISTORICAL LEGACIES

*Austria has traditionally invested in Slovenia because of simple historical reasons. The first is that it was part of Austria-Hungary superintended by Vienna rather than Budapest. The second is that the Austrians know that Slovenia contributed one-fourth of the Yugoslav GDP and more than one-third of its exports. What also plays a role here is the wider perception of this area among the Austrians. Austria-Hungary disintegrated in 1919* [sic!]. *It was less than a hundred years ago, and the perception of Slovenia as their former territory has been maintained across generations. As a result, now and then we can see a patronizing or lofty attitude towards the Slovenes. Austria's behavior in Slovenia is similar to Slovenia's behavior in Southeastern Europe*, said Jelko Kacin commenting on the economic presence of Austria in Slovenia (*Mladina*, March 14, 2004).

It is evident from Kacin's statement that the *nesting of colonialisms* in the case of Austria, Slovenia and the *Western Balkans*, is a stratified phenomenon that is much more complex than in the example based on an analogy between Portugal and Slovenia. The reason lies in the historical legacies shared by the two countries and with the countries of the *Western Balkans*. Kacin himself mentioned some of these: Austro-Hungarian/the Habsburg legacy shared by Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and parts of Serbia, and the Yugoslav legacy shared by Slovenia and other former Yugoslav republics. In addition, Slovenia also shares its socialist legacy with all other countries of the *Western Balkans*.

Historical legacies have an important influence on identities, relationships and roles in today's Europe. As Maria Todorova underscores, a historical legacy is also a useful analytical category because it does not exclude the advantages of spatial analysis but adds to it the dimension of time (Todorova 2005, 66). Unlike tradition, which is selective, a historical legacy is not the result of an active process of consciously choosing certain elements from the past: it

"encompasses everything that is handed down from the past, whether one likes it or not." (Ibid, 68). A historical legacy cannot be changed, but what we can do is either evoke it or conceal it, glorify it or make it taboo, depending on our present aspirations. Historical legacies are continually re-interpreted and used by countries sharing them to vindicate contemporary collective identities and political and social strategies. "Ordinary people" and members of political elites and institutions are both included in this process. The anthropologist Bojan Baskar provides an example of how the attitude towards a historical legacy is being redefined among "ordinary people." He explains yugonostalgia (nostalgia for former Yugoslavia) among Slovenes and Croats by placing it in the wider historical framework and analyzing it in the context of nostalgia for empire, a well-known phenomenon in the territories once belonging to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Common traits such as ethnic diversity, supra-national identity and personality cult enable the interpretation of yugonostalgia as "austro-nostalgia" within the territories that share the Austro-Hungarian imperial legacy; in this context, yugonostalgia emerges as an identity strategy of delimitation and a consequence of fear among the Slovenes (and the Croats) that after gaining independence they would become "the same as the Austrians," i.e. they will lose their distinct character (Baskar 2007).

Although Austria was not a colonial power in the traditional sense of the word, owing to its imperial past its attitude towards the other regions of the former Habsburg Monarchy is often treated as (post)colonial.[22] The *Südostforschung* tradition in German-speaking areas should therefore be understood as a variant of the orientalist relationship between knowledge and power. Austrian policy towards its southern neighbor, Slovenia, both before and after it joined the EU, was frequently interpreted as being (post-)colonial. The essayist and expert on the Middle East, Karin Kneissl, stresses that this neo-colonial attitude has been frequently highlighted since Austria became an EU member in 1988. Slovenian politicians and journalists began to criticize Austria for its alleged obstruction of EU enlargement (Kneissl 2002, 167). The Slovenian newspapers featured titles such as *Is Slovenia Already an Austrian Colony?* (*Delo*, September 10, 1999), *Still an Austrian Colony* (*Večer*, September 13, 1999) etc. "The terms such as *guardianship, hegemonistic aspirations, hypocrisy* and *presumptiousness* became an integral

22 Cf. Feichtinger, Prutsch, Csáky eds. (2003), Ruthner (2003), Uhl (2002).

part of Slovenian newspaper texts dealing with Austria's attitude towards Slovenia" (Kneissl 2002, 167–68).

Because of overlapping historical legacies, the *nesting of colonialisms* in the context of Austria, Slovenia and the *Western Balkans* cannot be reduced merely to a linear transmission of discursive patterns from Austrian to Slovenian political and media discourses (meaning the patterns that exploit the colonial legacy as an argument for legitimizing positions and roles within the EU). What is involved is rather a kind of "contest" between the two countries competing for the title of *expert on the Western Balkans*.[23] Both countries cited the *Western Balkans* as one of their priorities during the EU presidency (Austria held the EU presidency during the first half of 2006, and Slovenia during the first half of 2008). The common historical legacy shared by Austria and Slovenia with the countries of the *Western Balkans* is the basis for invoking a special knowledge of the region and appropriating a special role as an *expert on the Western Balkans* within the EU. However, the origin of this knowledge is differently treated in Austrian and Slovenian discourses: while Austrian politicians and journalists explicitly mention the shared experience arising from Austria's expansion to the southeast, the producers of public discourse in Slovenia rather conceal the source of their knowledge about the *Western Balkans*. In other words, the Yugoslav and socialist legacies are not mentioned in this discourse.

The text on the official web site of the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (http://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/foreign-ministry/foreign-policy/europe/western-balkans.html, accessed on March 8, 2009) states that the *Western Balkans* is a priority issue in Austrian foreign policy. This statement is supported by two complementary arguments:

a. shared historical legacy: *Due to centuries of political, cultural and economic interrelations, Austrian foreign policy has always attached particular importance to the Balkans.*
b. expert knowledge: *Austria has traditionally played a very proactive role in the foreign policy measures taken by the EU to assist the Balkans in overcoming their problems. Thanks to its profound knowledge of the processes in the region, Austria is in a position to contribute effectively to crisis management in the Balkans.*

23 In political science and international relations studies, geographical proximity and common history are taken as a basis for the strategy of "active foreign policy," which is regarded as particularly suitable for small European countries. Bojinović (2005) analyzes the options of such a strategy, using the example of Slovenia and Austria and their policy towards the *Western Balkans*.

Both arguments are frequently highlighted in Austrian political and media discourses. It is even possible to establish a continuity between contemporary discourses and those of the 19th century. In 1887, the statistician Hugo Bach wrote that *the promotion of national education in Serbia has to be ascribed primarily to the influence of the adjacent (Habsburg) Monarchy. According to the 1874 Serbian census a number of Serbian citizens had been born in Austria-Hungary. This demonstrates that the historical mission to carry culture into the East has been fully accomplished on Serbian soil* (Promitzer 2003, 192); in 2006, *Der Standard* carried the following statement: *Austrians are held in high esteem in Bosnia, this being related to the educational reform implemented by the Habsburg Monarchy after the 1887 annexation* [sic!] (June 16, 2006).

The anthropologist Andre Gingrich argues that it was the specific nature of such discourse that mobilized the Austrians to help Bosnian Muslims between 1993 and 1994, when 80,000 people (mainly Muslims) from Bosnia-Herzegovina found refuge in Austria, even as a large part of the Austrian population supported Jörg Haider's xenophobic policy, which was based, among other things, on contempt for the Muslim Other. The statement frequently used by Austrian politicians and social activists in the campaign entitled *Nachbar in Not* [A Neighbor in Distress] was: *These people are our neighbors, they have close historical links to Austria* (Gingrich 1998, 106). Gingrich concludes that this statement referred to Austria's de facto colonial presence in Bosnia, and moreover, "(i)t can also be understood in light of Austria's open and sometimes hazardous anti-Serbian policy after 1991. Our Bosnian neighbors are also descendants of those Muslim Bosnians who resisted Serb nationalism before 1914, when Serbian nationalists killed the Austrian crown prince in Sarajevo, thereby provoking the outbreak of the World War I. They are descendants of those Bosnian Muslims who then fought bravely for the imperial Austro-Hungarian army against the Serbs and Italians on Austria's southeastern battle lines until the last days of the First World War. These are those Good Muslims who have a permanent place in the Austrian imaginary" (Ibid, 106–107).

Slovenian discourses, on the other hand, also refer to specialist knowledge of the region but without highlighting the historical ties and the shared past that made this knowledge possible. In March 2007, Janez Janša stated that one of the priority tasks during Slovenia's presidency of the

EU would be endeavors to expand European integration to the *Western Balkans*, while Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel said on the same occasion that *Slovenia has good knowledge of the circumstances in the region* (B92.net, March 31, 2007).

Even when "offering help" to the former Yugoslav republics undergoing the accession process, Slovenian politicians skip the argument of the shared past. During his visit to Serbia in 2003, Rupel stated that *Slovenia is willing to help Serbia and Montenegro using its connections, experience and options, so that the whole region would as soon as possible follow it on its way to Euro-Atlantic integration* (*24ur.com*, August 28, 2003). Three years later, at the opening of the Slovenian embassy in the newly independent Montenegro, he said that *Slovenia was willing to share with Montenegro its experience on its way to joining the* EU (B92.net, June 23, 2006).

The difference between discourses on the *Western Balkans* in Austria and Slovenia can be explained by the different historical roles of the two nations. The role of Slovenia in the region has never been characterized by expansionism. One could even argue that Slovenia, much like the *Western Balkan* countries, was "colonized" by one or the other empire that was present in this region since the beginning of the 20th century. Then there is the socialist legacy, which additionally contributes to the ambiguous position of Slovenia on the symbolic map of contemporary Europe. And it is this position that produced the *returning home* rhetoric used by Slovenian politicians to describe Slovenia's accession to the EU. Mitja Velikonja gives a vivid illustration of such discourse: "One supporter of the SLS party claimed: *we have become members of that group of countries to which we have always belonged by virtue of our culture and historical tradition*. Another one pointed out that *we are now truly part of the family of European nations, and not only on the map*. On the day of the enlargement, Slovenia and the Slovenes became part *of the community of nations and of the region to which we belong by virtue of our history and culture*, or in other words, *what we have here is a kind of return, of the normalization of life of the Slovenian nation and state in the wider company of European nations* (*Primorski dnevnik*, May 1, 2004, p.11). (…) *After many decades, Slovenia politically 'returns' to where it has always belonged in the intellectual and cultural sense of the word. The natural state that has been disrupted for half a century is being restored again* (*Družina*, May 2, 2004). All in all, *we are returning home* (*Žurnal*, April 30, 2004; also, *Now We Return* (the president of the Slovenian Academy

of Sciences and Arts, in *Družina*, May 2, 2004, p.4))" (Velikonja 2005, 22). Yet Velikonja also shows (2007, 11) that this *returning home* did not end on May 1, 2004; *Europeanness* must be proven time and again, by achieving the set goals: the first such goal was accession to the EU, followed by the adoption of the European currency, the joining of the Schengen area, and finally the presidency of the EU. "And so on along the endless teleological spiral, where one end goal is replaced with another as soon as it is achieved: we are never good enough, there is always something that prevents us from being 'fully Europeans'" (Ibid.).

The homecoming rhetoric pursued within Slovenia serves the purposes of internal politics. On the other hand, Slovenia's "otherness" within the symbolic geography of Europe is perpetuated from the outside because of its socialist past. Although Yugoslavia was established in 1918 (and on principles that can also be found in the rhetoric of the EU – unity in diversity, pluralism and the like), the Yugoslav legacy of Slovenia is today largely identified with the socialist legacy. In European political discourses, the latter is understood exclusively in ethical and institutional terms, as a totalitarian regime rather than one among many historical legacies that marked European societies. Todorova argues that socialism, like any other historical legacy, can be observed from two perspectives, that of continuity and that of perception. "The socialist legacy as continuity displays different degrees of perseverance in separate spheres and in separate countries but, like any legacy, is bound to subside. In the realm of perception, however, we are speaking of the discrete experience of two or three generations" (Todorova 2004, 14–15). Slovenian politicians never mention the socialist past of Slovenia. They refer to socialism as a totalitarian regime and talk about it from a neutral position, from a distance, framing their statements in such a way that they could be attributed to any European politician. For example, former PM Janez Janša stated that *no one has the right to deny the European perspective to the states of Eastern and Southeastern Europe which suffered too long under the totalitarian regimes* (*Delo*, June 5, 2005). European politicians, on the other hand, mention the socialist past of Slovenia mainly when they want to emphasize Slovenia's success in joining European integration. Even in this discourse, socialism is reduced to the totalitarian regime. In 2004, Javier Solana stated: *I would like to say that you should feel the wish to guide and point out the way to the EU. In this*

*sense you have a responsibility towards other countries that try to do the same as you did* (*24ur.com*, September 28, 2004). The President of the European Parliament, speaking at the conference in Ljubljana on May 13, 2008, said that *(t)he current Slovenian Presidency of the* EU *is the best testament to the fundamental change that has taken place in this region over the past two decades. This is an extraordinary achievement, when you consider that less than 20 years ago Slovenia was part of communist Yugoslavia.*

Obviously, political discourse treats socialism exclusively as one of the totalitarian regimes in Europe, perpetuating in this way one of the most stable images of the Other in contrast to which European identity is shaped. Within such a conceptual apparatus, the comparative notions are socialism (communism) and Fascism, or communism and Nazism, rather than capitalism and communism, or liberalism (including neo-liberalism) and communism (Todorova 2006). This being the dominant approach, the perception of socialism as one of the historical European legacies and "the experience that shaped lives of three to four generations in Eastern Europe (...) is still frozen in an ideological straightjacket" (Todorova 2002, 15). It is then not surprising that Slovenian politicians avoid explicit mention of Slovenia's socialist legacy.

On the symbolic map of Europe, East Europeans were located outside Europe's borders, to the east, in Asia, even before the socialist era. As Mastnak argues (1998, 86), "the issue of Europe's eastern frontier has long since been contentious, because it has never been satisfactorily resolved, and it continues to disturb both the 'European Europeans' and those who see themselves as Europeans but also want to be recognized as such by those that are considered to be Europeans 'objectively,' not only by their subjective convictions or feelings." As early as the 17th century, the Duke of Sully wrote that *the peoples inhabiting these countries were partly idolaters and partly schismatics and that they belonged to Asia at least as much as to Europe* (in Mastnak 1998, 86). The East Europeans themselves often treat socialism as something essentially non-European that originated in Asia and was enforced upon them, threatening their otherwise profoundly European identity (as a result, accession to the EU is *returning home*). This kind of discourse was already being used by opponents of the socialist regime after the Second World War, for example, in emigrant newspapers of the Slovenes in Argentina: *We, who saw with our own eyes how Asiatic*

*"freedom" looks, could not believe that somewhere in the world there existed a country where a person could still live in peace. And so we came to Argentina, where freedom is so great that to us, accustomed to European circumstances, it seems too great. Argentina does not have concentration camps, or torture rooms that could be born only of Asiatic bestiality, or curfews, or the secret police that throw you out of your bed in the middle of the night never to come back, or paid spies who follow your every step and are willing to testify on order against you before "people's court;" there are no member cards of various colors here for those more and those less reliable, and even an opposition member can sit in a national office and vote against his employer* (*Svobodna Slovenija*, January 15, 1948). *These tens of thousands of fighters defending freedom and Christian civilization from the assault of Asiatic communist barbarism experienced their first disappointments during the first few days of their exile. Instead of the recognition of their persistent fight in the frontline against the greatest enemy of every freedom and human dignity, various accusations of "treason" descended upon them from various sides* (*Svobodna Slovenija*, May 5, 1949). *The Slovenian nation, which was more than any other European nation suffused with western culture and civilization and Christian ideas, was along with its neighbors left in a cold-blooded manner to the exploitation of repulsive foreign Asiatic force to which every true Slovenian felt aversion* (*Svobona Slovenija*, April 27, 1950).[24] An example from post-socialist Romania cited by the anthropologist Katherine Verdery reveals how this kind of discourse functions in the context of accession to the EU. In 1991, at the founding rally of the Civic Alliance Party it was said that *Romania today has two possible directions before it: Bolshevist Asiatism or Western, European standards. Between these, [we] see only one choice: Europe, to which we already belong by all our traditions since 1848* (Verdery 1996, 104).

The brochure on the official web site of the Slovenian Presidency of the EU includes the following statement: *The first Presidency of a new Member State confirms the historic legitimacy of the decision to unite the European continent and in doing so overcome its unnatural division. Indeed, it is a tribute to the courage with which both Western democratic nations, and Central and Eastern European nations recently liberated from totalitarian communism, seized the historic opportunity of the end of the Cold War* (available at http://www.eu2008.si/includes/Downloads/misc/program/Programme_en.pdf, accessed on

24 I am grateful to Tanja Nadu for supplying these quotations from the Slovenian emigrant newspapers.

March 8, 2009). However, it soon became obvious that this opinion was not shared by all EU member states, particularly not *Western democratic nations*. Only one day after Slovenia concluded its presidency of the EU, the membership of East European countries was directly related to the institutional crisis in the wake of Ireland's rejection of the Lisbon Treaty. When France took over the presidency of the EU from Slovenia, N. Sarkozy, President of France, said: *As long as we do not have adequate institutions, further enlargement of the Union is out of the question. What we did by including the countries of the eastern block was a great mistake* (*B92.net*, July 1, 2008).

The reduction of the socialist (and every other) legacy exclusively to the political regime while ignoring legacy as a perception permits the revival of the paternalistic attitude; it is again possible to establish continuity between 19th-century Austrian discourse and contemporary political discourses. As Promitzer established, Austria's attitude towards Serbia, which was trying to gain independence from the Ottoman Empire, was paternalistic: "it was one of a 'civilized' people observing how hard another people was working to abandon its 'barbarian' behavior in order to meet European standards." An anonymous author writing about the Serbs in 1811 described them as *a well-shaped, sharp-witted and brave people, naturally interested in all arts and sciences like any other European nation, but having so long endured the Ottoman yoke, they had become ignorant and superstitious, and appear to lag behind other, luckier European nations* (Promitzer 2003, 191). In 2002, the Federal Chancellor of Austria, Wolfgang Schüssel, also referred to the *less and more lucky* European nations: *Austria and Slovenia are closely related both geographically and historically, but these links could not be brought to life fully for some decades. Slovenia's elation over the independence and Austria's enthusiastic support for its neighbor in fighting the communist Yugoslav leadership could not conceal for long that this artificial separation hindered the gradual overcoming of historical differences, of the kind that was possible in the luckier Western Europe* (Schüssel 2002, 7).

Both colonialism and socialism are European historical legacies. Both were subject to criticism and distancing. Yet in the political and media discourses of contemporary Europe, only socialism is stigmatized and reduced to the oppressive political system, with the experience of millions of Europeans who for several decades lived under various socialist regimes being completely ignored. Imperialism and colonialism, on the other hand, are openly used as arguments

in legitimizing the newly defined power relations in Europe, regardless of the ideological burden and their indisputably problematic nature. Moreover, references to the experience of "ordinary people" show that they are treated on the level of perception. For example, it is possible to hear that people to the south of Austria's contemporary border still remember the era of Austrian rule that lasted until 1918 (cf. the above-quoted statement from *Der Standard* and Jelko Kacin's statement), although there must be few Europeans still living who actually experienced this or who can remember it.

The fact that certain historical legacies may suitably be mentioned while others must be concealed is predicated on the various degrees of *Europeanness* of European societies, further corroborating what Šumič-Riha and Mastnak bitterly pointed out when they placed a question mark over Europe: new divisions in Europe by no means eliminate old divisions. Joining the *big European family* is not the ultimate proof of the *Europeanness* of former socialist and Balkan countries, and correspondingly, their returning home is not final. Owing to this ambiguity, Slovenia's position within the EU can be interpreted in the light of post-colonial criticism. Researchers of Slovenian discourses on accession to the EU observed the paradox of *returning to where Slovenia and the Slovenes have always belonged*. Although Slovenia has always been in Europe, on May 1, 2004 it returned to Europe. In 1998, Tomaž Mastnak wrote: "The nation that now argues that it is part of 'Europe' as it has always been, set out on its journey to 'Europe' with full force and conviction. Where this journey – unnecessary as it appears – leads is not particularly clear to anyone" (Mastnak 1998, 11). Mitja Velikonja wonders: "How, then, is it possible that 'we are becoming part of it now,' if 'we have always been part of it'?" (Velikonja 2005, 26). His explanation for this paradox lies in the discourse of "colonial mimicry," a theory developed by Homi Bhabha (cf. Bhabha 1994). In this discourse "the colonized natives *are almost the same, but not quite the same* as their colonizers, i.e., the members of the 'ruling' and hence, naturally, 'higher' culture. (…) The situation in which the Slovenes (and other newcomers to *Europe*) found themselves within this new Eurocentric metadiscourse is one in which we are 'almost European, but not quite European;' or, in other words, 'soon to be Europeanized Non-Europeans, who still have to learn a lot about being European" (Velikonja, *loc. cit.*). Jeffs (2003, 98, quoted in Velikonja 2005, 26) concludes that "precisely the incessant repetition of

and emphasis on the Central European and Euro-Atlantic identity of Slovenia reveals that it is a dubious issue; neither the subject who pronounces this nor the addressee are entirely convinced of its truthfulness; the need to confirm it repeatedly points to its ambiguity."

The very nature of the discourse that legitimizes the position and the role of individual states within the EU by way of historical legacies also places Slovenia in the position of a colonized subject. Since it is not capable of articulating its own discourse based on historical experience, its only option is to borrow others' discourses, which it cannot justify, and to conceal its own historical experience, which is seen as unsuitable or *non-European*.

## "NESTING COLONIALISMS" BEYOND DISCURSIVE PRACTICES

After visiting Slovenia with Queen Elizabeth II in autumn 2008, the UK Foreign Secretary David Miliband quoted in his blog a statement by "a leading Slovenian politician" that *for a small country Europe is heaven* and that *in Austria-Hungary and Yugoslavia the national identity of the Slovenes was jeopardized by the "imperial nations" that dominated these historic integrations* (http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/roller/miliband/entry/for_a_small_country_europe accessed on March 8, 2009; *B92.net*, October 26, 2008). While Slovenian politicians see certain periods in their country's history as periods of subordination to imperial powers and assess them negatively, when speaking about the *Western Balkans*, they nevertheless use a discourse that directly invokes colonial relations. As we have established, the explanation for this ambiguous attitude to colonialism should be sought in Slovenia's own ambiguous position within the symbolic geography of contemporary Europe, and this discourse should be understood as a defense of Slovenia's *Europeanness* and as emphasizing Slovenia's importance within the EU.[25] The open invocation of colonial patterns when referring to the *Western Balkan* countries should also be viewed in the wider, economic context that necessarily follows (or precedes?) such discourse. While Austria is the largest foreign investor in Slovenia and one of the most important investors in the *Western Balkans*, the largest part of Slovenia's foreign investment goes to Serbia; in 2007, the SE European region

25 Polish policy towards Ukraine and Belarus should be understood along the same lines – for more on this, see Hunin ed. (2006).

accounted for one-sixth of all Slovenian exports (*EU in države JV Evrope* [The EU and the Countries of Southeastern Europe], *Dnevnik*, January 17, 2009, p. 6). The economist Jože Mencinger explains Austria's contemporary presence on the Slovenian market with its historical (i.e. imperial) presence in Slovenia and Eastern Europe: *This is true not only of Slovenia but of all other eastern countries of which the Austrians had the best knowledge because of the common past; vicinity, too, was important* (*Mladina*, March 14, 2004). For Slovenia, too, the *Western Balkans* are, apart from an "area of expertise," the most important market and the "sphere of interest." As Baskar argues, "the Slovenians have developed a habit of considering the rest of Yugoslavia as 'their markets.' The Slovenian comeback to Bosnian, Croatian and now also Serbian markets has been fast and very ambitious, thereby inviting some criticism in these countries regarding Slovenia's 'economic imperialism'" (Baskar 2003, 199). Velikonja (2005, 52) quotes similar statements. One comes from the chairman of the Slovenian pan-European movement: *For us, this* [the Balkans] *is the area in which we can pursue our interests, and in this respect we have a great advantage over others*; another statement comes from a representative of the party Slovenija je naša [Slovenia is Ours]: *Within the EU framework, Slovenia must assume the leading role in Southeastern Europe and organize its diplomatic network in such a way that it will function as a service to the Slovenian economy and its science*. Vojko Volk, a diplomat and the coordinator for the Balkans at the Slovenian Foreign Ministry, has affirmed that once Croatia joins the EU, Slovenia will not compete with it *as to who will administer the Balkans better*, but will *gladly leave that task* to Croatia. Yet in the next sentence, Volk links the role of the *expert on the Western Balkans* to economic presence and influence in this region: *Croatia comes second after Slovenia in terms of the economic presence in Kosovo (…) Slovenia is the foremost investor in Kosovo (…) Croatia comes after us and such a development can only be welcomed. (…) The same holds true for Montenegro. Croatia is a welcome competitor* (*Dnevnik*, *Objektiv*, February 21, 2009). Obviously, the role of expert on the *Western Balkans* is inseparable from economic influence in this region and economic interests of individual EU member states. The discursive patterns and power relations behind them are mutually supportive, and they legitimize and create a logical, albeit frequently historically unfounded, link (let us call to mind again the statements by Janez Janša and Jelko Kacin

on Slovenia's interests concerning the *Western Balkans* and the parallels between Slovenia and Portugal, or Austria).

The popular view across former Yugoslavia was that within the federation Slovenia functioned as a colonial force in the economic sphere, exploiting the cheap labor force and raw materials and re-selling its products at high prices. This shows that the perceptions of the imperial and the colonial in former Yugoslavia were multi-directional and multifarious. Within the new context created when Slovenia joined the EU while other former Yugoslav republics remained outside it, the colonial representations and relations within this region acquired still another, rather ugly face. The living conditions of temporary workers in Slovenia, most of whom come from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and other parts of former Yugoslavia and mainly work under contract for Slovenian construction companies, are incredibly poor. They work more hours per day than prescribed by law, and the valid visa regime and work permit policy make them completely dependent on their employers. The brutality of their situation is strongly reminiscent of the exploitation mechanisms used during the colonial era in Western Europe. In the contemporary context, it is Slovenia's membership of the EU that enables it to use such mechanisms. Slovenia's EU membership also plays a central role in openly racist discourses. One example of such discourse was a message from the Vegrad construction company addressed to the workers from Bosnia-Herzegovina, posted in March 2008 on the containers in which they live in the Ljubljana district of Bežigrad. It warned the Bosnian workers against trying to practice their *culture and behavior, which in some cases is extremely inappropriate. You should be aware that you currently live in Ljubljana, the capital of the Republic of Slovenia, an EU member state. Here we observe laws and rules that are of a higher level.* In the words of Boris Dežulović, this example of discourse involves a "typical Central European cliché: an ordered 'urbanized environment' is by definition a 'social environment of a higher cultural level,' inhabited by 'highly situated people,' meaning highly cultured citizens with high wages who will 'not much longer approve' of any kind of newcomer or guest worker, nor of dirty southerners, Africans, Arabs, Turks, Roma, Croats, Serbs, or Bosnians in this example, disturbing their urban idyll. In these 'social environments on a higher cultural level' different rules of behavior are observed, and the newcomers' only task is to commit their cheap labor to building these 'urban

environments'" (*Dnevnik, Objektiv,* November 22, 2008). In this case, "dirty southerners" are people from the "third world" – without any political power or basic rights; these are no longer *southerners (južnjaki)* from other republics of former Yugoslavia, whose position was much better despite their ghettoization and widespread stereotypes. Similarly, this group does not comprise other seasonal workers from Slovakia or other East European EU countries – the legal treatment of these workers is different, and moreover, the low wages and poor living and working conditions in Slovenia attract only few workers from these countries (their number is much lower than was expected after Slovenia joined the EU).

## VI. THE *WESTERN BALKANS* IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD: FORMER BROTHERS, FUTURE FAMILY MEMBERS, NEIGHBORS AND THE REST

In European history, the concept of neighborhood is inseparable from the concept of frontiers. The discursive shaping of representations about a neighbor/neighborhood and the influence of discursive patterns on the opinions, political moves and viewpoints of society, have become primary topics with the beginning of processes such as EU enlargement and the inclusion/exclusion of European countries generated by the EU as a political, institutional and social unit. The 18th European Meeting of Cultural Journals in Istanbul, in November 2005, was dedicated to the concept of neighborhood. The organizers emphasized the importance of neighborhood for contemporary European societies and the fact that frontiers and neighborhoods are redefined time and again, meaning that these are dynamic processes. In his paper for this conference, the Austrian historian and diplomat Emil Brix highlighted the necessity for an academic study of neighborhood as a potential for both solidarity among people living on different sides of the border and for conflicts among them. In Brix's opinion, the future of Europe is more likely to be decided on its peripheries than at the centers of power, that is, in European capitals (Brix 2006).

Analyzing the semantics of the neighborhood concept, Jan Ivfersen and Christoffer Kølvraa draw attention to its ambiguity: "The neighbourhood is a space lodged in between the safe inside of friends and the threatening outside of enemies" (Ivfersen and Kølvraa 2007). Zygmunt Bauman similarly emphasizes the ambiguous position of neighbors located between friends and enemies and equates neighbors, drawing on George Simmel, with "foreigners" (Bauman 1991: 53–61, quoted in Ivfersen and Kølvraa 2007). Ivfersen and Kølvraa (*op. cit.*) argue that "friends and enemies are opposite positions in the same system, whereas strangers, because they cannot adequately be known and identified as either friends *or* enemies, introduce ambivalence into the system. But even if both 'neighbours' and 'strangers' as such escape the complementary categories of friend/enemy, they are clearly not of the same nature. The lack of knowledge that constitutes the stranger, the inability to locate and identify him does not fit well with the manifest

nearby presence of the neighbour. Being a stranger to one's neighbour would be considered an abnormality, but neither is 'neighbour' directly opposed to stranger, because we are not expected to know our neighbours in the intimate detail that regards family. The neighbour turns out to be a denomination so – except for the claim to proximity – that its meaning easily changes in different circumstances. The neighbours can be a comforting buffer when we are under threat from our enemies. But they seem distant acquaintances when in the company of the friends which we have chosen to love. They are reassuringly recognizable in a world of strangers, but clearly outsiders when compared to the intimacy of the family."

Another important characteristic of the semantics of *neighbor* should be added to this analysis: mutuality. A neighbor is always a neighbor to a neighbor, which should imply their equality.

## FROM NEIGHBORS TO CANDIDATES AND BACK

In the remaining part of this chapter I take a closer look at the discourse used by politicians from EU member states when speaking about the countries that share borders with the EU. I would like to highlight the functions of these discourses, on the general European level, and on the level of individual EU members. The countries bordering on the EU are divided into two groups by the EU administration: candidate countries (the *Western Balkan* countries) and Europe's neighborhood. The latter is further divided into its eastern neighborhood (Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and the countries of the Caucasus region; Russia refused to be part of European neighborhood policy so defined and ensured for itself a special status) and its southern neighborhood (the countries of the South Mediterranean). The main difference between candidates and neighbors lies in what is referred to as a *clear European perspective* in political discourses: for candidate countries, this is supposedly ensured and unquestionable, while neighbor countries are not part of the accession process and, at least for the time being, they do not have the *European perspective*. The related problem here arises from the ideological equation of Europeanness with membership in the EU: since the eastern frontier of Europe is not, and cannot be, unequivocally defined, the possibility of a *European perspective* for eastern neighbors is not completely excluded, because that would challenge European

identity of these countries; in the case of the South Mediterranean, the fact that it geographically does not belong to Europe excludes the option of the *European perspective*.[26]

Ivfersen and Kølvraa (2007) conclude that policies and attitudes towards the neighbors are largely borrowed from the EU strategies used in relation to candidate countries: the action plans that define content and priority tasks in the relations between the EU and individual neighbors were modeled on the Association Agreements with candidate countries; similarly, the neighborhood assessment policy was formulated in the form of "country reports," modeled on the "progress reports" used in the accession process. Much like candidate countries, neighboring countries, too, are expected to accept *European standards*. At times, this is expressed in an extreme or openly racist and colonial manner. Such was, for instance, Nicolas Sarkozy's speech in Dakar, Senegal, in which he invited young Africans to *recognize that part of Europe in them which calls to reason and to the universal conscience* (Tatlić 2007/2008). In this process, mutuality as an inherent trait of the neighborhood concept is ignored. There does not exist a counterpart discourse on, for example, *Ukrainian neighborhood policy towards the EU*, or *neighborhood policy of the North African countries*. The concept of neighborhood policy is expressly unidirectional, as it is created within the exclusive center of power (the EU). In much the same manner, the conceptualization of these neighborhood regions (the eastern, the Mediterranean neighborhoods) takes place within the EU and not within these parts themselves, and it is not a result of mutuality or interactions.

Yet this is not the only direction taken by the ideological equation of neighbors and candidates in EU political discourses, meaning the equation based on conditions and the representation of the Other as non-European. Even more interesting for our study is the opposite direction, whereby the image of the *Western Balkan* countries is shaped with the help of the same discursive tools used in the representation of non-European countries, or the "third world" countries. I will devote more attention to this practice in the next, concluding chapter and will now focus on another important aspect of neighborhood in the context of the EU, i.e., the relationship between individual EU members and their

26 Morocco is the only country so far whose request for EU membership was refused on the grounds of its not being a European country (Ivfersen and Kølvraa 2007, Hunin 2006, 65).

neighbors aspiring for membership. Here, too, references to Europe, European values and EU membership become a means for legitimizing the individual member states' interests and their method of defending their own status and role within the EU. Membership in the EU has become a necessary and sufficient condition for demonstrating superiority, something that allows these countries to formulate certain kinds of statements that would not be possible if this condition were not fulfilled.

## THE KEY TO THE EUROPEAN DOOR IN THE HANDS OF A NEIGHBOR

Slovenian politicians, for example, even make use of general initiatives on the part of the EU, such as the initiative to establish the Union for the Mediterranean, to stress Slovenia's interests in the process of defining its relations with neighbors: *The time has come for Slovenia to begin taking advantage of its location and take more initiative with respect to its neighborhood*, said Dimitrij Rupel on the occasion of establishing the Union for the Mediterranean, linking this with the *Western Balkans*, once again in the context of Slovenia's interests: *The foundation of the Union for the Mediterranean is one step in the process of the Western Balkans' moving closer to the EU. In addition to Monaco, the Barcelona process was joined by Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro*. In the words of Rupel, this will also facilitate *the solution of problems related to the Adriatic* (*Žurnal* 24, July 14, 2008).

The attitude of member states towards individual candidate countries is ambivalent and dependent on the concrete interests of each EU member. By and large, it can be said that the attitudes range from paternalistic support to pressure, conditioning and control. This is also evident from the following statement by Hannes Swoboda, the Vice-Chairman of the Delegation for relations with the countries of Southeastern Europe: *The countries concerned need support but also strong pressure not to lose sight of the European perspective because of petty-minded interests*. In Swoboda's opinion, *Slovenia has an important role to play. It should coordinate its steps with the EU neighbors of that region, like Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria* (*B92.net*, July 29, 2008). While politicians generally emphasize their readiness to help neighbors on their way to European integration (using arguments based on shared historical legacy, as established in the previous chapter), whenever an open issue between the neighboring countries

comes to the surface, offers of help turn into threats of blocking, or making impossible, the integration process. This ambivalence could be detected in the relations between Italy and Slovenia and Austria and Slovenia before 2004, as the following statement of the then Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel illustrates: *In November 1998, I myself, as the president of the Council of Ministers – despite large resistance – launched accession negotiations with Slovenia. Some think that Austria now has the key to Slovenia's accession to the European Union. Depending on individual perspectives, Austria uses it either excessively or insufficiently. Excessively from the perspective of the candidate that sees itself confronted with petty, particular interests, and insufficiently in the eyes of many Austrians who think that after Slovenia's accession it will not be possible to successfully discuss certain issues* (Schüssel 2002, 8).

Today, the same dialectic conspicuously characterizes the neighbor relations between Slovenia and Croatia. On every possible occasion, Slovenian politicians emphasize that *Slovenia will help Croatia on its way to the* EU. The columnist Jurij Gustinčič critically noted: "I do not know what led us to convince ourselves that we should point out to the Croats their way towards civilization. What it actually means today is that we have to get them into 'Europe' and it is clear what this means in terms of bureaucracy (…) The Croats do have a few difficulties with joining the organized Europe, but we do not allow them to ponder these. Instead, we incessantly repeat, no matter whether or not we are asked, that we will enthusiastically help them on their way to the Union" (*Mladina*, February 1, 2008, p. 47). However, as Velikonja (2005, 51) noted, this "Euro-hosting" and hence patronizing attitude turns into the gatekeeper attitude "whenever relations become tense, as they did following an incident in the border region of Dragonja in September 2004. (…) Slovenian politicians jointly, suddenly and loudly, although only briefly, withdrew their support for Croatia in its accession negotiations with the EU" (Velikonja 2005, 51, note 155). Eventually, towards the end of 2008, backed by almost complete national consensus, Slovenia blocked further accession negotiations with Croatia because of the unresolved border issue.

Much like discourses enabled by the new context based on EU membership, the attitude characterized by an oscillation between paternalism and extortion is further extended according to the *nesting* principle, including to the *Western Balkans* themselves. There, it is the holders of power in

countries *closer* to EU membership who may appropriate the right to shape discourses identical to those whose subjects they themselves are in the wider context. In May 2008, Croatian PM Ivo Sanader sent a message to Serbia saying that it would be *good if the government is soon formed to take Serbia from the past into the future*, adding that *Croatia wishes everything good to Serbia and will help it on its way to the future* (*B92.net*, May 29, 2008). A few months later, after the arrest of Radovan Karadžić, Sanader stated that, regardless of this important step taken by Serbia, Croatia will enter the EU earlier than its neighbor: *We expect the new Serbian government and the Serbian President to keep on the same course and we keep our fingers crossed for them*, adding the almost inevitable paternalistic promise of assistance – *Croatia will support Serbia along this course* (*B92.net*, July 28, 2008). When Slovenia blocked Croatia's accession negotiations, Sanader again made use of the situation to emphasize the hierarchy among candidate Balkan countries, based on the order of *joining the European table*: he said that *Slovenia blocks Croatia on its way to the EU, but Croatia will not do the same to its neighbor in revenge*, and also, *when Croatia will sit at the European table it will not behave towards Serbia as Slovenia now behaves towards Croatia* (*B92.net*, December 19, 2008). The Serbian President Boris Tadić "borrowed" this same logic dictated by power relations in contemporary Europe when explaining Serbia's standpoint on the issue of Kosovo independence. He stated that he was *convinced that Kosovo has no future in the European Union as an independent state but only as part of Serbia, a part of our country for which Serbia is responsible*. Tadić is *convinced that Serbia now has perhaps even greater responsibility than ever before to make Kosovo a European region* (*B92.net*, January 3, 2009). The emphasis on Serbia's responsibility with regard to Kosovo is a local variant of the discourse about the necessity for assistance, supervision and *leading the Western Balkan countries on their way to the EU*, and *the responsibility of the EU and its members* towards these countries, placing the latter in the relation of immature and irrational children needing supervision.

## VII. THE *WESTERN BALKANS* ARE IN THE SOUTH

The conspicuously hegemonic character of political discourses in contemporary Europe, where Europe is equated with the European Union and the latter is perceived as a model and prescriber of *Europeanness*, determines the new symbolic geography of the European continent where traditional and deeply entrenched divisions into "our Europe" and the "other Europe," "European" and "Non-European" Europe become unimportant. Europe is becoming one Europe, and this is EUrope (of course, along with its internal antagonisms, divisions and *different speeds*), while European internal Others are moving southwards, outside Europe, so that in the political imagination they are becoming part of the "third world," and part of the regions occupying the border area of contemporary EUrope. The political philosopher Étienne Balibar also draws attention to the fact that "there has been much talk in recent years about the displacement of the axis of East-West confrontation in favor of that of North-South conflicts, which we can translate as a regression of ideological determinations of world politics under the effect of a growing burden of economic inequalities. But the other part is significant. To say that the East has passed into the South is to say that 'Third Worldization' and relegation to the periphery are the order of the day in all of Eastern Europe" (Balibar 2004, 97). Hassner similarly argued in the early 1990s that "because of the cold war, the East-West problems had priority. With the end of the cold war, these problems lost their urgency and specific character on account of the relations between the North and the South (…) The relations between the East and the West are themselves increasingly similar to the relations between the North and the South" (Hassner 1991, 20–21).

In discourses through which the identity of contemporary Europe (that is, the EU) is shaped and legitimized, the Balkans have also increasingly become part of the "third world" – numerous researchers concur with the view that the "representation of the Balkans as the 'European third world zone' helped create the impression of so urgently needed collective identity and the sense of the European Union" (Erjavec and Volčič 2007: 124, cf. Mastnak 1998).

A more in-depth analysis shows that the apparently important difference between the status of candidate countries (the *Western Balkan* countries) and that of Europe's

neighbors (particularly those in the South Mediterranean), which is based on the existence/non-existence of the *European perspective* and which supposedly puts the *Western Balkans* in a better position than "Europe's neighbors" in the context of European integration, actually does not exist.

The accession discourse, in which candidate countries are ensured the European course and the European perspective, is marked by the "the paradox of postmodern ambiguity" (Busch and Krzyżanowski 2007): in this discourse, "the set of preconditions for entering the EU is volatile when it comes to EU newcomers, juxtaposed with Europeanization and transition construed as 'a passage from a well-defined point of departure to a unitary and well-defined destination'" (Fairclough 2005, 4, Majstorović 2007). Each *step* on this *passage* earns praise from European politicians, inevitably followed by a statement that the *target destination is still far away,* albeit not accompanied by a clear explanation of why this is so; a good illustration of such discourse is provided by the statements of the German Foreign Minister Steinmeier on Serbia: *The Government of Serbia has clearly chosen the course leading to Europe* (…) *We can all see your great effort to enact reform in your country. Undoubtedly, there is a lot more to be done, not only in Serbia but in the entire region. When I speak to Serbian politicians I can sense in every sentence their determination to bring Serbia closer to Europe. Undoubtedly many more obstacles have to be overcome, and the government in Belgrade knows this as well as I do* (B92.*net*, January 27, 2009). Such ambivalence and lack of clarity leave ample room for political imagination in which the Balkan Other, in addition to its traditional image of a semi-wild and semi-civilized European periphery, also acquires the traits of the colonial Other. This process enabled by the ideological identification of contemporary Europe with the European Union is also strongly supported by the logic of neo-liberal capitalism: the Balkan Other has been turning into the kind of Other over which it is necessary to gain the economic upper hand and which must be cultivated to produce a cheap workforce.

Apart from economic interests, today's political imagination largely categorizes the *Western Balkans* as the south, the "third world" because of the security aspect: the countries that border contemporary EUrope to the east, southeast and the east form an area that in *Europe's* eyes is *dangerously close*, and where lurk all sorts of dangers – organized crime supported by corrupt political elites, drug smuggling,

illegal immigrants, terrorism (because the Muslim population is "autochthonous" both in the Balkans and in North Africa, this area can be associated with Al Qaeda and 'global terrorism') etc.

The countries of the *Western Balkans* cannot be denied their geographical placement in Europe even within the new political reality, if only because on today's political map of Europe they appear as a "black hole" surrounded by EU territory. If for that reason they should be "allowed into Europe," this is justified by the need for security: before 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* (B92.*net*, July 1, 2008); or, as was written in the Program of the Slovenian Presidency of the EU, *[t]he stability of the Western Balkans – a region encircled by Member States – is of major importance for the security and prosperity of the entire Union*. (http://www.eu2008.si/includes/Downloads/misc/program/Programme_en.pdf, accessed on March 8, 2009). In this example, new patterns of exclusion again tally well with the old ones – the discourse on the "problematic nature" of the Balkan countries and their responsibility for violence and war in Europe is now carried forward through the representation of the Balkan countries as the "seedbed of terrorism," while in the contemporary variant the images of barbarism, primitivism and crudeness are conveyed through discourses on crime, corruption, terrorism and illegal immigration. The necessity for supervision is therefore a constant motif in both old and new discourses – the *Western Balkan* countries have to be admitted into the EU so that they can be supervised and prevented from causing new trouble in Europe.

The attitude towards history, memory, the past and the future is still another area in which in contemporary political discourses a clear dividing line is drawn between "Europe" and "non-Europe," whereas the Balkans is equated with the "third world." As already emphasized, one characteristic of orientalization is the perception that Others live in another time. Contemporary "European Orientalism" also places the Balkan countries in the past and portrays EU membership as their only possible future. In addition, the Balkans are traditionally perceived as an area inhabited by peoples obsessed with history who build their identity on myths and

are not capable of "facing the present" and "turning to the future." *Europe* attributes the same characteristics to "third world" countries: *The tragedy of Africa is that the African has not satisfactorily entered history (…) In this imaginary world where everything starts over and over again there is no place for human adventure or for the idea of progress. The man never looks towards the future. Never breaks the repetition cycle (…) That is the problem of Africa*, said President Sarkozy addressing young Africans in Dakar (Tatlić 2007/2008).

On the other hand, in Europe's perception of itself, the idea of progress is inherent to Europe; it is a space characterized by a linear flow of time, as contrasted with the non-European, cyclic perception of time and endless repetition. In addition, Europe sees itself as a community of nations joined together precisely by their ability to face their traumatic past, overcome it and build a better and more ethical society through such catharsis.[27] By contrast, the Balkans live in the past, are obsessed with the past, and on top of that are unable or unwilling to face that past. Since as such they seriously threaten Europe's self-image, it is suitable to place the Balkans beyond European borders. In 1999, Balibar pointed out in his lecture given in Thessaloniki, that "the fate of European identity as a whole is being played out in Yugoslavia and more generally in the Balkans (even if this is not the only site of its trial)" and that Europe has two options: "Either Europe will recognize in the Balkan situation not a monstrosity grafted to its breast, a pathological "after-effect" of underdevelopment or of communism, but rather an image of effect of its own history, and will undertake to confront it and resolve it and thus to put itself into question and transform itself. Only then will Europe probably begin to become *possible* again. Or else it will refuse to come to face-to-face with itself and will continue to treat the problem as an exterior obstacle to be overcome through exterior means, including colonization" (Balibar 2004, 6).

A deeper look into the European discourses on the *Western Balkans* shows that today Europe is no more *possible* than it was ten years ago when Balibar made the statement quoted above. One could even argue to the contrary. The means used to constitute the *Western Balkans* as an area outside Europe have become even more explicit; the

27 In his study of 20th-century European history, Mark Mazower convincingly deconstructs this European narrative about the cathartic confrontation with the past and points out that Nazism was "a nightmarish revelation of the destructive potential of European civilization – turning imperialism on its head and treating Europeans as Africans" (Mazower 1998, xiii).

use of well known mechanisms of supervision and colonization is characterized by an even greater lack of reflection, and these means have become accessible to all those inside the EU. The main economic beneficiaries from this symbolic and discursive colonization of the Balkans are precisely those countries that most frequently make use of these mechanisms, i.e. EU members located on the EU's southeastern border. As to Europe as a whole, this colonization enables it to continue building and maintaining a self-satisfied image while shunning, or ascribing to those *outside*, everything that might possibly challenge such an image. In this kind of Europe there is no room for "peaceful, managed and nurtured diversity" (Garton Ash 2007), and this kind of Europe is not capable of self-reflection. In this kind of Europe, the media repeat on a daily basis politicians' statements echoing the well known patterns that marked the darkest periods of European history. Because of this, it is difficult to avoid an unpleasant feeling of repetition – despite the deep-rooted opinion that repetition is *a problem of the African man* and of the Balkan peoples, and by no means of Europeans.

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