

»ACCESSING THE EU IS LIKE RUNNING ON A TREADMILL IN THE GYM«
 HOW THE EU ACCESSION PROCESS IS METAPHORICALLY PRESENTED
 IN THE ONLINE MEDIA OF SERBIA, MONTENEGRO, AND BOSNIA AND
 HERZEGOVINA

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we investigate the metaphors conceptualising the process of the accession of the Western-Balkan countries to the European Union, in the online news articles published in Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In a corpus comprised of 150 articles (104,806 words), we identified the expressions which were the instantiations of various conceptual metaphors with ACCESSION as the target domain. The accession, a dynamic process in itself, was generally presented via dynamic metaphors (travelling, entering a house, schooling, etc.); however, the dynamics of the processes presented via these metaphors was almost always contextually reduced (the travelling was long, slow or endless; the person entering the house could not move past the doorstep or they found the door closed or just slightly open; the student did not finish school or did not make progress ...). The more frequent metaphors were a continuation of the conventional patterns from the earlier period, whereas the less frequent metaphors proved more creative.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor, metaphorical expressions, the EU-accession process, critical discourse analysis, media discourse, the Western Balkans

«ACCEDERE ALL'UE È COME CORRERE SUL TAPIS ROULANT»:
 LA PRESENTAZIONE METAFORICA DEL PROCESSO DELL'ADESIONE ALL'UE NEI MEDIA
 DIGITALI IN SERBIA, MONTENEGRO E BOSNIA-ERZEGOVINA

SINTESI

Nel contributo si esaminano metafore utilizzate per concettualizzare il processo dell'adesione all'UE dei paesi dei Balcani occidentali negli articoli di notizie online pubblicati in Serbia, Montenegro e Bosnia-Erzegovina. Nell'ambito di un corpus di 150 articoli (104.806 parole) abbiamo identificato espressioni che erano istanziazioni di varie metafore concettuali con adesione come dominio bersaglio. L'adesione, di per sé un processo dinamico, veniva generalmente presentata tramite metafore dinamiche (viaggio, ingresso in una casa, istruzione ecc.), ma la carica dinamica dei processi descritti da queste metafore era quasi sempre contestualmente ridotta (il viaggio era lungo, lento o infinito; la persona che entrava nella casa non riusciva a oltrepassare la soglia oppure trovava la porta chiusa o aperta di appena uno spiraglio; lo studente non completava l'istruzione oppure non faceva alcun progresso...). Le metafore più frequenti erano continuazioni di modelli convenzionali del periodo precedente, quelle meno frequenti invece dimostravano più creatività.

Parole chiave: metafora concettuale, espressioni metaforiche, processo di adesione all'UE, analisi critica del discorso, discorso mediatico, Balcani occidentali

INTRODUCTION

The metaphorical conceptualisations of the European Union, of the candidates for the EU membership and of the very process of the EU accession, have been studied by a considerable number of papers, written mainly from the perspective of critical discourse analysis. Most of them dealt with the integration processes of the candidates who eventually became the EU members – these always had a clear accession perspective and the process itself lasted for a decade at most. The term *Western Balkans* has changed its meaning – it started as a geographical term but has recently become a political one, given that it now excludes the countries which are geographically situated in the Western Balkans but which have joined the EU – Slovenia and Croatia (Petrović, 2009, 33). The journey of the Western-Balkan countries (we use the term in the latter meaning) to the EU has already lasted for quite some time; still, the end of the negotiations is not in sight and their outcome is rather unpredictable. Despite the outward assurances and promises, the hope of these countries actually joining the EU has diminished over the past few years – what is safe to conclude at this point is that their fast integration into the EU is certainly not plausible. With this backdrop in mind, it is no wonder that the conceptualisation of the EU-accession process of these countries is rather different from that of the former candidates. The difference may, arguably, also be observed in how this process was perceived at the beginning of the EU journey of the Western-Balkan countries and how it has been seen as of late. Bearing this in mind, we believe that there is a need to critically analyse the conceptualisation of the EU accession of these countries in the recent period. To address this need, in this paper we study the conceptual metaphors representing the EU-accession process in a corpus of news articles published in 2018 in the online media of several Western-Balkan countries – Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In the light of the above, the following research questions guided our study:

1. Which metaphors are most frequently used to represent the EU accession of Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the online media of these three countries?
2. How is the accession, which is essentially a dynamic process, specifically conceptualised in the online media of these three countries, in the light of the stagnation in the EU expansion process?
3. How does the evaluative content of the metaphors representing the current EU-accession processes of Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the online media of these countries, differ from the metaphors representing the accession of these and other countries in the previous period?

In order to answer these questions, we will first present the theoretical framework for this study, which includes a brief review of the conceptual metaphor theory and critical discourse analysis. The theoretical part of the paper ends by presenting the previous research on the related topics.

Conceptual metaphor

The definition of metaphor from the point of view of cognitive studies is very different from that offered from the perspective of stylistics or rhetoric. The latter view metaphor as a figure of speech which rests on comparison and differentiates it from *simile*, a related figure which does the same but signals the comparison with the words such as *as* or *like*. Thus, from the point of view of stylistics and rhetoric, the utterance *Achilles was a lion in the battle* contains the metaphor *lion*, while the utterance *Achilles was as a lion in the battle* contains the simile *as a lion* (Kövecses, 2002). However, according to the theory of conceptual metaphor proposed by Lakoff & Johnson (1980), both the utterances contain instantiations or linguistic realisations of the same conceptual metaphor – PERSON IS A LION or, more specifically, BRAVE PERSON IS A LION, resting on the analogy between the *source domain* (in this case LION), which is more concrete and arises from the empirical plane, and the *target domain* (in this case (BRAVE) PERSON), which, in comparison, is more abstract.

Conceptual metaphor, therefore, is a cognitive structure that has concrete realisations in language – these realisations may be called *linguistic metaphors* (Steen, 1999). Thus, one conceptual metaphor typically corresponds to several linguistic metaphors – some are regularly used (such as those found in: *She is lion-hearted* or *She is a real lioness*), while others can be more ephemeral, coined for a specific context and occasion (as in the example found in Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian (BCMS) – *Kida kao lav* (cf. Ljubavna adresa, 2019) (English: *He/she bites as a lion*)). This applies not only to linguistic metaphors, but also to the conceptual ones – some are more embedded in language – for example, the conceptual metaphor MONEY IS LIQUID/WATER, which has the following linguistic realisations: *inflow*, *outflow*, *liquidity*, etc., while, on the other hand, the conceptual metaphor MONEY IS A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN (cf. Politika.com, 2013) is unusual and may be creatively used in a certain context. However, the discourse power of both conventional and creative metaphors should not be underestimated.

Many metaphors are universal (as is the metaphor MONEY IS LIQUID/WATER, referred to above, which is similarly realised in a number of languages), while others are more shaped by the culture and context from which they originate (Goatly, 1998; Kövec-

ses, 2010; Zhang, 2013). Thus, for example, Perović (2017) observes that the metaphor *LOVE IS A FLOWER* is quite universal, while the conceptual metaphor *LOVE IS A MEADOW FLOWER*, which is narrower, might be more local, i.e. more specific (Perović found it in the language of Montenegrin students). Generally speaking, the more general the metaphor, the more universal it is, and *vice versa*.

Conceptual metaphor pervades thought and the process of thinking is, essentially, metaphorically organised (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The linguistic realisations of metaphors are only the reflections of our thoughts (Lakoff, 1987) and, most often, we use them unconsciously and automatically. Thus, conceptual metaphors whose realisations we find, for example, in public discourse, are often the reflections of the established ideologies – it is important to explain, analyse and deconstruct these, so as to shed light on the intentions of the discourse participants and on the processes through which these may be perpetuated. This can be done through applying a critical perspective in discourse analysis.

Critical discourse analysis

A critical approach to discourse is almost always socially engaged in some manner, since the critical discourse analyst takes a certain position in relation to the text they are analysing and sends a message to the society in the form of its critique. Theorists present critical discourse analysis as a set of approaches to socially engaged discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2005a), as a programme or school (Wodak, 2002), or simply as a critical perspective in discourse analysis (van Dijk, 2001). Usually, this approach requires interdisciplinarity (van Dijk, 2001; Wodak, 1989) and so the analyst applying this perspective goes beyond the formal framework of linguistics. Thus, the methodology, i.e. the wide range of the methods which are used in critical discourse analysis (CDA), has emerged from the dialogue of different disciplines (Fairclough, 2005b).

A critical discourse analyst departs from the premise that language is not a mere means of expressing social phenomena, i.e. that language is not only their mirror, but also their constitutive factor. In other words, language is not only a reflection of the social inequalities where they normally exist, but it also actively participates in their creation and propagation. One of the many themes that critical discourse analysts deal with is the inequality of participants in communication in terms of their position in the social hierarchy (e.g. member of a higher class – member of a lower class, manager-worker, etc.) or the hierarchies imposed by certain social situations (e.g. teacher-student, doctor-patient, etc.), which affect the choice of topics, length of turns/deliveries, order of speakers, etc. (Vuković, 2014). Critical discourse analysts deal with the language used to talk about vulner-

able groups, as well as the language used by vulnerable groups. Whenever inequality is talked about in discourse or this inequality is reflected in it, there is a possibility to approach that discourse critically.

There are three main directions in the critical analysis of discourse. Fairclough is one of the most significant authors within critical discourse analysis (Blommaert, 2005) and his theory is known as the theory of social discourse. Fairclough's three-dimensional model of analysis includes the simultaneous analysis of text, discourse practice (origin, distribution, use of text) and social practice, i.e. the wider social context (Fairclough, 1992; 1995a; 1995b; 1996; 2000; 2001). Text analysis includes the methods of systemic functional linguistics, as well as semiotic and interdiscursive analysis. At the level of social practice, analytical concepts include those such as speech acts and coherence, as well as intertextuality, as a mixture of texts and also as a mixture of genres and cultural elements (Fairclough, 1995a) – the latter is sometimes referred to as interdiscursivity (Sheyholislami, 2001; Blommaert, 2005).

Another important CDA representative is Teun van Dijk with his sociocognitive method. While Fairclough's methodology is sociologically anchored, van Dijk positions his model in the cognitive disciplines. This model also has three components: discourse – social cognition – society (van Dijk, 1993a; 1993b; 2001; 2002; 2003; 2006). The first and the third components correspond to Fairclough's text and social practice, while the second component mediates between discourse and society (Fairclough, 1995a).

Wodak (2002; 2007) establishes a third important model in the critical analysis of discourse, which is based on the socio-historical method. Its starting point is that discourse should be interpreted in the context of its historical events, i.e. a certain time and space.

CDA has also received some criticism. On the one hand, the variety of the theories underpinning it (Henderson, 2005) and of its methods (Orpin, 2005), the lack of objectivity (Widdowson, 2004), as well as the imprecision of its methodology (Frantz, 2003), are among the criticisms that fundamentally question this approach (Haig, 2004). On the other hand, critical discourse analysts respond that the analyst is always inevitably involved in the constitution of the discourse that they are analysing (de Beaugrande, 2006) and argue that researchers should not ignore the inequalities observed in and perpetuated by language (van Dijk, 1993a; 2001).

Critical analysis discourse and conceptual metaphor

Many critical discourse analysts define metaphor and identify its structure in terms of the source and the target domain, following the principles of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory. However, unlike Lakoff & Johnson (1980), these analysts typically reject the position that conceptual metaphors are used only unconsciously and

automatically. Instead, they argue that the choice of metaphor may deliberate, i.e. that it may be motivated in various ways and that it is of importance to study the discourse purposes of metaphor (Charteris-Black, 2004). Steen (2008) also discusses the possibility that some metaphors may be chosen consciously and deliberately, and calls them *deliberate metaphors*. Apart from these, it is also of significance for critical analysts to investigate metaphors which are used unconsciously and automatically, as these can reflect the established ideologies and be propagated and perpetuated through language.

Zinken et al. (2008) distinguish primary conceptual metaphors from *discourse metaphors*, whereby the difference is based on the fact that the former are universal, i.e. they are common to different languages and mainly rely on the physical experience, while discourse metaphors are more context-dependent, have an ideological basis and are marked by strategic use. Most of the metaphors studied by critical discourse analysts are actually discourse metaphors – so are the metaphors that conceptualise the EU-accession process as travelling or entering a house, for example, since these metaphors are largely shaped by the socio-cultural context and are not purely based on a bodily experience.

Critical approaches to metaphor in discourse typically use the methods of corpus linguistics, pragmatics and qualitative discourse analysis, since such an analysis examines the instantiations of metaphors in authentic language and their direct co-text, as well as the wider social context. Thus, for instance, Musolff (2015) investigates the metaphors that dehumanise immigrants in public discourse and, *inter alia*, reveals that immigrants may be conceptualised as a *flood*, within the broader conceptual metaphor IMMIGRANTS ARE A NATURAL DISASTER, as *leeches* (IMMIGRANTS ARE PARASITES), while their arrival may be perceived as an *invasion* (IMMIGRATION IS AN ACT OF VIOLENCE). Similarly, Santana (2015) deals with the conceptualisation of Latino immigrants in the USA and finds a number of dehumanising metaphors in readers' comments on articles published in the online media – among the realisations of the conceptual metaphor IMMIGRANTS ARE ANIMALS, the author finds the following: *cockroaches, grasshoppers, leeches, pests, dogs, vultures, deer to be hunted*. As we can see, conceptual metaphors for immigrants and their realisations can be explicitly dehumanising and clearly reflect a racist ideology.

A somewhat deeper deconstruction than the one needed in the cases above, may be required to reveal the ideologies on which some metaphors are based. Thus, Semino et al. (2017) explore the metaphors that conceptualise cancer and conclude that the experience of this disease is often represented as a STRUGGLE OR WAR. The authors point out that such a choice of the metaphor might have a negative effect on the patients, as the patients may feel that the outcome of the disease

depends on them and that they are to blame and be responsible if they are losing such a 'battle'. Another example comes from the study of Radić-Bojanić & Silaški (2012), who investigated sports metaphors in political discourse and discovered that they could often be used manipulatively – for example, an excessive use of metaphors drawing from the source domain of FOOTBALL in politics may, to an extent, exclude from such a discourse an average woman who does not follow football too much and is not particularly familiar with its terminology, while most men can understand such metaphors spontaneously and instantly. Furthermore, Bratić & Vuković-Stamatović (2017) dealt with the conceptual metaphor of WOMAN IS A CAR, i.e. its realisations in the internet discourse of the Western Balkans (some of the instantiations of this metaphor were the following: *How far has she travelled?; Is it expensive to maintain her?; She looks like a Ferrari; She has good airbags*, etc.). The authors state that women in this discourse are understood as an object (a car) that belongs to a man, which points to an imbalance of power between men and women, and is a reflection of the established way of thinking in the language and culture of the investigated part of the Western Balkans. This metaphor is, therefore, critically commented on in order to contribute to the deconstruction of the sexist ideology on which it is based. Vujković (2019) does the same, analysing animal metaphors depicting women on Montenegrin websites (e.g. WOMAN IS A CAT and WOMAN IS A FISH) and concludes that these metaphors emphasise the physical and sexual characteristics of women while simultaneously backgrounding their other qualities.

Similar approaches, with some variations, can be found in the papers by Musolff (2004; 2006; 2010; 2015; 2016), Charteris-Black (2004; 2006; 2011; 2018), Hart (2008; 2018), Koller (2004; 2005), Semino (2008), among others. We apply such an approach in this paper, as our goal is to critically investigate the conceptualisation of the EU-accession process in the public discourse of a part of the Western Balkans and to reveal the ideologies which form the basis of such conceptualisations.

Earlier research

One of the authors whose frequent topic of research was the metaphorical conceptualisation of the EU and the EU-accession is Musolff. In the EUROMETA corpus, which comprises articles from the German and the British press, Musolff (2004) determined that the EU integration processes were metaphorically depicted via a series of different scenarios with the following keywords: ROAD – MOVEMENT – SPEED, GEOMETRY – GEOGRAPHY, TECHNOLOGY – BUILDING, GROUP – CLUB – CLASS, SCHOOL – DISCIPLINE, LOVE – MARRIAGE – FAMILY, LIFE – HEALTH – STRENGTH, GAME – SPORT, WAR – FORTRESS – BAT-

TLE, PERFORMANCE – SHOW, NATURE – TIME. Thus, *inter alia*, the EU could be perceived as a *house*, which is being built, equipped, or renovated, or as a *family*, whose child is the *euro* currency.

One part of this type of research comes from the authors from the former membership candidates. Horolets (2003) investigates the Polish press and finds metaphors which depict the EU as a *club* and the accession as a *journey*. She also studies some more culturally-specific metaphors representing the EU – one of them sees it as the *Babylonian tower* – an overly ambitious plan of humans that is doomed to fail, while another represents it as an *apocalyptic beast*. Drulák and Königová (2007) studied the EU metaphors in the discourse of Czech civil servants – the authors find the *container*, *movement* and *balance* metaphors. They notice that through more intense contacts with the EU, the perception of the EU changes – for instance, the frequency of the container metaphors decreases over time. Petraškaite-Pabst (2010) investigates the EU metaphors in the Lithuanian and in the German political discourse and finds that the dominant metaphors are those with the source domains of *house*, *transport*, *family* and *disease*. She points out that these metaphors in the Lithuanian discourse mainly come from the previous discourse on the EU from other countries, but that they were also adapted to the Lithuanian political discourse.

The metaphors conceptualising the EU accession of the Western-Balkan countries have also been investigated. The following short review is certainly not exhaustive. Šarić (2005) deals with the integration of Croatia into the EU and concludes that the accession was usually presented as a JOURNEY OR MOVEMENT, where Croatia was conceptualised as a PASSENGER and the EU as the journey's FINAL DESTINATION. Another model that was frequent in the data was the model in which the EU was represented as a HOUSE OR BUILDING. Both these models were noted in the research on the EU accession of other, non-Balkan countries (for instance, in Musolff, 2004). In her research on the metaphors presenting Croatia's accession, Škara (2009) arrives at similar results

Petrović (2009) devotes an entire book to this topic. In it, she mostly deals with the discourse on the EU in Slovenia, but also covers the EU-accession processes of Serbia and Croatia to an extent. In her analysis, which applies both linguistic and anthropological methods, Petrović concludes that the EU treats the Balkans as *the Other*, which must prove its *Europeanness* before joining the EU, and which is perceived as subordinated and marginalised. The metaphors likely come from the EU public discourse and are reproduced by the local politicians in an uncritical way and without problematisation (Petrović, 2009, 26). The EU is clearly behaving *paternalistically* towards the Balkans, *pushing* it further south, beyond its symbolic

borders of Europe (Petrović, 2009, 40–47). Even the name itself, *Western Balkans*, does not mention or evoke Europe.

In a similar way, Šarić (2010) deals with the conceptualisation of the Balkans and concludes that the term Balkans, which originally had a geographical character, has become a cultural-identity label. In the Serbian media, Šarić argues, *Balkans* is used more often as an identification label for Serbia than it is used as an identification label for Croatia in the Croatian media, where this term is perceived negatively. Šarić (2014) also studies the metaphors in the Croatian media discourse on the EU. In case of the dynamic conceptualisation, the emphasis is on the process of joining itself, while in other metaphors the EU is more perceived as a static entity, the author concludes (Šarić, 2014, 183). She also argues that, on the one hand, this discourse, as a thematically determined one, inevitably contains certain conventional metaphors – such as the *journey* metaphor. On the other hand, less conventional metaphors, such as the metaphors of illness and health, tend to be much rarer – these are sometimes culturally specific and indicate an attitude of a certain author/politician/group/people/country towards joining the EU.

Barčot (2016) studies the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY in the interviews and speeches of Zoran Milanović, former Croatian Prime Minister, on the topic of joining the EU, from the period of just before and during the entry of Croatia into the EU. Werkmann & Buljan (2013) further deal with the discourse on the EU in Croatia, analysing a corpus of newspaper articles. They study how the conceptualisation of the EU in Croatia changed over time – some source domains proved to be constant, but with different categories in focus, while some new domains also appeared over time. That is exactly what we expect in our analysis and how we justify our revisiting the topic of the EU-accession discourse.

Đurović (2013) studies the metaphors of the EU as an UNFINISHED BUILDING and HOUSE in the public discourse of Serbia – Serbia is at the THRESHOLD of that house and in the periods when progress is noted, it is in its LOBBY. Furthermore, Đurović & Silaški (2012) analyse the metaphor of TRAFFIC LIGHT on Serbia's path to the EU – the *green* and the *red lights* are the signals that Serbia receives from the EU, regulating the movement of this country along the EU's path, which is thus strictly controlled from the outside. The same authors (2014) also study the SCHOOL METAPHOR in the discourse on Serbia's accession to the EU. Serbia is presented as a STUDENT, while the EU is shown as a TEACHER, which points to the marginalised status of Serbia and the dichotomy in how the two are presented. Kapranov (2016) is another author who studies the integration of Serbia into the EU – this time in the discourse of the Twitter posts of the British Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

He finds that this discourse is organised around the models of *travel*, *positive mood*, *support of the United Kingdom*, *regional cooperation*, *disappointment* and the *European family*, and concludes that the Brexit process did not impact the discourse of the future enlargement of the European Union.

Vuković-Stamatović, Bratić & Babić (2021) study the *game* and *sport match* metaphors in the online media articles on the EU integrations published in Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. They find that, on the one hand, the EU is typically presented as the dominant player who is winning, or as a referee. On the other hand, the Western Balkans are shown as the underdog, a player losing a match, or even as a playing field. There is a great imbalance in power between these two discourse participants, the authors argue.

Vuković-Stamatović (2021) studies how the Western Balkans are conceptualised in the online media discourse of the same three countries. The study is based on a corpus of 137 articles and the author finds that the Western Balkans are deeply marginalised in this discourse, given that there is a stark contrast in the roles assigned to the EU and to this region in the metaphors analysed. An expanded version of this corpus is used for the present study, but this time, as suggested earlier, the focus is not on how the Western Balkans are perceived but on how the EU-accession process itself is conceptualised.

As can be seen in this brief review, not much literature focuses on the EU integrations of Bosnia and Herzegovina – this can be explained by the fact that these processes are much less advanced in that country than in the other regional countries, and the fact that this country has yet to receive an official candidate status. Still, the public discourse of the region and of the EU has been referring to this country as a potential EU member for quite some time now. Likewise, not much literature has been devoted to the EU integrations of Montenegro, even though this country has the most advanced integration processes in the region. The fact that we cover both these countries in our corpus is thus of importance, as more light will be shed on how the EU processes are seen across the region. The details of how we do it for the purpose of this study are given in the next section.

CORPUS AND METHODOLOGY

The corpus analysed in this paper consists of 150 articles taken from Serbian, Bosnian and Montenegrin online news portals during 2018. We used two search engines to collect the articles – *Naslovi.net* and *Google*, and our first search criterion was the acronym “EU”. During 2018, we periodically read texts selected on the basis of this criterion (several times a month) and included in the corpus those articles that

were primarily about the EU, that is, the accession of the Western-Balkan countries to the European Union. This is how we got the aforementioned corpus of 150 articles from the online news portals on the topic of the integration of the Western Balkans into the EU, which has a total of 104,806 words (the list of the articles is attached). The articles were downloaded from a total of 31 online portals: *B92*, *BBC Serbian*, *Beta*, *Bijeljina Online*, *Blic* (including the special editions for Bosnia and Herzegovina and for Montenegro), *Brotnjo*, *CDM*, *Dan*, *Danas*, *Dnevni Avaz*, *DW*, *Fokus*, *Fonet*, *FOS Media*, *Index*, *Informer*, *Kurir*, *Mondo*, *N1*, *Nova Ekonomija*, *Novi Magazin*, *Novosti*, *Pobjeda*, *Politics*, *Portal Analitika*, *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, *RTS*, *Sputnik*, *VOA* and *Vijesti*. We noticed that identical texts or texts with minor changes (shorter versions, language adjustments) were often published on the different news portals of these three countries – due to this, when referencing the source texts we indicate the portal from which they were taken and not necessarily the portals on which they may have originally appeared.

We carefully read the corpus in order to identify realisations of the conceptual metaphors that represent the process of the EU accession. We checked their metaphoricity using the MIPVU methodology (Steen et al., 2010), which meant determining the lexical units in the mentioned realisations, determining the meaning of those lexical units in the context, and then comparing that meaning with their basic meaning. In case these contrasted, i.e. there were differences between the contextual meaning and the basic meaning of the lexical units, such units were marked as metaphorical. In this way, we collected linguistic metaphors, i.e. realisations of the conceptual metaphors.

In the next step, based on the linguistic realisations that we previously identified, we defined the conceptual metaphors, which was not difficult considering the previous research on the EU enlargement discourse. We singled out those which had *ACCESSION (TO THE EU)* as their target domain and classified them according to the source domains.

For the analysis and the presentation of the results, we use the so-called *hybrid* approach (Deignan, 2016), which means that we analyse the realisations of the conceptual metaphors using a corpus and apply a discourse approach, i.e. we analyse and present metaphors in their context (which is quoted, typically in the form of excerpts). The analytical apparatus we apply is the critical analysis of metaphors in discourse, as presented earlier in the theoretical part of the paper.

ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS

In the following analysis, we present and analyse the metaphors in the order of the frequency of their linguistic realisations in the corpus. As expected, the

conventional metaphors were the most frequent – these were also found in the enlargement discourses from the previous period. In the concrete excerpts in which they were found, the emphasis was on the duration of the process and the difficulties encountered in its implementation. More creativity was found in the less frequent metaphors.

As stated in the theoretical review, the process of entry into the EU is usually presented as a *journey* of the countries candidates to a destination, which is the EU in this case. Šarić (2014) finds this metaphor “conventional” in the EU discourse, since it is practically inevitable in it. It was the most frequent in our corpus, with 365 instantiations. Given that this metaphor has been widely studied in the literature, here we will pay our attention to its submetaphors and realisations which have characterised the discourse of the latest stages of the EU integrations in the selected three Balkan countries. Let us look at the following:

1. *“I have no illusions, I know that the European public opinion is not ready for the integration of the Western Balkans and I understand that we have a long **journey** ahead of us. However, the expansion it is not contradictory to the consolidation of Europe. I even think that the continuation of the expansion is in the interest of Europe. The alternative to that would be us waiting for the breakout of a new big crisis,” said Đukanović. (Vijesti, 11/13/2018) [Nemam iluzija, znam da evropsko javno mnjenje nije spremno na integraciju Zapadnog Balkana i shvatam da je pred nama dug **put**. Međutim, proširenje nije kontradiktorno konsolidaciji Evrope. Ja čak mislim da je nastavak procesa proširenja u interesu Evrope. Alternativa tome je da čekamo izbijanje nove velike krize”, naveo je Đukanović.]*
2. *We have, practically, been **travelling** to Europe and on that **road**, we have been “reforming” ourselves (every day in every aspect) for 18 years already, but, the bottom line is that we have **moved** very little. (Dan, 12/02/2018) [Mi u Evropu praktično **putujemo** i na tom **putu** se „reformišemo” (svakog dana u svakom pogledu) već 18 godina, ali kad se podvuče crta, saldo je da smo malo **odmakli**.]*
3. (Headline) *CCI: Bosnia and Herzegovina holds a record in how slow it is **approaching** the EU (Dnevni Avaz, 21/05/2018) [(Naslov) CCI: BiH rekorder u sporosti **približavanja** EU]*
4. *She emphasised that **road** to the EU is not simple at all ... (CDM, 2/07/2018) [Ona je naglasila da **put** ka EU nije ni malo jednostavan ...]*
5. *For some eight or nine years already we have been given the condition which the EU formulates as “the key priority”, which is a pleonasm, and that is to give Kosovo away. We will give it to them, but we will not **move** a **step** closer... (Sputnik, 28/07/2018) [Mi već osam-devet godina imamo uslov koji EU formuliše kao “ključni prioritet”, što je pleonazam, a to je dati Kosovo. Mi ćemo ga dati, ali se nećemo **pomeriti** ni **korak** ...]*

As can be seen, the journey to the EU is presented as a long, difficult, slow and complex one. The metaphor of the journey is mostly realised through the more specific metaphors *ACCESSION IS A LONG AND SLOW JOURNEY* OR *ACCESSION IS A JOURNEY WITH OBSTACLES*. These metaphors also appeared in the earlier discourses on the accession of the former candidates, however, in the discourse on the accession of the countries of the Western Balkans, they are much more frequent and best reflect the political essence of that process. They are usually accompanied by a specific emotional evaluation – typically, that of despair, fatigue and frustration of the new candidates and, occasionally, irony. When addressing the problems arising in the journey to the EU, Balkan politicians sometimes emphasise that there is no alternative to that journey and thus almost issue threats – for instance, in excerpt 1, the President of Montenegro Đukanović says that a major crisis will break out if the journey to the EU does not get a clear perspective. Excerpt 2 suggests that the journey is about the reforms but these are ironically perceived (in quotation marks, followed by a well-known quote from famous regional film, which is mostly associated with negative and ironic contexts), and it is also concluded that the path travelled is rather short.

The journey to the EU is often discussed from the perspective of the first person plural, as is the case in the first two excerpts above (we have a long journey ahead of us; ...us waiting for the breakout of a new big crisis (1); we have been travelling, we have been reforming, we have moved (2)). The speaker, thus, experiences themselves as one of the passengers or a fellow traveller, which is something with which the reader of a regional news portal may easily identify.

Furthermore, the speed and the dynamics of the journey is often emphasised through the epithets accompanying the linguistic realisations of the journey metaphor – thus, a great number of the excerpts contain words which suggest slowness. Such is the case in excerpt 3, where Bosnia and Herzegovina is ironically characterised as a recorder-holder in slow motion (amongst the otherwise slow Balkan countries). In excerpt 4, it is pointed out that the road to the EU is not easy, and the same message of complexity may be found in the excerpts which refer to the obstacles encountered in it. These obstacles are conceptualised in various ways:

6. Aleksandar Vučić will **climb the Everest**, but this will not be a mountaineering but a political feat of the President of Serbia, who, commenting on the EU's strategy for the Balkans released last Tuesday, said that to Serbia it poses "**an obstacle as big as the Himalayas**." [Aleksandar Vučić će se **popeti** na Everest, ali to neće biti alpinistički, nego politički podvig predsjednika Srbije, koji je, komentarišući u prošli utorak objavljenu novu strategiju EU za Zapadni Balkan, izjavio da ona Srbiji postavlja „**prepreku visoku kao Himalaji**“.]
7. Do Bosnia and Kosovo have a true European perspective with respect to the **blocks** in political terms? (B92, 30/05/2018) [Imajuli Bosna i Kosovopravuevropsku perspektivu s obzirom na političke **blokade**?] Macron's **road-ramp** to the Western Balkans? (DW, 18/04/2018) [Makronova **rampa** Zapadnom Balkanu?]

In the corpus, the obstacles are lexicalised in different ways and it is mostly suggested that they are almost insurmountable and that the outcome of the journey depends on surmounting them – thus, for example, Serbia faces an obstacle *as high as the Himalayas* (6), which indicates the most dangerous feat for the bravest mountaineers, which may also result in death (A TRIP TO THE EU IS CLIMBING THE HIMALAYAS). Although the Himalayas are a natural obstacle, the responsibility for this obstacle is not vested in a *force majeure*, but in the EU as an actor with agency in this discourse and, so, the Serbian President rejects the responsibility and fully attributes it to the EU. Although the EU, according to him, sets enormous obstacles, “he will climb Everest” – the promise of an almost superhuman feat is not unusual for politicians; what is particularly interesting here is that Vučić himself performs that ascent, equating himself with the state. Furthermore, the situation is similar in case of the road *ramps* and *blocks* (excerpts 7 and 8), which also suggest a complete interruption of the journey, which is controlled by the EU itself. The EU, as the setter of the roadblocks and ramps, has the characteristics of an agent, while the passengers are passive participants in the journey. In addition to the various obstacles presented through nouns, sometimes using *brakes* while travelling is also referred to, which can also be understood as one of the problems encountered in the journey and suggests its possible interruption, as is evident in the following examples:

9. In addition, the German news agency points out, Spain is **putting on the brakes** and will accept the reception of new members only if the status of Kosovo is defined in such a way which prevents the rebel Catalans from using the recognition

of Kosovo as an example against Madrid; they also point out that this is complicated and that it will last for a long time. (Informer, 18/05/2018) [Osim toga, ističe nemački servis, Španija **koči** i hoće prijem novih samo ako se status Kosova definiše tako da pobunjeni Katalonci priznanje Kosova kao države ne mogu da iskoriste kao primer protiv Madrida, uz ocenu da je to komplikovano i da će trajati dugo.]

10. The European Commission proposed that, in the future, all technical decisions be adopted by a qualified majority instead of consensus every member, as was the case up until now, which **put the brakes on** and blackmail our country in the negotiation process. (Novosti, 15/08/2018) [Evropska komisija skrojila je predlog da se ubuduće sve tehničke odluke donose kvalifikovano većinom, a ne konsenzusom svih članica, kao do sada, što su pojedine države, uključujući i Hrvatsku, koristile da **koče** i ucenjuju našu zemlju u pregovaračkom procesu.]

Unlike the obstacles which were presented as nouns, where the agent does not have to be in the foreground (as in excerpt 7), in the case when verbs and verbal phrases are used to the same purpose, the culprit is always clearly designated and is in the position of the topic/theme (in relation to the comment/rheme) – that is usually some specific EU country, depending on the case. The transport vehicle used by the Western Balkans is controlled by the EU, given that it is the EU which has the ability to use the brakes – the Balkan countries are once again presented as passive passengers driven by the EU, which directs and stops the journey at its own discretion. In excerpt 10, the EU is even portrayed as a blackmailer (more on that particular metaphor may be found in Vuković-Stamatović, 2021).

In public discourse, the EU integrations are conceptualised not only as a slow and difficult journey with obstacles but, ever more often, as an *incomplete* journey, which discourages the passengers to the point of thinking that they should abandon it:

11. A great number of Austrian and German news outlets reported the reaction of the Minister of Defense of Serbia, Aleksandar Vulin, who said that “if Kosovo is crucial for the EU, then we should **go our separate ways**,” and based on this statement concluded that Serbia is thinking about **leaving the EU road**. (Novosti, 22/05/2018) [Veliki broj austrijskih i nemačkih medija preneo je reagovanje ministra odbrane Srbije Aleksandra Vulina da, „ako je Kosovo ključno za EU, treba da **krenemo svojim putem**“, te iz ministrove izjave izveli zaključak da Srbija razmišlja o **napuštanju** evropskog **puta**.]

12. *We are forbidden from even thinking about the termination the European road and at the same time we are clearly told that we won't arrive at the destination. That's something like running on a treadmill in the gym.* (Vesti-online, 23/05/2018) [Zabranjuje nam se i da pomislimo na prekidanje evropskog puta, a jasno nam se kaže da na cilj nećemo stići. To je nešto kao trčanje na traci u teretani.]

Although discouraged and defeated, from its passive role of undergoing a journey which is controlled by someone else, the Balkan passenger takes over the active role and holds agency, but only when cornered and when it accepts that the membership is improbable; when *running on a treadmill in the gym* (12), regardless of the effort, the runner remains in the same place.

In the discourse of the EU integrations, the conceptualisation of the journey as a long one with obstacles was certainly present before but, in the public discourse of the Western Balkans, these metaphorical models have become much more dominant and are instantiated through more different realisations. What differentiates this discourse from the one of the former membership candidates is that an intrinsically dynamic metaphor of travel is presented in such a way that its dynamics is very often contextually reduced.

As in the case of journey metaphor, presenting the EU as a house or a building into which new members are entering is another conventional conceptualisation of the EU integrations. In our corpus, this conceptual metaphor had 140 instantiations, which include the following lexicalisations: *entry/entering, door which is ajar, open/closed door, neighborhood, yard, hall, doorstep, house foundation*. The mappings, therefore, are as follows: the EU is a house/home, the candidates want to become new members of the household, the door is an obstacle to the entry, i.e. the accession, and the waiting in front of the door or in the hall is parallel to the political waiting for the EU membership.

In contrast to the discourse of the EU-accession of the earlier membership candidate, in the public discourse of the three Balkan countries the dominant models now are: the EU door is closed/only little ajar, the candidates are waiting at the doorstep or in the lobby, and the entry, i.e. entering, is long-lasting and with obstacles. In the case when accession is represented as entering the EU-house, the more general metaphor is ACCESSION IS MOVEMENT, whose submetaphors are the previously described metaphor ACCESSION IS A JOURNEY and the metaphor ACCESSION IS ENTERING A HOUSE.

As has been said, the EU is very often presented as a house whose door is closed for new residents, i.e. in which new residents are not welcome:

13. *Until democracy is really established, I don't believe we can become a member, even when Europe opens its door again, and that door is right now closed and will remain closed for a number of years.* (Vijesti, 7/15/2018) [Dok se zaista ne uspostavi demokratija ne vjerujem da možemo postati član, čak i kad Evropa jednom ponovo otvori vrata, a ta vrata su trenutno zatvorena i biće zatvorena jedan duži niz godina.]

14. *For the first time, opening the Brussel's door is not "a movable target".* (Dan, 11/02/2018) [Otvaranje briselskih vrata po prvi put nije „pokretna meta“.]

15. *We don't think that we should stand, kneel and pray for the EU door to open.* (Vijesti, 22/05/2018) [Mi ne mislimo da treba stojati, klečati i moliti da se otvore vrata EU.]

In excerpt 13, it is said that the EU door will be closed for a long time. The EU is personified, which is frequently the case in political discourse (NATION IS A PERSON AND THE COMMUNITY OF NATIONS IS A PERSON). In the examples where the *opening* of the door is referenced, it is the EU which has full agency and control over this act. However, in the excerpts mentioning the *closed door*, the culprit is typically not expressed and is left backgrounded. Likewise, the constructions in the excerpts 14 and 15 do not expressly mention the agent. Thus, the responsibility of the EU is not explicitly evoked and the acts of closing and opening the door are presented as processes which do not depend on the will of any of the actors. Additionally, in excerpt 14, there is one more metaphor, that of the *moving target* – what was destination in the metaphor ACCESSION IS A JOURNEY is now presented through an analogy with shooting at a target, which belongs to broader metaphor ACCESSION IS WARFARE. The combination of different metaphors in the same excerpt is typical of this discourse.

The asymmetry in the roles of the EU and that of the Balkans is particularly visible in excerpt 15 – it is stated that the Western Balkans, basically, can only stand, kneel and pray for the door to open, which is rejected as undignified. Although this course of action is rejected, it is still something that the speaker has thought about. As with the journey metaphor, it is the length of the accession process which is emphasised and its dynamics that is contextually reduced.

Game and sports metaphors are rather popular in political discourse (Callies, 2011), where politics is perceived as a competition governed by certain rules. Howe (1988) points out that such metaphors often simplify political processes, which themselves are unpredictable and often entropic – through these metaphors the said processes are given order, rules and clear roles for a limited number of players. Therefore, it is not unusual that in our data there are excerpts in which the EU

and the Western Balkans are presented as players in the game, i.e. in the accession sport (they feature a total of 41 occurrences in the corpus). We will consider several excerpts containing some representative instantiations of these metaphors:

16. *However, even though the EU's **game** so far has been called the door is open, Macron has decided to close it—at least for a moment.* (Blic, 22/04/2018) [No, dok se **igra** EU dosad zvala vrata su otvorena, Makron je rešio da ih zatvori – bar na trenutak.]
17. *Their approach is “don't do what we do, you do what we tell you to do.” I feel those are double standards and hypocrisy. We are tired from **the little games**.* (Pobjeda, 14/09/2018) [Njihov pristup je “ne radite što mi radimo, radite što vam kažemo”. Osjećam dvostruke standarde i hipokriziju. Umorni smo od **igrice**.]
18. **The match** for the EU without deadlines (headline) (Radio Slobodna Europe, 6/02/2018) [**Utakmica** za EU bez rokova (naslov)]

In excerpt 16, two metaphors are used, that of game and that of the already commented metaphor of the door – we have already said that the combination of metaphors is not uncommon in this discourse. In the excerpts 16 and 17, the roles of the players are not equal. Thus, in 16 the EU determines the name of the game and how it is played – it is ironically said that “the EU's **game** so far has been called *the door is open*”. In 17, the EU plays *the little games* – in BCMS, *igrice* is the diminutive form of *igra* (game) and this diminutive form has negative connotations in this context. This points to manipulation and hypocrisy of the EU as a player, which is literally referred to in the remaining text of the excerpt. In the excerpts, game is not seen as a joyful activity, in which more or less equal players compete under fair conditions, but rather as a game in which one player is the judge and the organiser of the game, and the other player is a completely passive participant, which frustrates them (“we are tired of games”). In addition, games and little games are primarily reminiscent of children, i.e. their use suggests the immaturity of the participants in the process – at least the participant who does not control the game, i.e. its rules (in the corpus, the metaphor WESTERN BALKANS ARE AN IMMATURE PERSON is often used – it is, for instance, instantiated in the headline: *The countries of the Western Balkans are “immature for the EU”* (Vijesti, 12/02/2018), which supports this observation; we did not focus on this metaphor in the present paper as our topic here is solely the conceptualisation of the accession process, but we have studied it in more details in Vuković-Stamatović (2021)).

Excerpt 18 once again underscores the uncertainty of joining the EU, i.e. the long-lasting nature of that process. The *match*, in contrast to *game/little games*, however, refers to more mature and serious players, as

well as to the chance that a Balkan player achieves a good result in an organised sports match (sport implies fair play). Nonetheless, even if the Balkan players play well, they cannot win the game that has no end – thus, the headline in 18 suggests hopelessness and frustration, which is an evaluative content that we often find in the metaphorical expressions of the EU-discourse in the countries of the Western Balkans.

The metaphor of *war*, i.e. struggle, is also common in political discourse. In principle, all the metaphors we have presented so far, including this one, can be said to be conventional for political and the EU discourse. The *war* metaphor is rather similar to the previous metaphor and the EU and the Western Balkans are presented as warring parties. The Balkan countries are in a position to fight for the status of Europeans, i.e. the two sides are unequal once again. There were 18 realisations of this metaphor in the corpus. Here are some excerpts containing them:

19. *Accessible negotiations are a very difficult **fight**, which does not depend only on our team.* (Vijesti, 20/12/2018) [Pristupni pregovori su vrlo teška **borba**, koja ne zavisi samo od našeg tima.]
20. *At the same time, the EU Commissioner for the Enlargement Johannes Han made it clear last Sunday, in both Belgrade and in Podgorica, that the accession does not fall from the skies, but that one should **fight** for it, the daily Kurir wrote.* (DW, 12/02/2018) [Istovremeno je komesar EU za proširanje Johannes Han prošle nedelje i u Beogradu i u Podgorici jasno stavio do znanja da pristup ne pada s neba, već da se za njega valja **izboriti**, piše dnevnik Kurir.]
21. *France and several other EU members even wanted to completely ignore the communication of the EC on enlargement in the conclusions of the June EC meeting, what would have been a harsh **blow** to the whole process.* (Vijesti, 11/06/2018) [Francuska i još par članica EU su želeli čak u potpunosti da ignorišu u zaključcima junskog Evropskog saveta komunikaciju EK o proširenju, što bi bio **veliki udarac** za čitav proces.]

The accession is seen as a *difficult fight* (19), which may receive *harsh blows* (21), and as an outcome for which the Western Balkans must *fight* (20). As we can see, the metaphorical expressions are present in the nominalised and impersonal constructions, which background the opponent against whom the Western Balkans *should fight*, as the EU commissioner suggests, i.e. usually this opponent is not explicitly identified. In 20, there is another metaphor – the metaphor that suggests that the accession is a gift, which is another message of the EU commissioner. Although the commissioner uses a negative sentence, the presupposition remains the

same and it implies that the Western Balkans assume that the accession will happen on its own, as a gift, without its more active participation.

There are a number of correspondences in how *war* and *game* metaphors are used in the corpus, which is not unusual, given that the parallel use of the *GAME* and the *WAR* domains is common in language (game is often conceptualised as war). The focus, again, is on the difficulties of the process and the problems that characterise it, as well as on the asymmetry between the two sides. One side inflicts blows and makes the fight difficult, while the other takes the blows and can reach the goal only through fighting. In fact, it is not always clear who the enemy is – is it an invisible enemy – the EU, is it perhaps a higher power, or are the Balkans fighting themselves? Such an undefined struggle can be manipulatively used in political discourse.

However, regardless of how unequal a fighter the Balkans may be, the very notion of fight implies a more active role than the one they play when presented as passengers whose vehicle is driven by someone else and/or whose journey is controlled by obstacles, or as people waiting at the door which someone else should open. The same goes for the *game* metaphor. However, the question is of whether the Western Balkans want to play a more active role at all – the EU, through the metaphor of accession as a gift from the skies, suggests that the Balkan countries expect the accession to come without their active contribution.

The conceptual metaphor *ACCESSION IS SCHOOLING* has already been studied Silaški & Đurović (2014), as presented earlier in our review of previous research. This metaphor is less conventional than the previous ones. The mappings are as follows: the EU is presented as a teacher, while the Balkans are a student, typically a bad student who receives criticism and bad grades from the teacher. The schooling corresponds to the accession process, while passing the exams corresponds to making some progress in the accession process. And, vice versa, bad grades reflect stagnation or a step back in the process. Once again, the contextual emphasis is on reducing the dynamics of the process. This metaphor was instantiated 12 times (through the metaphorical expressions which translate to: *student*, *entrance exam*, *class*, *homework assignment*, *graduation thesis*). Let us consider several excerpts:

22. *We will get into the next (school) grade, but as weaker students* (Radio Slobodna Evropa, 27/05/2018) [Preći ćemo u sledeći **razred**, ali kao slabiji đaci]
23. *First, it is necessary to do all homework at home, primarily this applies to those candidates which have progressed the furthest in the process, and these are Montenegro and Serbia, and only then, when all criteria are met, it is possible to talk about a more precise, more concrete accession date.* (Radio Slobodna Evropa, 26/05/2018)

[*Najpre je potrebno završiti sve domaće zadatke kod kuće, pre svega se to odnosi na one kandidate koji su otišli najdalje u procesu, a to su Crna Gora i Srbija, a tek potom, kada budu ispunjeni svi kriterijumi, moguće je baviti se preciznijim, konkretnijim, datumom pristupanja.*]

24. *The offer, which should be of the type which “cannot be refused”, is that Montenegro and Serbia (exactly in this order), could become full members in 2025, on the condition that they pass all entrance exams.* (Dan, 11/02/2018) [Ponuda, koja bi trebalo da bude od one vrste „koja se ne odbija“ glasi da bi Crna Gora i Srbija (navedene su baš ovim redom), punopravne članice mogle da postanu 2025, pod uslovom da polože sve **prijemne ispite**.]

The Western Balkans are presented as *weak students* who barely manage to reach the next *grade* (it is unclear which grade they are in and how many grades there are), who have to complete *homework* and pass the *entrance exam*, which are the conditions imposed by the one who controls the learning process, i.e. the accession process. A more certain perspective is offered in excerpt 24 – however, we should add that the EU quickly denied that such an offer ever existed and confirmed that the procedure was still without deadlines (and remains so to this day).

In this metaphor, the emphasis is not on the process of learning as a positive activity through which the Balkan countries could make progress, but only on the process of the examination, i.e. on the testing of the students. Thus, the most unpleasant aspect of the entire schooling process is foregrounded. It is also suggested that the process of acquiring knowledge should be done by the Western Balkans themselves – they should complete their homework, at home, as suggested, prepare for the entrance exam, do a graduation thesis (which implies fairly independent work), etc. As in the metaphor in which it was assumed that the Western Balkans expected membership as a gift from heaven, the EU sends the message that it expects progress from the Balkans, but progress that should be achieved independently.

The metaphor *ACCESSION IS A STORY/FAIRYTALE* had 8 realisations in the corpus (its instantiations translate to: *story*, *talk*, *fairy tale*, *happy end*). The accession is here characterised as a sad story or an atypical fairy tale, since it has a sad ending:

25. *A sad Balkan story in which the actors are Berlin, Sofia, Prague and the Hungarian commissioner* (Radio Slobodna Evropa, 18/01/2018) [Tužna balkanska **priča** u kojoj glume Berlin, Sofija, Prag i mađarski komesar]

26. Translated into **fairytale** terms, that would look like this: “Once upon a time, there was a bridegroom who was cursed to wait for years for an answer from a girl to whom he had proposed. And so, for years he had to stand under her magnificent balcony. And he was not allowed to seek new love or to look at another princess. And so, he grew old while waiting...” For 18 years now, Serbia has been standing still before the EU gate, waiting. We don’t know if the story will have a **happy end**, but many who were young and enthusiastic in the year 2000, no longer believe in **fairytale**s. Fortunately, the bride is not so young, healthy and attractive any more. (Standard, 24/05/2018) [U prevodu na rečnik **bajki**, to bi izgledalo ovako: „Bio jednom jedan mladoženja, koji je osuđen na prokletstvo da godinama čeka na odgovor devojke koju je zaprosio. I godinama tako morao je da stoji ispod njenog velelepnog balkona. I nije smeo da potraži novu ljubav niti da se okrene za drugom princezom. I tako je ostaro u čekanju...” Srbija već 18 godina tapka pred kapijom EU čekajući. Ne znamo da li će sve ovo imati **srećan kraj**, ali mnogi koji su bili mladi i orni te 2000. godine, već odavno ne veruju u **bajke**. Na sreću, ni mlada udavača više nije tako mlada, jedra i atraktivna.]

The excerpt 26 is particularly interesting, as it contains an entire allegory – a membership candidate is compared to a bridegroom who has been waiting for years for an answer from the girl he had proposed to – the EU. The bridegroom eventually grows old and there is no happy ending. By presenting the accession as a story, i.e. a fairytale, it is suggested that the process is actually a simulacrum – a pretence.

The conceptual metaphor which conceptualises the accession as a *family* process has been studied earlier (e.g. Musolff, 2004). There were 7 instantiations of this metaphor, which translate to: *relative*, *family*, *extended family* and *possessive parent*. What marked all its instantiations is that the Western Balkans were presented as an inferior family member. The mappings were as follows: the EU is the parent or a wealthy relative, the Western Balkans are relatives, and the accession is the joining of the family members. However, the relative who is to join the family is not very welcome. Let us look at the following excerpts:

27. And, as the French diplomat explains, that will not mean the entry of the new “poor” **relatives**” who will expect money from of the EU budget while also sending new one migrants to the Union. (Novosti, 18/05/2018)

[I kako je objasnio francuski diplomata, da to neće značiti ulazak novih “siromašnih **rođaka**” koji očekuju novac iz budžeta EU, a šalju nove migrante u Uniju.]

28. Europe is wrong to constantly impose its choice as our own, treating the Balkan people as immature, which ultimately makes us unfree. Acting that way, like a possessive **parent**, it does not allow the Balkans to grow up, finding among its nations constant favourites and constant culprits, which is not good for either the Balkans or for Europe. (Politika, 18/05/2018) [Evropa greši kad nam stalno nameće svoj izbor kao naš, tretirajući balkanske narode kao nezrele, što nas u krajnjem čini neslobodnim. Upravo na takav način, poput **posesivnog roditelja**, ona ne dozvoljava Balkanu da odraste, nalazeći među njenim narodima i stalne miljenike i stalne krivce, što nije dobro ni za Balkan ni za Evropu.]

In excerpt 27, the relative is characterised as a *poor* one and as expecting money from their wealthier family. Although the utterance is negative (the diplomat says that the accession will *not* mean that), the potential arrival of new poor cousins is conceptualised anyway. At the same time, this excerpt also features a *container* metaphor (suggested through *entry*). Thus, the EU is seen as a home which gets a new household member – a poor relative. As suggested earlier, the EU assumes that the Western Balkans expect gifts – this time it is clearly stated that they expect money from the EU budget, while also suggesting that they will not earn it.

In excerpt 28, the Western Balkans are labelled as an *immature person*, a metaphor we mentioned earlier, while the EU is represented as a *possessive parent*, suggesting that the Balkans are a child. The implication is that a parent has the right to raise and control their immature child and that they know what is best for them. However, the *possessive parent* also points to something else – however immature the Balkans may be, it is still a child of the EU – and a typical parent loves their child. The possessive parent, however, despite loving their child, does not allow it to grow up, which is a situation that does not lead to progress.

The metaphor ACCESSION IS INVESTING has 8 realisations in the corpus, which translate to *investment* and *afford*:

29. A geostrategic **investment** of the European Union (DW, 7/02/2018)

[Geostrateška **investicija** Evropske unije]

30. All was additionally and vividly explained by the commentator of the “Deutsche Welle”, Christof Haselbach, who said that the EU cannot **afford** the Western Balkans but it must not give it up to the influence of Russia and China. (Vesti-online, 23/05/2018) [Sve nam je dodatno i plastično objasnio komentator „Dojče velea” Kristof Hazelbah, koji kaže da EU sebi ne može da **priušti** Zapadni Balkan, ali ne sme da ga prepusti uticaju Rusije i Kine.]

Through this metaphor, the process of the accession is seen as an economic transaction, where the EU spends money and buys something, which some see as an investment (29) and others as an overpriced trade (30). The Western Balkans equate to goods that can be bought and sold.

Other metaphors had fewer realisations in relation to the previous ones – we will dedicate some space to them as these are, typically, creative metaphors with strong evaluative content. We will present those which had at least two realisations and were found in different texts, which shows that these were not one-off, i.e. completely ephemeral, metaphors.

ACCESSION IS SALVATION is one of the metaphors which was used by Balkan politicians:

31. (Headline) Đukanović: *Politics of expansion is lifesaving for the EU too* (CDM, 11/12/2018)
[(Naslov) Đukanović: *Politika proširenja je spasonosna i za EU*]
32. (Headline) Dačić: *The only salvation for the EU is that the Western Balkans join it* (Politika, 9/07/2018)
[(Naslov) Dačić: *Jedini spas za EU je da u nju uđe zapadni Balkan*]

In excerpts 31 and 32, the metaphors were instantiated in the headlines, which demonstrates their importance and prominence. The mappings were as follows: the accession is salvation, the Western Balkans are a saviour, the EU is in trouble and it needs someone to save it. What is interesting in this case is that the accession is the salvation for the EU (in the context of the Brexit) and not for the Western Balkans. The roles are reversed for the first time and so the Balkans have a chance to save the EU – at least that is how some prominent regional politicians see the situation. Such messages are mostly meant for the local audience.

The next excerpt, features the metaphor ACCESSION IS UNDERGOING A CALVARY, among other metaphors:

33. (Headline) *Those who have entered, have entered: Brussels prescribes a new calvary for membership to Serbia ... This message says – you will undergo a calvary and, yet, this will not guarantee that you will enter the EU. So, this message by itself is very discouraging for all those who have hoped for some future status of an EU member. On the other hand, for the Balkan countries which still have not joined the EU, the Brussels' argument which says "if you do this and that, your European perspective will be stronger", is greatly weakened. What is actually said by this is – we want to keep you in a state of suspended animation and you should still continue to fulfil our conditions, but do not expect to enter the EU," Pavić explains.* (Sputnik, 30/08/2018)

[(Naslov) *Ko je ušao, ušao je: Brisel Srbiji propisuje novu golgotu do članstva ... Ova poruka govori – proći ćete kroz golgotu, a opet je pitanje da li ćete ući u EU. Dakle, ova poruka je sama po sebi vrlo obeshrabrujuća za sve koji su se nadali nekom budućem statusu člana Evropske unije. Sa druge strane, kada je reč o zemljama Balkana koje još nisu ušle u EU, ovim je u velikoj meri oslabljen onaj argument Brisela koji glasi „ako uradite to i to, vaša evropska perspektiva će biti pojačana“. Ovim je zapravo rečeno – mi želimo da vas držimo u stanju suspendovane animacije i da vi i dalje ispunjavate naše uslove, ali nemojte da očekujete da ćete ući u EU“, objašnjava Pavić.]*

Once more, the mappings point to the problems and difficulties in the process, the accession is seen as martyrdom, where the source of the metaphor is of a religious nature (the Passion of Jesus). In this context, the EU is implicitly the oppressor. Martyrdom, however, does not guarantee the accession. Additional metaphors which may be found in the excerpt above include that of the EU as a house (e.g. “those who have entered, have entered”, “enter the EU”) and that of the Western Balkans as a person in a state of suspended animation. The latter draws from the domain of health/disease. Other realisations relying on this domain present the accession as a half-alive or a dead animal:

34. *Mr. Sarazzin, someone once said that the EU enlargement is like a decapitated chicken – it still runs, but it is actually dead. Would you agree?* (DW, 31/05/2018)
[*Gospodine Zaracin, jednom je neko rekao da je proširenje EU kao obezglavljeno pile – još trči, ali je zapravo mrtvo. Slažete li se?*]

In 34, the mappings involved present the accession as a small animal, not particularly representative for its intelligence. The chicken is running headless, i.e. it is taking senseless and frenetic actions, and has no future. It is a morbid image – the accession is here also presented as a kind of martyrdom. The culprit for the beheading of the chicken is completely backgrounded and the candidate countries are not even mentioned.

The accession was also conceptualised as experimentation (ACCESSION IS EXPERIMENTING). The EU conducts the experiment, while the Western Balkans passively undergo it:

35. *It is very important that everyone, including us here and especially our partners, realise that neither Montenegro nor the Western Balkans are a terrain on which one can experiment, they are not a terrain on which you can prescribe what is mandatory to apply and what should be seen through the glasses*

suggested by someone from some other international address. (Radio Slobodna Europe, 14/07/2018) [Jako je važno da svi, i mi ovdje i posebno naši partneri shvate da ni Crna Gora ni Zapadni Balkan nije **teren na kojem se može eksperimentisati**, nije **teren** na kojem možete propisivati šta je obavezno primijeniti a šta treba gledati kroz naočari koje vam sugeriše neko sa druge međunarodne adrese.]

36. (Headline) *THE PRESIDENT OF THE AMM PARTICIPATED IN A MEETING IN RUSSIA* The Balkans are suitable for **experiments** (Dan, 12/10/2018) [(Naslov) *PREDSJEDNIK AMM-A UČESTVOVAO NA SKUPU U RUSIJI* Balkan pogodan za **eksperimente**]

In 35-36, the Western Balkans are actually presented as a field where an experiment is carried out, while its citizens are, implicitly, guinea pigs – usually, experiments are carried out on animals, as beings of lesser value than humans, whose lives may be risked for the sake of some common good, or, if the experiment involves people, they are necessarily volunteers. However, the excerpts do not suggest willingness on the part of the Western Balkans to participate in the experiments. The utterance in 35 is actually negative but, as in the previous cases which featured negative constructions, the conceptualisation that the Western Balkans are actually a field for experimentation is still present. The experimentation itself implies certain risks for the guinea pig, as well as the control of the experimenter. The outcome of the experiment is always uncertain – the reason why experiments are conducted is to see what happens.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

We will organise this part of the paper around the research questions asked in the introduction. We will also relate our conclusions to the results from the previous literature.

The first research question posed in this paper is which metaphors were the ones most frequently used to describe the process of the accession of Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, to the European Union, in the online the media of these three countries. The following metaphors turned out to be the most common ones: ACCESSION IS A JOURNEY, ACCESSION IS ENTERING A HOUSE, ACCESSION IS A PLAYING GAME, ACCESSION IS FIGHTING, ACCESSION IS JOINING THE FAMILY, and ACCESSION IS SCHOOLING. We can call these metaphors conventional for the discourse of the EU accession as they were all recorded as frequent in the earlier research of that type of discourse: all the mentioned metaphors were noted by Musolff (2004); the journey metaphors were studied by Horolets (2003), Drulák & Königová (2007), Šarić (2005), Škara (2009), Petraškaite-Pabst (2010), Kapranov (2016), and Barčot (2016); the metaphor of the EU as a house was investigated by Drulák &

Königová (2007), Petraškaite-Pabst (2010), Đurović (2013), Šarić (2005), and Škara (2009); further, Silaški and Đurović (2014) dealt with the metaphor of schooling; while the family metaphor was analysed by Petraškaite-Pabst (2010) and Kapranov (2016). In our study, the less frequent metaphors were: ACCESSION IS A STORY/FAIRYTALE, ACCESSION IS INVESTING, ACCESSION IS UNDERGOING A CALVARY, ACCESSION IS EXPERIMENTING, ACCESSION IS A HALF-ALIVE/DEAD ANIMAL and ACCESSION IS SALVATION. With the exception of the metaphor featuring a half-alive animal, which could be subsumed under the script LIFE-HEALTH-STRENGTH, studied by Musolff (2004), these latter metaphors have not, to our best knowledge, been investigated in the earlier research, and so one of the concrete contributions offered by this paper might be that. Our conclusion is the same as the one reached by Werkmann & Buljan (2013): in the discourse of the EU accession, some domains remained constant but different categories rose to prominence over time, while some new domains appeared as well.

The second research question was how the accession, which is essentially a dynamic process, is specifically conceptualised in the internet media of the three mentioned countries, in the view of the stagnation in the expansion of the European Union. Most of the results from the literature come from the research on the EU-accession discourse from the first decade of this century – our results differ somewhat from those and are closer to the results of the more recent studies. In our data, the context usually reduces the dynamics of the process: the accession, thus, may be presented as a journey but the emphasis is on its slowness, uncertainty, complexity, etc., with the countries of the Western Balkans encountering obstacles at every step of the way (the non-dynamic nature of the journey was also pointed out by Đurović and Silaški (2012), in the analysis of the traffic light metaphor, which had two realisations in our corpus). Similarly, the accession can be presented as entering a house, but door to the house is typically closed. The accession process may also be perceived as playing a game or fighting, but the game/fight turns out to be a never-ending show-down of unequal competitors. The Western Balkans are also seen as bad students, who barely progresses to the next grade. Furthermore, the accession takes on a half-life state, i.e. it is in a state of suspended animation, with little hope of returning to normal life. All these metaphorical representations point to the non-dynamic nature of the accession process.

The last research question refers to how the evaluative content of the metaphors from our corpus differs from the metaphors representing the accession of the former EU-membership candidates. The conclusions of our analysis are similar to those

of Kapranov (2016) – the recent EU-accession metaphors are organised around the discursive model of disappointment, while in the earlier discourse there was mostly a positive mood. The discourse in which the metaphors were realised in our corpus also suggests fatigue, a sense of injustice, and frustration.

The results, thus, show that some domains have remained constant, i.e. the same, compared to the previous period, but also that the prominent metaphorical models have changed somewhat. Namely, the current prominent models involve: a traveller who gets nowhere, a guest standing at the door, a game in which you cannot win, a fight in which you only get punched, a meeting with a family that rejects you, and a school where one does not make it, or barely makes it, to the next grade. The EU-accession process is making little progress or not moving at all, or is simply being simulated – the whole process might even be seen as a *simulacrum*. Nowhere is this simulacrum more noticeable than in the metaphor *ACCESSION IS A STORY/FAIRYTALE*, one of the more creative metaphors from the corpus, which has not been studied in the literature so far, to our best knowledge. Politicians from the region, as well as those from the EU, agree to this simulacrum, while the journalists themselves rarely try to deconstruct it critically.

The discursive context of the realisations of a significant number of metaphors from the corpus points, therefore, to a lack of dynamics in the accession process, while the evaluative content points to disappointment and fatigue. Either the EU or a

higher power is presented as the culprit, while the responsibility of the Western Balkans, i.e. their politicians, is backgrounded, which was to be expected since the media mainly reported the statements of the regional and local politicians. At the same time, any small progress actually made in the process is usually attributed individually and directly to certain politicians, i.e. to their political parties. Such discourse strategies of highlighting the good and downplaying the bad in “us” are typical for political discourse in general (van Dijk, 2001). What is not typical for every political discourse and what was observed in this study, as well as in earlier research (Petrović, 2009; Vuković-Stamatović, 2021), is the subordinate position of the Western Balkans – this is not only a consequence of the specific political situation in which the Western Balkans are the requesting party, but is also a consequence of a more historical view of the Balkans as less valuable compared to the West in general, a view that was indirectly expressed by many politicians and journalists from the region.

As we have seen, the accession is predominantly represented as difficult and uncertain, with little or without any possibility of resuscitation. Only one metaphor from the corpus was different from this – the metaphor *ACCESSION IS SALVATION*, which two Balkan politicians used to send a message to the EU on how to overcome the Brexit crisis; these two politicians have tried, consciously or unconsciously, to reverse the image and the role of the Western Balkans in the process of the European integrations. Will such a discourse become more prominent in the future, only time can tell.

»PRISTOP K EU JE KOT TEK NA TEKALNI STEZI V TELOVADNICI«:
 METAFORIČNO PREDSTAVLJANJE PROCESA VKLJUČEVANJA V EU V DIGITALNIH
 MEDIJIH V SRBIJI, ČRNI GORI TER BOSNI IN HERCEGOVINI

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POVZETEK

V prispevku predstavljamo konceptualne metafore s ciljno domeno *PRISTOP K EU*, primere katerih smo našli v korpusu 150 spletnih novičarskih člankov, objavljenih v Srbiji, Črni gori ter Bosni in Hercegovini leta 2018. Za analizo tega korpusa 104.806 besed smo uporabili tako kvantitativne kot kvalitativne metode, metaforičnost izrazov pa smo preverjali s postopkom za prepoznavanje metaforičnih besed MIPVU. Analizirali smo najpogostejše metafore znotraj njihovega sobesedila (odlomki iz korpusa) pa tudi širši (družbeni in politični) kontekst. Za najpogostejše so se izkazale konvencionalne metafore: *PRISTOP JE POTOVANJE*, *PRISTOP JE [KOT] VSTOP V HIŠO*, *PRISTOP JE IGRANJE IGRE*, *PRISTOP JE BOJ*, *PRISTOP JE PRIDRUŽEVANJE DRUŽINI* in *PRISTOP JE ŠOLANJE*. V korpusu pa je bilo najti tudi manj konvencionalne in ustvarjalnejše metafore: *PRISTOP JE ZGODBA/PRAVLJICA*, *PRISTOP JE KALVARIJA*, *PRISTOP JE EKSPERIMENTIRANJE*, *PRISTOP JE NAPOL ŽIVA/MRTVA ŽIVAL* in *PRISTOP JE ODREŠITEV*. Kritična analiza je pokazala prevlado metaforičnih modelov, ki izpostavljajo problematičnost in negotovost procesov vključevanja, kot tudi njihovo nedinamičnost. Diskurz, v katerem so se pojavljale metafore pristopa k Evropski uniji, kaže na utrujenost, občutek krivičnosti in frustracijo med zahodnobalkanskimi kandidatkami za članstvo v EU. V nasprotju z zgodnejšim diskurzom o pristopu k Evropski uniji, ton katerega je bil na splošno pozitiven, so preučevane metafore nastajale v povezavi z diskurzivnim modelom razočaranosti.

Ključne besede: konceptualna metafora, metaforični izrazi, proces vključevanja v EU, kritična analiza diskurza, medijski diskurz, zahodni Balkan

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