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**The positions of Austria, Czech Republic and Germany on the
Western Balkan EU accession**

Master Thesis

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Statutory Declaration

I hereby declare that this master thesis under the title “The positions of Austria, Czech Republic and Germany on the Western Balkan EU accession” I have elaborated by myself and cited all sources used.

In Olomouc on 5th of December 2022 Kateřina Loskotová

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Abstract

The master thesis deals with the frames that are linked to the stance of Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic towards the Western Balkan enlargement of the EU. Through these found frames, characteristics of the international discourse could be analysed. It finds theoretical basics in the social constructivism theory, as well as sociological institutionalism, that describe formation of the reality through subjective factors and impact of the institutions on agents and vice versa. Special focus is given to the identification of the way of the formation of national identity and related interests of the state. It is summarized that all of the selected countries manifest the support of the accession of Western Balkan countries to the EU in different ways, with similarities, that can be unified under common contextual frameworks.

Key words

Frames, Enlargement of the EU, Western Balkans, Social Constructivism, Sociological Institutionalism

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Introduction

The European Union is often ranked among the most successful peace projects of mankind. Its genesis, justified by the advantages of the single market, and its subsequent evolution into a sui generis institution balancing the diverse interests and identities of nation states and the federative tendencies of integration was even awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012. This prize is on display in the entrance of the Council of the European Union's headquarters, the Justus Lipsius building, the European institution that represents the interests of the Member States in the institutional triangle. On a daily basis, this award is thus exposed to the gaze of Member States' representatives who head to the conference rooms to defend the unique interests of their Member State. And it is this diversity, which is reflected in the EU's very motto¹, that is Europe's most ideologically significant force. However, in practice, the view of diversity can often differ. This is most clearly the case with the issue of EU enlargement.

Currently, six candidate countries are officially standing at the "EU gates", four of which are located in the region of South-Eastern Europe, more commonly referred to in EU communication as the Western Balkans. These are Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and Northern Macedonia. The two remaining states in the region, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, are awaiting candidate status, the first named could be granted it by the end of this year², Kosovo has set itself the target of submitting an application by the same date³. However, the candidate countries of the Western Balkans also have a long way to go in terms of bringing their legal systems closer to European standards. Even those countries that were granted candidate status more than 10 years ago (Montenegro and Serbia) have shown only slow progress in implementing reforms and closing individual negotiation chapters. The long negotiation period and the sense of stagnation are reducing the willingness of both candidate countries to implement reforms and of Member States to support the accession of new states, contributing to the louder voices of critics of the enlargement process. A phenomenon called 'enlargement fatigue' is emerging, the EU's own absorption capacity is being questioned and the whole

¹ United in diversity. Cf. EU motto. Symbols. Principles, Member States, history. *European-union.europa.eu* [online]. [viewed 30 September 2022] Available from: https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/symbols/eu-motto_cs.

² BRZOZOWSKI, Alexandra. Bosnian EU candidate status possible in December if conditions met, Varhelyi says. *Euractiv* [online] 29 November 2022. [viewed 30 November 2022] Available from: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/bosnian-eu-candidate-status-possible-in-december-if-conditions-met-varhelyi-says/>

³ Kosovo Pledges To File EU Application By End Of Year. *Rferl.org* [online] 10 July 2022. [viewed 30 September 2022]. Available from: <https://www.rferl.org/a/germany-scholz-priority-western-balkans-joining-eu/31892443.html#:~:text=Kosovar%20Prime%20Minister%20Albin%20Kurti%20says%20his%20country%20will%20formally,Serbia%2C%20also%20an%20EU%20aspirant.>

enlargement process and its achievements are being strongly questioned. However, despite the critical voices, the process continues to move forward and countries continue to show interest in membership. One of the many reasons for this is the majority political support shown for membership at the level of nation states. For the Western Balkan states, which until the start of the war in Ukraine were the scene of the last conflict on European soil, the prospect of accession is a significant opportunity to renew and modernise relations in the region. The Republic of Northern Macedonia, for example, knows this, having already had to resolve two international disputes with EU members before its EU application could be unanimously approved by the European Council. Specifically, the name dispute with Greece and the historical-linguistic dispute with Bulgaria.⁴ There is also an opportunity for the normalisation of relations in the region in the case of Kosovo, but progress in this area, according to the most recent developments, appears to be a challenging long-term task for all parties involved, to some extent compounded by the effects of the war in Ukraine.⁵

The presented thesis deals with the speeches with international overlap of the selected states in relation to the accession of the Western Balkan countries to the EU and tries to analyse the frames in official communication through which the issue of the membership of the Western Balkan countries is communicated by the states by means of the first defined research question. Furthermore, the thesis also seeks to answer the question of what potential changes are occurring in these interpretive frameworks in the selected time period. The last research question deals with the form of discussion at the international level. The author expects that all the selected countries have a positive attitude towards the EU membership of the Western Balkan countries, but the individual discourses and interpretive frameworks used will differ. From the perspective of social constructivism theory and the way state interests and identities are born, it is expected to confirm the hypothesis that the named characteristics of states emerge through a combination of endogenous and exogenous approaches, i.e. both formulations from within and from without.

Three EU Member States - the Czech Republic, Austria and Germany - were chosen for the purpose of this thesis for several reasons. The first is the different historical experiences,

⁴ TAYLOR, Alice. Bulgaria's veto hurts future of North Macedonia - diaspora leader. *Euractiv.com* [online]. 9 February 2022. [viewed 30 September 2022]. Available from: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/interview/bulgarias-veto-hurts-future-of-north-macedonia-diaspora-leader/>.

⁵ TAYLOR, Alice. Kosovo snubs EU, levies criticism following Serbia license plate deal. *Euractiv.com* [online]. 26 June 2022. [viewed 30 September 2022]. Available from: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/kosovo-snubs-eu-levies-criticism-following-serbia-license-plate-deal/>.

both in terms of the relationship with the Western Balkan countries and in terms of gaining EU membership in different accession waves, which could also play a role in the level of support and communicated tendencies.⁶ Furthermore, these countries were chosen based on similar geographical location in the imaginary 'centre' of Europe to eliminate the diversity of the analysed frameworks based on proximity/distance to the Western Balkan countries, as this aspect was not deliberately chosen as the subject of the research. The accuracy of the processed data was ensured by the author's knowledge of the German language, which proved to be crucial in the analysis. Speeches at international venues are often delivered in the national language with the help of interpreters. The use of modern technologies such as online translators could have distorted or eliminated the searched and analysed frames as a category composed of linguistic devices and nuances.

The theoretical foundation of the thesis is based on the book *Teorie mezinárodních vztahů* by Petr Drulák or the monograph by Oldřich Krpec *Národní zájmy v moderní demokracii – Česká republika*. These are works representing a variety of theoretical approaches used in political science. The degree of focus on the specific approaches used in these works is high, but not exhaustive, and scholarly articles, especially *Constructivism: what it is (not) and how it matters* by Friedrich Kratochwil and Hannes Peltonen or *The Evolution of Social Constructivism in Political Science: Past to Present* by Hoyoon Jung, which can deal with the theories described in more depth, have served as a useful complement to these basic characteristics.

Framing theory, including the nature, effects, and importance of framing in the media production process, is a dynamically used concept in studies ranging from psychology and sociology, to gender studies and environmentalism, to political science and economics. The main sources for this thesis are a wide range of English-language scholarly texts. Key works include Regina G. Lawrence's *Researching Political News Framing: Established Grounds and New Horizons* and Claes H. de Vreese's *Framing the Economy: Effects of Journalistic News Frames*. Both articles are part of the proceedings edited by Paul D'Angelo and Jim A. Kuypers *Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives*. Although the issue is that of frames presented in the media, the named studies, according to the author of the submitted thesis, also offer themselves as suitable for foreign policy discourse, which

⁶ Germany is a founding member of the EU, Austria joined in 1995 and the Czech Republic was part of the largest accession wave to date in 2004. Compare to: From 6 to 27 members. Enlargement. Home. *Neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu* [online]. [viewed 30 September 2022] Available from: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/6-27-members_en.

unfortunately is not sufficiently covered academically. Alex Mintz and Steven B. Redd's article *Framing Effects in International Relations* serves as an exception, presenting different types and modes of foreign policy framing and demonstrating examples of these types of frames in the context of American foreign policy. In addition to scholarly articles and monographs, in several cases, relevant Internet resources were also used web articles or links to official websites of state or European institutions.

The first chapter introduces the theoretical basis. The thesis is based on a social constructivist approach in which states' attitudes and interests are shaped by debate, do not exist in themselves, are not "set in stone" or part of constitutions. They are the pure product of the social environment. This exchange of views shaping the identity and interests of the state is further elaborated by sociological institutionalism, which speaks of the emergence of templates and frameworks that in turn influence the behaviour of individuals and ultimately, through individuals, entire institutions. The last part of the first chapter is followed by the introduction of framing theory, which is crucial for understanding and uncovering interpretive frames that provide information with a certain subtext based on consciously chosen means, which is subsequently accepted by the recipient of the information often subliminally and has the ability to influence the opinion of the individual, and consequently the overall picture of the issue. The objectives of the thesis, research questions and hypotheses, as well as the selection of cases and the limits of the research are set out there. The third chapter deals with the analysis of the interpretive frameworks themselves, which are categorised according to their nature into three general frameworks, which are accession process, security and values. Each chapter has its partial summary, the outcomes of the thesis are presented in the conclusion, at the very end.

1. Theoretical part

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the theory of sociological institutionalism, which attributes to political actors the ability to shape social structure through their communicative discourse. Since its premises are constructivist in nature, the author finds it appropriate to introduce the theoretical foundations of sociological constructivism first. For the purposes of this thesis, the imaginary output of both theories is framing theory, on the basis of which the methodological part of this thesis is built.

1.1. Social constructivism

Social constructivism penetrated the study of international relations in the late 1980s. It is not a theory as such, it is a certain social concept on which constructivist theories of international relations are based.⁷ On the basis of the so-called "Third Great Debate", there was a "constructivist turn" by reflexive authors who found that there were many failures of traditional rationalist paradigms, e.g. on the fact that reality is completely exempt from the invention of the individual, whose knowledge is merely a reflection from an unshakable reality.⁸ Constructivists assign great weight to human cognition in the shaping of reality and thus can occupy a place in the middle between rationalists on one side of the spectrum and representatives of interpretive approaches such as relativists on the other.⁹ According to Adler, "*the main goal of constructivism [...] is to provide a theoretical and empirical explanation of social institutions and social change, through the combined action of agents and social structures.*" In the relationship between institutions and agents, the greatest emphasis is on their joint interaction. Actor and institution are placed on the same level in a hierarchy of reciprocity, and the meaning of material structures is shaped by the social context through which it is interpreted.¹⁰

The basic thesis of conventional constructivism in international relations is that the functioning of a society (state) in the international system can never be examined objectively, as it is a set of subjective interactions between actors in a specifically delineated ideological

⁷ KRATOCHWIL, Friedrich and Hannes PELTONEN. *Constructivism: what it is (not) and how it matters. Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 81.

⁸ JUNG, Hoyoon. *The Evolution of Social Constructivism in Political Science: Past to Present*. SAGE Open, 2019, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 2.

⁹ ADLER, Emanuel. *Seizing the Middle Ground*. European Journal of International Relations, 1997, p. 322.

¹⁰ JUPILLE, Joseph, James A. CAPORASO, and Jeffrey T. CHECKEL, 2003. *Integrating Institutions*. Comparative Political Studies. 36(1-2), p. 15.

structure. With this definition, conventional constructivism objects to the positivist current, i.e. theories based on attempts at empirical investigations of international relations. Like any other current of thought, constructivism branches out into different variants over time in an attempt to encompass and explain as many phenomena as possible.¹¹

First of all, there is a categorization into critical and conventional constructivism according to Hopf. The former focuses on the unique and distinctive elements of world politics, while the latter approach emphasizes generalizable phenomena. Another phenomenon that significantly distinguishes conventional constructivism from other varieties of constructivism and especially from realism is the origin of interest and preferences. Conventional constructivism excludes the transfer of preferences to society from outside (i.e. exogenously) and states the opposite view, i.e. that interests originate outside the state and then spread to international structures.¹²

The question arises, however, where does the identity of the state and its associated preferences and behaviour originate? Representatives of social constructivism offer multiple perspectives on this issue, primarily addressing the question of whether these basic attributes of the state emerge in the domestic arena (Katzenstein) or through the operation of the international order (Wendt). Katzenstein's conception presents the identity of the state as an aggregate of national ideology and statehood that differs state from state and thus in turn influences state policy. On the other hand, according to Wendt, national identity is "*a property of international actors that produces motivational and behavioral dispositions.*"¹³

The critique of social constructivism is based on the nature and practice of the theory itself. The association of other disciplines to the study of international relations, such as psychology and sociology, is to some extent necessary and offers theories new ways of getting even closer to reality; on the other hand, they carry with them the danger of focusing too much on issues and debates that are, in the end, not entirely relevant to the overall study of international relations.¹⁴ Jung argues that social constructivism is subject to a 'selection bias', as it focuses to a large extent only on norms that 'flatter' human nature, hence international structures, such as human rights, environmental protection, women's rights, etc. Constructivist studies are only little concerned with, for example, the spread of xenophobia, racism,

¹¹ ADLER, Emanuel. *Seizing the Middle Ground*. European Journal of International Relations, 1997, p. 325.

¹² JUNG, Hoyoon. *The Evolution of Social Constructivism in Political Science: Past to Present*. SAGE Open, 2019, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 2.

¹³ Via ZEHFUSS, M. Constructivism and Identity: A Dangerous Liaison. European Journal of International Relations, 2001, 7(3), p. 318.

¹⁴ DRULÁK, Petr. *Teorie mezinárodních vztahů*. Prague: 2009, p. 132.

nationalism, etc.¹⁵ As far as critiques of social constructivist principles are concerned, there are doubts about the ability of actors to infer individual interests from identity, and also whether the whole process of social interaction is more complex than a 'tennis match' of national identities with national interest instead of a ball.¹⁶ Some authors have also argued that constructivism's principles have failed to convincingly overcome the tenets of realism, the first theoretical approach to claim the national interest and its constitution. By their inclination towards normativity, some authors (e.g. Wendt) 'undermine' constructivism, and the blurring of the dividing line between facts and values in constructivist research on the legitimacy of the national interest casts this critical theory in a bad light.¹⁷ Nevertheless, social constructivism is one of the most popular and fastest evolving theories of international relations in professional circles today.¹⁸

1.2. Sociological institutionalism

Like constructivism, the new institutionalism emerged during the 1970s as a reaction to the emergence of behaviourism and its shift from psychology through sociology into other social sciences. It is based on the premise that institutions, defined as any structures/groups/concepts existing in society, shape their own outcomes and are not merely reflections of tendencies and movements in society. In fact, society shapes the institution itself to some extent through the insertion of the "partisanship, biases" of individuals.¹⁹ At the same time, the institution shapes the environment for the individual's actions by creating norms and values that guide the individual.

The new institutionalism is divided into three main currents. According to Hall and Taylor, the distinction between the different institutionalisms can be defined by answering two questions: How to interpret the relationship between institutions and individual behaviour, and how to explain the process by which institutions emerge or change?²⁰

¹⁵ JUNG, Hoyoon. *The Evolution of Social Constructivism in Political Science: Past to Present*. SAGE Open, 2019, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 8.

¹⁶ KRPEC, Oldřich. *Národní zájmy v moderní demokracii – Česká republika*. Brno: 2009, p. 51.

¹⁷ KRATOCHVÍL, Petr. *Původ a smysl národního zájmu.: Analýza legitimacy jednoho politického konceptu*. Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury (CDK), 2010, p. 192.

¹⁸ JUNG, Hoyoon. *The Evolution of Social Constructivism in Political Science: Past to Present*. SAGE Open, 2019, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 8.

¹⁹ HALL, Peter A. and Rosemary C. R. TAYLOR. *Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms*. *Political Studies*. 44(5), 1996, p. 941.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 942.

The first stream is historical institutionalism, which emerged by expanding the definition of institutions in older institutionalist theory and providing a deeper justification for the importance of their role. Of all the sub-categories of institutionalism, it is the historical one that ascribes the greatest role and importance to institutions, and above all, it is attributed the property of influencing to some extent the inputs (not only the outputs), i.e., it influences its own form through influencing the individual. Thus, there is a great deal of imbalance between the two actors in the system, where the normative power of institutions is emphasized. Representatives of historical institutionalism point not only to the imbalance between these two actors, but also to the unequal distribution of relevance and power even among groups of individuals.²¹ In terms of answering the question of how institutions influence behaviour, according to Taylor and Hall, historical institutionalists address this question the least of all the subcategories of new institutionalism and do not offer a specific causal chain between the two.²² In relation to the emergence and development of institutions over time, they assume that institutions have always existed and thus society can choose which template to use in the creation of a new institution. Most often, then, their analyses involve evaluating the behaviour of historical actors through induction. Although they can evaluate many cases in this way, the main drawback is the inability to generalize these insights within systematic theoretical approaches.²³

Another strand of the new institutionalism, which developed in the same time period as, but quite independently of, the historical institutionalism, is rational institutionalism, sometimes called rational choice institutionalism. As the second name suggests, this is a direction in which the emphasis is on the rules of bargaining and the behaviour of individuals in a non-cooperative game, i.e. where actors "*make decisions under the condition that the final outcome will be influenced by other actors.*"²⁴ The behaviour of these individuals is motivated by the achievement of personal gain. Among the main contributions of this direction is the emphasis on strategic cooperation that is expended by actors to enforce their preferences, which the actors possess in the long run. Institutions are created to establish the values and norms that the institution represents. The most common phenomenon that representatives of this approach are

²¹ ASPINWALL, Mark D. and Gerald SCHNEIDER. Same menu, separate tables: The institutionalist turn in political science and the study of European integration. *European Journal of Political Research*. 2000, 38(1), pp. 5-9.

²² HALL, Peter A. and Rosemary C. R. TAYLOR. Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms. *Political Studies*. 44(5), 1996, p. 953.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 958.

²⁴ ASPINWALL, Mark D. and Gerald SCHNEIDER. Same menu, separate tables: The institutionalist turn in political science and the study of European integration. *European Journal of Political Research*. 2000, 38(1), p. 11.

concerned with, is the minimization of the costs incurred to achieve an outcome, so to some extent one can speak of an attempt to monitor the emergence of compromise in the course of institutional processes, whether it is the functioning of specific state institutions (such as the US Congress, through the study of which this subcategory of institutionalism originated) or coalitions of states (such as the EU).²⁵ In Taylor and Hall's assessment, rational institutionalism offers a good basis for explaining the relationship between institutions and behaviour, but it adheres to perhaps over-simplified ideas about the nature of human motivation and is thus better able to describe behaviour that is primarily instrumental/procedural in nature. In the case of the second question - i.e. where do institutions come from and how they change this direction fails to explain the origins of institutions. What it loses in this aspect, however, it makes up for in explaining change and the ability of institutions to adapt, which allows them to remain relevant and continue to exist, as they often focus their analyses on a functionalist approach, i.e. what function the institutions perform in a given time period.²⁶

The third and most important current in terms of the needs of the presented work is sociological institutionalism. Culture plays a key role in this theoretical approach, which is elevated to the role of an institution that models the scenarios and patterns of individual behaviour. Even behaviour that may appear to be rational is socially constituted. Institutions, from the perspective of sociological institutionalism, are created in order to achieve a widely positively valued outcome across society. Thus, there may be a paradoxical emergence of an institution not for function but for the purpose of social appropriateness. The development of institutions occurs through the emergence of cognitive maps created within social debates. This process can also be observed between nation states. The actions of the more 'developed' ones are considered to be emulated and, in the context of international cooperation, these models are exported across borders.²⁷ According to Taylor and Hall, sociological institutionalists place great emphasis on personal motivations of the individual, allowing individual agendas to enter into even highly instrumental/procedural decisions. In tracing the emergence and development of institutions, representatives of this strand make the same assumption as those of historical institutionalism, namely that institutions have existed since ancient times and thus new institutions adopt templates that are not only evaluated for efficiency but also for social

²⁵ HALL, Peter A. and Rosemary C. R. TAYLOR. Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms. *Political Studies*. 44(5), 1996, pp. 946-948.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 955.

²⁷ ASPINWALL, Mark D. and Gerald SCHNEIDER. Same menu, separate tables: The institutionalist turn in political science and the study of European integration. *European Journal of Political Research*. 2000, 38(1), pp. 15-17.

valuation in the context of maintaining social legitimacy. However, there are also templates and frameworks that are not only created by interpretation but also by the collision of different motivations, so this direction could adapt some approaches from rational choice institutionalism and also focus on frameworks created by disagreements within the institution.²⁸

Sociological institutionalism and social constructivism are different theoretical approaches, but as outlined in the introduction to this chapter, sociological institutionalism is to some extent influenced by social constructivism. They meet in the view that actors are not given as immutable agents but are shaped and influenced by institutional forms within discourse. The influence of constructivism is reflected in the function of institutions to provide "*the very conditions through which meaning is assigned in social life. This implies that institutions do not only influence individuals' strategic calculations, as institutional rational choice theorists claim, but also their most basic preferences and identity itself. The self-concept and identity of social actors are constituted from the institutional forms, representations and signs provided by social life.*"²⁹ These 'forms' can be seen as certain discursive frameworks, which are discussed in the following chapter.

1.3.Framing theory

If the goal of entering public discourse is not just a strict description of events or facts, the frames and their ubiquitous nature cannot be ignored, for the reason that through them people, and subsequently society, can be influenced. A summary of the above can be found in E. Goffman's definition of frames, i.e. 'interpretive schemas', as "*tools that enable events or information to be located, perceived, identified and labelled*".³⁰ A framework emphasises the information to which it is attached and influences the recipient's ability to view the information in a different light than it might appear when viewed on its own. Frames add colour to the information, which then, when interpreted, works with the recipient's understanding of the social or cultural context and adds new meaning to the information.

To some extent, we could consider the framework as part of the sociologist Max Weber's notion of *Verstehen* (German for understanding). The world cannot be seen without reference

²⁸ HALL, Peter A. and Rosemary C. R. TAYLOR. Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms. *Political Studies*. 44(5), 1996, pp. 956-958.

²⁹ ASPINWALL, Mark D. and Gerald SCHNEIDER. Same menu, separate tables: The institutionalist turn in political science and the study of European integration. *European Journal of Political Research*. 2000, 38(1), p. 18.

³⁰ GOFFMAN, Erwin. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. New York: Harper 1974, p. 21.

to language, while at the same time the interpretation of outcomes is not separated from the world in which they are produced. Everything that is investigated is interpreted based on an interpretation of social reality as such, which is shared between individuals. Norms and values exist within institutions and the processes tied to them.³¹

Communication frameworks offer a way to understand the motivations of actors in public discourse. However, interpretive schemas are also a "double-edged" weapon. If used correctly, the framework is a way to persuade society or a part of it in one's favour. This manipulative potential has been the subject of a large number of scholarly works dealing primarily with the development and presentation of frames in the media space, most often in the form of research on the image of various social issues, e.g. over a period of time containing a major change in circumstances and the associated change in media presentation. However, the topics investigated also include the issue of the media image of migration³², or the analysis of frames associated with the activities of social movements ranging from environmental³³ to civic and political ones.³⁴ The success of this method is evidenced by its extension into many areas of social science, from sociology to economics. Framing thus establishes a certain predictable outcome, which is called the "framing effect"³⁵

But how to identify the framework and how to properly assess how it should operate? As Van Gorp points out, a framework consists of a whole package of information to work with. In addition to the information itself, this package also contains the linguistic means to interpret the framework. Thus, it is not only the narrative but also the rhetorical function of the framework. At the linguistic level, the framing resources are crucial. There are a large number of these devices, Van Gorp lists everything from metaphors to the introduction of contrasts, to the actual layout of the text and the visual aspect of the message.³⁶ Finding a framing device in a text, however, does not necessarily lead to finding the frame itself. Frames often distract from other aspects of the problem, using only the context that is appropriate for the depiction of the

³¹ ADLER, Emanuel. *Seizing the Middle Ground*. European Journal of International Relations, 1997, pp. 326-327.

³² TABOSA, Clarissa, 2020. Constructing Foreign Policy vis-à-vis the Migration Crisis. Czech Journal of International Relations. 55(2), 5-23. ISSN 2570-9429. Available from: doi:10.32422/mv.1687.

³³ GIUGNI, Marco and Maria T. GRASSO, 2015. Environmental Movements in Advanced Industrial Democracies: Heterogeneity, Transformation, and Institutionalization. Annual Review of Environment and Resources. 40(1), 337-361. ISSN 1543-5938. Available from: doi:10.1146/annurev-environ-102014-021327.

³⁴ TUNGUL, Lucie, 2021. Framing as a Social Movement's Transnational Strategy: the Gülen Movement's EU-Turkey Discourses in the Post-2016 Online Media. International Relations. 56(4), 41-71. ISSN 2570-9429. Available from: doi:10.32422/mv-cjir.1769.

³⁵ ELLIOTT, Catherine S, Donald M HAYWARD and Sebastian CANON, 1998. institutional framing: some experimental evidence. 35(4), 456.

³⁶ VAN GORP, Baldwin. Strategies to Take Subjectivity Out of Framing Analysis. In: *Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives*. New York: Routledge, 2009, pp. 87-90.

problem at the time. Failure to provide a counter-narrative or to give it a negative colour is a common feature of the use of frames in media or political settings.³⁷

Lawrence's research on the framing of political news suggests that when reporting on foreign affairs related to national security, such as conflicts or wars, journalists give more space to politicians and government officials and do not interfere by framing themselves. This may stem from the belief that presenting information that is not confirmed by top foreign policy officials and closely related to the security situation is considered unprofessional. However, one of the key characteristics that the media should exhibit in relation to power centres is independence, and therefore a willingness to offer a variation of frameworks through which issues are communicated. A quality independent modern media, operating in a democratic society, should offer counterarguments and a wide range of views and frames. However, in the realm of foreign policy, Lawrence identifies what is called *indexing*. This is a phenomenon of information production in which only the positions and arguments presented in official debates by political representatives at the highest level, e.g. in government and legislative debates, are presented. This approach therefore only takes into account the interests of those currently in power, be it the ruling elite or its most vocal opposition, which can lead to a lack of presentation of views. In a society with functioning democratic institutions in which quality and fair debate takes place, indexing would seem to be an ideal expression of the media's "*democratic language*". In a world of misinformation and polarisation, however, the former is more likely to happen.

As an example of the imperfection of this relationship between the media and ruling elites in the case of reporting on foreign policy issues, Lawrence cites the beginning of the Iraq war, where frames that did not ideologically match the frames presented by the ruling discourse were harshly condemned, which in retrospect appears to be a strong paradox.³⁸

After the events of September 11, 2001, when the George W. Bush administration presented its intention to go to war and deliberately created frames that society could interpret as an appeal for unity in American patriotism. A traditional example is the label "*war on terror*", which, by using the general negative characteristic of terror, conveys a strong sense that this is a war against an evil that can reside anywhere. It is a clear value division on the axis

³⁷ ENTMAN, Robert M. Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 1993. 43(4), p. 54.

³⁸ LAWRENCE, Regina, G. Researching Political News Framing: Established Grounds and New Horizons. In: *Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives*. New York: Routledge, 2009, pp. 269-281.

of "us" and "them", good versus evil.³⁹ The situation is different when it comes to the relationship between the media and the ruling elites on the domestic front.⁴⁰

In general, framing is divided into three paradigmatic approaches. The first is the cognitive paradigm, otherwise also known as mental models theory, defined by B. Scheufele. This theory is used to explain the effect of framing from the recipient's perspective. The recipient already approaches the information containing the frame with his or her own mental model, a kind of point of view through which the frame is interpreted. After receiving the information, a new mental model is created as a result of the transforming and establishing function of the frame.⁴¹

The second of the framing paradigms is the critical paradigm. If constructivists emphasize collaboration between media and recipients, critical researchers emphasize the primacy of media over individuals. This perception of frames is based on the assumption that power relations, whether political or economic, are illustrated through frames. Compared to other paradigms, this acts as a significant narrowing of the function of frames, with non-negligible implications for groups whose representatives are not in positions of power. Thus, this approach may provide an advantage when examining the impact of frames on minority oppression or, as used in the source cited above, when analysing manifestations of patriarchy in the media and its reflection in frames.⁴²

The constructionist paradigm views journalists as part of a culture shared with their audience, they are not detached from the reality of the recipient of the information they produce, and it emphasizes above all the cooperation between the various agents of the model. According to Hardin and Whiteside, this approach thus allows for *"a less institutional semantic definition*

³⁹ MINTZ, Alex and Steven REDD. Framing Effects in International Relations. Synthese. s. 203.

⁴⁰ Probably the strongest departure from the frameworks of the original sources can be found in the coverage of election campaigns, where the degree of the journalist's own framing of the issue is the most significant and he becomes a *"watchdog"* of the political competition. There is thus a struggle between politician and journalist to apply their own frames to the issues. If, for example, there is no alternative view of the situation articulated strongly enough in society, the politician (in a democratic world, once a consensus has been reached and a unified approach adopted within the political arena) has no opposition. The media can serve as a *"megaphone"* for opposing views, and therefore the battle over who can be better persuaded by framing is crucial in the power struggle. Cf. LAWRENCE, Regina, G. Researching Political News Framing: Established Grounds and New Horizons. In: Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives. New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 267 and ENTMAN, Robert M. Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. Journal of Communication, 1993. 43(4), p. 55.

⁴¹ SCHEUFELE, Bertram T. and Dietram A. SCHEUFELE. *Of Spreading Activation, Applicability, and Schemas: Conceptual Distinction and Their Operational Implication for Measuring Frames and Framing Effects*. In: Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives. New York: Routledge, 2009, pp. 95-98.

⁴² Ibid, p. 314.

of power that is more focused on the individual and discourse."⁴³ The analysis in the present thesis was guided by this paradigm.

In terms of interpretation, the aspect of culture must not be overlooked. Different cultures and nations have a different set of national myths and archetypes, and thus the framing is influenced.⁴⁴ Culture can thus be defined as *"an empirically demonstrable set of shared frameworks that are manifested in the discourse and thinking of most people in a social group."*⁴⁵ This implies the assumption that frames may be generalised and thus their function may be reduced to some extent when conveying information in an international setting. However, this assumption cannot be verified within the scope of the present thesis as it only deals with outputs with an international reach and does not monitor the impact of these outputs towards a domestic audience.

In relation to the topic of the present thesis dealing with the issue of EU enlargement, the author considers it appropriate to mention one particular study using a framework analysis that evaluates the phenomenon of enlargement in connection with the economic impact of inviting new states to the European project and the psychological impact of positive and negative media frames. The author of the study is Claes H. de Vreese. The main hypothesis was the assumption of a positive psychological impact for articles that present the economic impact of EU enlargement in a positive way and a negative psychological response in the case of negatively biased articles. The second hypothesis was the assumption that media frames are linked to the application of considerations of a different nature on the part of the recipient - positive connotations in the case of positive reporting and vice versa. The third hypothesis is the assumption of a negative attitude towards the whole process based on the negative information about the economic impact of the extension. The study involved 177 undergraduate students at the University of Amsterdam. All hypotheses were confirmed by an experiment using almost identical articles, where the only difference was the title and the last paragraph discussing the unemployment rate in one case negatively, in the other positively. After reading the articles, the students were asked to fill in a questionnaire concerning the expected economic impact of the expansion, the importance of the different aspects in relation to the expansion

⁴³ HARDIN, Marie and Erin WHITESIDE. Framing Through a Feminist Lens: A Tool in Support of an Activist Research Agenda. In: *Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives*. New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 315.

⁴⁴ VAN GORP, Baldwin. Strategies to Take Subjectivity Out of Framing Analysis. In: *Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives*. New York: Routledge, 2009, pp. 95-98.

⁴⁵ ENTMAN, Robert M. Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 1993. 43(4), p. 53.

(stability, costs, risks) and the support for the expansion itself. In addition to confirming the hypotheses, the outcome of the study includes the confirmation of the hypothesis that political judgement can be influenced by the processing of online information that does not oblige the recipient to actively remember any of the above. The study also confirmed the ability of frameworks to directly influence the attitudes of information consumers. It is therefore essential that media makers continue to focus on the ways in which frames are created/received as they are an integral part of public opinion.⁴⁶

1.4. Summary

The first chapter presented the theoretical anchoring of the thesis - social constructivism, sociological institutionalism and framing theory. These closely related approaches play a crucial role in understanding the emergence and use of frames in institutional, specifically political, settings and are therefore key to the methodological part of the thesis that follows.

⁴⁶ VREESE, Claes H. de. Framing the Economy: Effects of Journalistic News Frames. In: *Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives*. New York: Routledge, 2009, pp. 187-214.

2. Methodological part

This section will present the methodological aspects of the research conducted. The first section will state the research questions that the thesis seeks to answer, followed by a brief introduction of the framing method used for the specific application in this thesis. The next section will specify the set of documents studied and justify their selection in terms of time and subject matter.

2.1.Objectives of the thesis and research questions

The aim of the thesis is to find out how the positions of the selected countries (Germany, Czech Republic and Austria) are officially communicated to the international audience. The following research questions were set:

- What themes and frameworks are emerging in the official communication of the selected states to the outside towards the EU accession of the Western Balkan countries?
- What potential changes are occurring in the interpretive frameworks of this discussion over the selected time period?
- What form is the international debate taking?

To answer the research questions, it is assumed that each of the selected Member States has its own long-term and consistent position on the EU accession of the Western Balkan countries. The research hypothesis is as follows: the attitude that is presented by foreign policy discourse through top state leaders corresponds to a combination of both social constructivism approaches in connection with state identity and interest formation - both exogenously (Wendt) and endogenously (Katzenstein), and the nuances between the cases are identifiable through interpretive frameworks.

2.2.Research method

The method that was chosen as the most appropriate to meet the above-mentioned objective of the thesis is framing. Although this method was originally developed in the field of sociology and is widely used in relation to the analysis of journalistic discourse and to a large extent also to the analysis of social and interest group communication, the author assumes that any communication stream, including official political discourse, can be viewed in terms of meaning frames.

In the context of this thesis, framing is analysed in the communication discourse of selected states "outwardly". Thus, it is not a matter of tracing the effects of the use of frames

on the national population/electorate, but rather of identifying attitudes and attempting to link these attitudes to the motivations of individual states with their domestic interests. Due to the "diplomatic" language of foreign policy communication to which the examined outcomes belong, the author does not assume the presence of symbolic means, i.e. "metaphors, examples, slogans, renderings and visual images"⁴⁷ as defined by another of the pioneers of this method, W.A. Gamson and K.E. Lasch.

After an initial analysis of the inputs, a set of three frames that appeared most frequently in the selected speeches was defined. These main frames are further subdivided, according to specific aspects, into "subframes" that appear in the sample under study and have a direct link to the parent frame.

2.3. Selection of cases

It is important for the objectives of the thesis to illustrate the articulation of the positions of the selected states externally. Therefore, in selecting the cases, emphasis was placed on the nature of the platform through which the output was disseminated. The original intention to consider primarily outputs and speeches within the Foreign Affairs Councils (FACs) could not be maintained due to the author's inadequate access to these speeches. Also, many important meetings within these Councils take place informally and there are no minutes of them. The author has chosen to use the archive of speeches and conversations of the various foreign ministries as the source corpus for the information needed.⁴⁸ Here, according to the author's reasoning, all key speeches of individual representatives of the foreign ministries, in which they represented their country, should be stored, and thus one can speak of a telling sample of the necessary information; in this way, at the same time, there is no potential distortion of the frames through media takeover/journalistic treatment. In the case of Austria and the Czech Republic these were only ministerial speeches, in the Federal Republic of Germany speeches at the level of deputy ministers and other top representatives of the Foreign Ministry are also available. From a personnel point of view, it should be mentioned that if we do not count the four-month assignment of the Minister of the Interior, Jan Hamáček, to the management of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a situation would have arisen during the selected time period in

⁴⁷ GAMSON, William A., LASCH, Kathryn E. *The political culture of social welfare policy*. [online] <https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/51014/242.pdf;jsessionid=AC32D7E6DF09F43D5FA26503A363BA0A?sequence=1>.

⁴⁸ Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí, Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten der Republik Österreich, Auswärtiges Amt.

which the number of persons who succeeded to the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs corresponded in all three selected countries. With the exception of the Czech Republic, there would always be three.⁴⁹ There is not even a bookmark of Mr Hamáček's speeches in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, and although his tenure is thus irrelevant for this research, he should not be missing from the list of ministers.

To avoid evaluating contributions that were given to domestic audiences, speeches or interviews that were given to domestic media or at domestic events without international participation were eliminated. At the same time, it is unnecessary for the thesis to deal on a larger scale with documents that do not show a thematic connection to the work presented.

In terms of time, a five-year period between the dates of 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2019 was selected. The author considers that this period is sufficient to illustrate the changes in the frameworks used in connection with the Western Balkan countries. It also covers the period after the accession of Croatia, the most successful successor state of the former Yugoslavia in terms of European integration so far. With its efforts, which were fulfilled on 1 July 2013, Croatia could overshadow the other aspiring states in the international discourse and widen the gap between the candidate countries in the eyes of international actors. The end of 2019 serves as a second demarcation, when the international political discourse was not yet exhausted by the global pandemic, nor could conferences and other meetings be held without limitations at which the observed outcomes were presented.

2.4.Limits of research

There are several factors that can affect the quality of the research conducted and they can stem from two factors. First, we can consider the limitations associated with the chosen method. The biggest risk of framing analysis is the high level of subjectivity inserted by the research author. This stems primarily from the nature of the frames themselves, which evoke certain emotions/feelings in the recipient without being explicitly included in the text at all.⁵⁰ Van Gorp himself later admits in the aforementioned text *"that a certain degree of subjectivity is unavoidable"* and goes on in his text to offer solutions and recommendations on how to stay as true as possible to the principles of reliability and validity within research. However, the

⁴⁹ Lubomír Zaorálek, Martin Stropnický (Jan Hamáček) and Tomáš Petříček for the Czech Republic; Sebastian Kurz, Karin Kneissl and Alexander Schallenberg for Austria; Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Sigmar Gabriel and Heiko Maas for Germany.

⁵⁰ VAN GORP, B. Strategies to also subjectivity out of framing analysis. IN: D'Angelo, P., Kyupers, J. (Eds). *Doing news framing analysis: Empirical and theoretical perspective*. New York: Routledge, p. 93.

level of hiddenness of these meanings, in the author's opinion, varies according to the format of the discourse under investigation. If it is a newspaper article/media portrayal of an issue, the possibilities of using linguistic and semantic turns of phrase will be to some extent more extensive and colourful than is the case with the discourse in international political discourse examined in the presented thesis.

The second limiting factor can be considered to be the set of texts under study. The thesis is to some extent content with the thesis that the output of foreign ministers available in the archives of their respective ministries is a representative and comprehensive source of information, but it is clear from a first glance at the individual clusters of speeches that have emerged that all three ministries have not and continue not to maintain their database at the same level. Germany maintains the largest number of outputs in the archive of ministry websites, where the author examined 385 outputs with a foreign impact. Compared to the other two countries, this is a tenfold number (for the Czech Republic, a set of 39 speeches was created, in the case of Austria it is 45 inputs). There is also a marked difference between the personalities of the ministers, whose teams clearly placed different emphasis on the representation and preservation of the minister's outputs for the public.

2.5. Summary

In the previous chapter, the methodological aspects of the thesis were presented, including the research questions and hypotheses that the author will try to confirm or refute in the following sections.

3. Analytical part

Three main sets of contextual frameworks have been identified that are common to the communication of the selected countries.

Due to the way ministry websites are managed and the different approaches to recording information representing the activities of individual ministers in the selected countries, the number of elements in each set varies, but this aspect is also interpreted in the conclusion of the paper.

3.1. Framework “accession process”

The first thematic framework in connection with which the Western Balkan countries are mentioned is the EU enlargement process. Although this may seem too obvious to do so, the author considers it essential to mention this category and to present the various subcategories of this broad framework, which in its scope corresponds to the breadth of views and arguments that are most often mentioned in connection with the accession process.

Most often, support from this framework is declared by selected states towards the Western Balkan countries, but the ways in which this is done vary. In terms of form, the most emotionally tinged position in this framework is presented by the Austrian side. The ministerial speeches emphasise Austria's direct connection to the Western Balkans in terms of national interests and thus the special position of the Western Balkans within the EU's neighbourhood policy. The pledge of support is even described as a “fight for the right thing”, which is not often popular at home: *“Ich bin mir bewusst, dass es in Österreich in der Mehrheitsmeinung nicht immer populär ist, sich für den Westbalkan einzusetzen. I am also very concerned that it is anything but popular to advocate an EU perspective for these States. It is not popular, but it is the right thing to do!”*⁵¹ The importance of the accession perspective of these states is emphasised as a driver for complex reforms. However, the issue of enlargement fatigue, which needs to be combated, is also raised in the Austrian discourse. However, concrete steps to end the stagnation of the accession process are not mentioned in the speeches examined. Germany, on the other hand, offers a more complex view of the reluctance to accept other countries into

⁵¹*“I am aware that standing up for the Western Balkans is not always popular among the majority opinion in Austria. I am also well aware that advocating an EU perspective for these countries is not popular. It may not be popular, but it is the right thing to do!”* Cf. Rede von Außenminister Sebastian Kurz anlässlich der 69. Generalversammlung der Vereinten Nationen. Reden 2014. Presse. Ministerium. *Bmeia.gv.at* [online]. Available from: <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/ministerium/presse/reden/2014/09/rede-von-aussenminister-sebastian-kurz-anlaesslich-der-69-generalversammlung-der-vereinten-nationen/>.

the European project. Particularly at the beginning of the period under review, it links this phenomenon to the consequences of the financial and economic crisis. In contrast to Austria, the need for internal EU reforms is also voiced. Furthermore, the German discourse warns against granting exemptions in order to speed up the process and, unlike Austria, often conditions its support on the need for a clearly demonstrated effort in the process of implementing reforms. A common example of the above is the following: *"First of all, the European Union has to do its homework. In order to remain capable of action and to be prepared for further accession rounds, we have to implement internal reforms. Secondly, the EU has to learn from the mistakes of previous accessions. In future, we must not give any sort of special treatment to candidate countries. Especially when it comes to the most fundamental issues, such as democracy or the rule of law, our message has to be clear: the accession criteria have to be met in their entirety before a country can join the European Union."*⁵²

In all three selected discourses, the lessons from past enlargements are emphasised, with the largest EU enlargement in 2004 being mentioned most often: *'Enlargement is a unique success story. It has helped define the European Union as we know it today: a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Union of nations. The "big bang" of 2004 was a breakthrough in overcoming the division of Europe deriving from the Cold War.'*⁵³ *"In the past many have been critical of enlargement and the opening to the East. Today everybody agrees that it has been a success. The same would be true for a future Western Balkans enlargement! So the message is clear."*⁵⁴

The discourse of the Czech Republic, for reasons of its own experience, also turns to the 2004 enlargement, but rather than being linked to the process itself, these experiences are linked to shared values, which is why they are included in another part of this thesis. The Czech Republic declares its support for the approach most often in the context of the activities of the Visegrad Group: *"Let me now briefly turn to external action. We welcome the focus of the*

⁵² "Serbia's path to the EU - next steps after opening Chapters 23 and 24". Speech by Europe-Staatsminister Michael Roth to students in Belgrade. News. Reden 2016. *Auswaertigesamt.de* [online]. [viewed 30 September 2022] Available from: <https://www.auswaertigesamt.de/de/newsroom/160912-stm-r-belgrad/283334>.

⁵³ Rede von Europa-Staatsminister Michael Roth beim Empfang anlässlich des 25. Jahrestages der internationalen Anerkennung Kroatiens in Zagreb. Reden 2016. *Auswaertigesamt.de* [online]. [viewed 30 September 2022]. Available from: <https://www.auswaertigesamt.de/de/newsroom/170116-stm-r-zagreb/287086>.

⁵⁴ *"In the past, many have criticised enlargement and opening up to the East, but today everyone agrees that it has been successful. The same would apply to future enlargement to the Western Balkans! So the message is clear."* Cf. Opening speech of Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz at the High-level expert conference on the resolution of bilateral disputes in the Western Balkans. Reden 2016. Presse. Ministerium. *Bmeia.gv.at* [online]. [viewed 30 September 2022] Available from: <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/the-ministry/press/speeches/2017/2016/04/opening-speech-of-foreign-minister-sebastian-kurz-at-the-high-level-expert-conference-on-the-resolution-of-bilateral-disputes-in-the-western-balkans/>.

Bulgarian presidency on Western Balkans. Our enlargement policy has proven to be the most effective tool towards durable regional stability. Rest assured that we will continue to support the reform efforts of our Balkan friends. Along with other Visegrad countries, we have contributed more than 12 million EUR to the region in the past three years. We have also assisted in constituting the Western Balkans Fund (WBF), operational since last September and based on the model of the International Visegrad Fund."⁵⁵

All three countries examined reflect almost identically the complexity of the reforms in their outputs and follow up with a balance sheet and a positive assessment of the progress made. However, if the target countries have not reached the necessary milestones or have started to move away from the approach, Germany is the only one to respond with appeal and urgency. The German and Austrian discourse declares the incompleteness of the European project until the former Yugoslav countries are part of it: "*The message first: the EU will not be complete without the Western Balkan countries, and despite numerous challenges the EU is facing at the moment, the enlargement process remains on the agenda.*"⁵⁶ *Wir sollten uns bewusst sein, dass die EU zumindest in geographischer Hinsicht definitiv kein abgeschlossenes Projekt ist, solange die Staaten des Westbalkans nicht auch Mitglieder der EU sind.*"⁵⁷

The last framework, partly subsumed under the framework of accession processes and partly subsumed under the following framework of security, is the stability of the region. The rationale for this double classification is the dual applicability of this framework. While the Czech Republic and Austria communicate regional stability only in relation to the importance

⁵⁵ "Nyní mi dovolu, abych se krátce věnoval oblasti vnější činnosti. Vítáme zaměření bulharského předsednictví na západní Balkán. Naše politika rozšiřování se ukázala jako nejúčinnější nástroj pro dosažení trvalé regionální stability. Ujišťujeme vás, že budeme i nadále podporovat reformní úsilí našich balkánských přátel. Společně s dalšími zeměmi Visegrádu jsme v uplynulých třech letech přispěli tomuto regionu částkou přesahující 12 milionů EUR. Pomohli jsme také založit Fond pro západní Balkán (WBF), který funguje od loňského září a je založen na modelu Mezinárodního visegrádského fondu." Cf. Projev ministra Stropnického k vedoucím zastupitelských úřadů ČS EU a západního Balkánu. Articles and speeches by Ministers. Article archives. About the Ministry. *Mzv.cz* [online]. [viewed 30 September 2022] Available from: https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/archivy/clanky_a_projevy_ministru/clanky_a_projevy_ministra_stropnickeho/x2018_02_06_projev_ministra_stropnickeho_k_vedoucim.html.

⁵⁶ "*The first message: the EU will not be complete without the Western Balkan countries and despite the many challenges the EU is currently facing, the enlargement process remains on the agenda.*" Cf. Address by Minister of State for Europe Michael Roth at the event "Youth and Integration - Young people's perceptions on EU integration challenges" (Tirana). News. Reden 2016. *Auswaertigesamt.de* [online]. [viewed 30 September 2022]. Available from: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/newsroom/161219-stm-r-tirana/286506>.

⁵⁷ "We should realise that, at least geographically, the EU is definitely not a finished project until the Western Balkan countries are also members of the EU." Cf. Die Globale Strategie der EU - Neue Perspektiven für die GASP/GSPV. Reden 2015. Presse. Ministerium. *Bmeia.gv.at* [online]. [viewed 30 September 2022]. Available from: <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/ministerium/presse/reden/2015/11/die-globale-strategie-der-eu-neue-perspektiven-fuer-die-gaspgsvp/>.

of the accession perspective⁵⁸ and the integration of the Western Balkan states into the EU⁵⁹, Germany partly links the level of stability in the Western Balkan countries to the accession perspective⁶⁰, but partly also directly to the security situation in the EU.

3.2. Framework “safety”

The different discourses examined also work differently with the security framework. The strongest subcategory of this framework is migration and the refugee crisis. The latter became a European issue in 2015, along with refugee redistribution quotas and the protection of the EU's external borders. The so-called "Western Balkan route" became notorious, with 764,000 people entering Europe illegally (a 16-fold increase compared to the 2014 flow).⁶¹ Austria reported the second highest number of asylum applications received per capita in 2015, with more than 88,000 asylum applications. Germany continued to be the top destination country for refugees in 2015, with more than 476 thousand applications, the sixth highest number per capita.⁶² Compared to these two countries, the impact of the European migration crisis in the Czech Republic was almost negligible to zero.⁶³ Despite this, the Czech discourse mentions this sub-category, along with the second most frequent sub-framework - terrorism: *„Uprchlická krize a společný boj proti terorismu přiměly EU i západní Balkán uvědomit si a na vlastní kůži zažít, jak jsme se stali vzájemně závislími. Nyní je nezbytné tuto vzájemnou*

⁵⁸ Projev ministra Stropnického k vedoucím zastupitelských úřadů ČS EU a západního Balkánu. Articles and speeches by Ministers. Article archives. About the Ministry. *Mzv.cz* [online]. [viewed 30 September 2022] Available from:

https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/archivy/clanky_a_projevy_ministru/clanky_a_projevy_ministra_stropnickeho/x2018_02_06_projev_ministra_stropnickeho_k_vedoucim.html.

⁵⁹ Die Globale Strategie der EU - Neue Perspektiven für die GASP/GSVP. Reden 2015. Press. Ministerium. *Bmeia.gv.at* [online]. [viewed 30 September 2022]. Available from: <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/ministerium/presse/reden/2015/11/die-globale-strategie-der-eu-neue-perspektiven-fuer-die-gaspgsvp/>.

⁶⁰ The speech by State Secretary Andreas Michaelis at the Drei-Meeres-Gipfel. News. Reden 2019. *Auswaertigesamt.de* [online]. [viewed 12 September 2022]. Available from: <https://www.auswaertigesamt.de/de/newsroom/michaelis-3-meere-initiative/2226988>.

⁶¹ Western Balkan Route, Frontex. [online]. [viewed 30 September 2022]. Available from: <https://frontex.europa.eu/we-know/migratory-routes/western-balkan-route/>.

⁶² Das Bundesamt in Zahlen 2015. Asylzahlen. Statistik. Themen. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. *Bamf.de* [online]. [viewed 12 September 2022]. Available from: https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Statistik/BundesamtinZahlen/bundesamt-in-zahlen-2015.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=16.

⁶³ Population of the Czech Republic 2019 - Migration. Catalogue of products. Czech Statistical Office. *Czso.cz* [online]. [viewed 12 September 2022]. Available from: <https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/121768528/13006920a07.pdf/ac66a9b9-6075-4ac7-9868-cf3b72be2db9?version=1.1>.

závislost promítnout do větší angažovanosti zemí západního Balkánu, a pomoci jim tak úspěšně dokončit proces budování demokratického státu."⁶⁴

The Austrian and German discourses do not neglect the connection between the Western Balkan countries and migration and declare that they will not leave them alone in the face of the crisis. Austria tries to draw attention to the problem of the transit countries of the Western Balkans⁶⁵, but more often the framework of terrorism resonates in its discourse, whether it is the danger of "returnees" from conflict areas⁶⁶, the prevention of youth radicalisation⁶⁷, or the online terrorist threat: *"Austria is taking action and intensifying the international cooperation especially with the Western Balkans. Last week we adopted an action plan to confront jihadism together with all Western Balkan countries: It includes, for example, closer cooperation between law enforcement authorities, enhanced border security and joint efforts to remove terrorist content from the Internet."*⁶⁸ Germany presents the concrete assistance it has provided to the countries (Serbia and North Macedonia).⁶⁹ The framework of terrorism is only mentioned in the German discourse in general terms, without a direct link to the Western Balkan region.

As mentioned above, Germany uses the regional stability framework in a way that is more in line with the overarching security framework. In particular, Germany is alone on the issue of Kosovo's stability. The involvement of German troops in the KFOR mission appears repeatedly in available speeches⁷⁰. Interestingly, both Austria and the Czech Republic also

⁶⁴ *"The refugee crisis and the common fight against terrorism have made the EU and the Western Balkans realise and experience first-hand how interdependent we have become. It is now essential to translate this interdependence into greater engagement with the Western Balkan countries to help them successfully complete the process of democratic state building."* Cf. Enhanced cooperation needed between Visegrad Group & Western Balkans. Articles and speeches by ministers. Article archives. About the Ministry. *Mzv.cz* [online]. [viewed 15 October 2022]. Available from: https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/o_ministerstvu/archivy/clanky_a_projevy_ministru/clanky_a_projevy_ministra_zaoralka_2016/x2016_04_12_ministr_zaoralek_pro_euractiv.html?notify=1.

⁶⁵ Rede von Außenminister Sebastian Kurz anlässlich des öffentlichen Segments der Botschafterkonferenz am 3. September 2015. Reden 2015. Press. Ministerium. *Bmeia.gv.at* [online]. [viewed 15 October 2022]. Available from: <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/ministerium/presse/reden/2015/09/rede-von-aussenminister-sebastian-kurz-anlaesslich-des-oeffentlichen-segments-der-botschafterkonferenz-am-3-september-2015/>.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ OSZE Rede - Rede des amtierenden Vorsitzenden, Bundesminister für Europa, Integration und Äußeres Sebastian Kurz vor dem Ständigen Rat der OSZE. Reden 2017. Presse. Ministerium. *Bmeia.gv.at* [online]. [viewed 15 October 2022]. Available from: <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/ministerium/presse/reden/2017/01/osze-rede/>.

⁶⁸ Open debate UN Security Council. The victims of attacks and abuses on ethnic or religious grounds in the Middle East - Statement by Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz. Reden 2015. Press. Ministerium. *Bmeia.gv.at* [online]. [viewed 15 October 2022]. Available from: <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/ministerium/presse/reden/2015/03/open-debate-un-security-council/>.

⁶⁹ Rede von Außenminister Frank-Walter Steinmeier bei der Westbalkan-Konferenz in Wien (in English). News. Reden 2015. *Auswaertigesamt.de* [online]. [viewed 15 October 2022]. Available from: <https://www.auswaertigesamt.de/de/newsroom/150827-bm-westbalkankonferenz/274240>.

⁷⁰ Order of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Heiko Maas, on the Bundesregierung's title: 'Fortsetzung der deutschen Beteiligung an der internationalen Sicherheitspräsenz in Kosovo (KFOR)' in the Bundestag. News. Reden 2019.

participate in this mission⁷¹, however, their participation is not communicated in the case selection set. As mentioned in the introduction of the previous framework, Germany exploits the ambivalence of the stability framework depending on the specific application. This is best illustrated by the following example, where a new French-German initiative to address the problem of small arms in the Western Balkans is presented: *Wir wollen letztlich, und das ist auch ein Teil dieser Initiative, durch Zusammenarbeit und Dialog den Weg nach vorne beschreiten. Darüber hinaus tun alle Seiten gut daran, ihr Engagement auf ein tragfähiges Abkommen zu richten, auch wenn viele Fragen noch nicht endgültig beantwortet sind. Eine umfassende Normalisierung vor Ort ist auch eine der Voraussetzungen dafür, dass wir gut, nachhaltig und effektiv zusammenarbeiten können. Denn die positive, aber auch die negative Entwicklung in der Region betrifft uns alle direkt – und das gilt nicht allein für das Thema Kleinwaffen. Deshalb liegt es im ureigensten Interesse der gesamten Europäischen Union, dass sich der Westliche Balkan gut und friedlich entwickelt.*⁷²

The last framework that should be subsumed under the security framework is the geopolitical importance of the region. The potential entry of another global player into the region and the possibility of asserting itself in the immediate vicinity of the EU is mentioned in speeches by Germany and Austria, although each of them points to a different global player. Austria warns of the danger of Chinese influence: *“Denn in das Vakuum, das hier nach Ende der Balkankriege der neunziger Jahre trotz allen internationalen Geldern und Militärengagements entstand, rückt vor allem China ein.”*⁷³, while Germany warns of Russian activity in the region: *“We must also make sure that the extensive support that the European Union already provides for the Western Balkan countries becomes more visible. It should not*

Auswaertigesamt.de [online]. [viewed 15 October 2022]. Available from: <https://www.auswaertigesamt.de/de/newsroom/maas-bundestag-kfor/2224726>.

⁷¹ Contributing nations. About us. Kfor. *Jfnaples.nato.int*. [online]. [viewed 8 November 2022]. Available from: <https://jfnaples.nato.int/kfor/about-us/welcome-to-kfor/contributing-nations>.

⁷² *“Ultimately, and this is also part of this initiative, we want to move forward through cooperation and dialogue. In addition, it would be good if all parties directed their efforts towards reaching a sustainable agreement, even if many questions have not yet been definitively answered. One of the prerequisites for good, sustainable and effective cooperation is also comprehensive standardisation on the ground. Indeed, the positive and negative developments in the region affect us all directly - and this does not only concern the issue of small arms. It is therefore in the best interests of the entire European Union that the Western Balkans develop well and peacefully.”* Cf. Rede von Außenminister Heiko Maas anlässlich des Hochrangigen Treffens der Deutsch-Französischen Initiative zur Lösung des Kleinwaffenproblems auf dem Westbalkan <https://www.auswaertigesamt.de/de/newsroom/maas-westbalkan-kleinwaffeninitiative/2168876>.

⁷³ *“The vacuum created by the end of the Balkan wars in the 1990s is being filled mainly by China, despite all the international money and military commitments.”* Cf. Was vom Völkerrecht noch übrig ist - Gastkommentar von Karin Kneissl. Reden 2018. Presse. Ministerium. *Bmeia.gv.at* [online]. [viewed 8 November 2022]. Available from: <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/ministerium/presse/reden/2018/07/was-vom-voelkerrecht-noch-uebrig-ist-gastkommentar-von-karin-kneissl/>.

*be the case that in Serbia, for example, a large proportion of the population - according to the surveys - still believes that Russia is the country's largest financial supporter. If the people are completely unaware of everything that the European Union does, it's hardly surprising that their interest in the accession process is limited. One example: I don't understand why one is greeted on the trip from Belgrade Airport into the city centre by a large poster that celebrates the Russian-Serbian friendship, while the yellow and blue of the European Union is totally invisible. In this regard, we must make significant improvements together - meaning the EU as well as the Western Balkan countries."*⁷⁴

3.3. Framework of values

The first and most frequently used value framework with the Western Balkan countries is solidarity. *"Twenty years ago, the disastrous and bloody wars following the breakup of the former Yugoslavia finally came to an end. Significant parts of the region lay in ruins. The new countries of the western Balkans and their societies were devastated and needed a hand in getting out of the quagmire they had sunk into."*⁷⁵

The value that is presented in the Austrian entries is media freedom: *"Journalists also shed light on incidents of violence, torture, discrimination, corruption, abuse of power and much more. And this is an essential first step to accountability. Because of that, media is often called the fourth pillar of democracy. I think we all agree that an independent, professional, and pluralistic media is indeed a core element for a healthy democracy. And: Freedom of the media is also crucial for the protection of human rights and can contribute significantly to political stability."*⁷⁶

⁷⁴ *"We also need to ensure that the extensive support that the European Union already provides to the Western Balkan countries is made visible. It should not be the case that in Serbia, for example, a large part of the population - according to surveys - still believes that Russia is the country's biggest financial supporter. If people are completely unaware of everything that the European Union is doing, it is not surprising that their interest in the accession process is limited. One example for all: I do not understand why one is greeted on the way from Belgrade airport to the city centre by a large poster celebrating Russian-Serbian friendship, while the yellow and blue colours of the European Union are completely invisible. We need to make significant improvements in this regard together - meaning both the EU and the countries of the Western Balkans."* Cf. Rede von Außenminister Sigmar Gabriel bei der 8. Aspen Südosteuropa Außenminister Konferenz. News. Reden 2017. *Auswaertigesamt.de* [online]. Available from: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/newsroom/170531-bm-aspen/290344>.

⁷⁵ PETŘÍČEK, Tomáš. Let's move forward in the western Balkans. Opinions. *Politico.eu* [online]. [viewed 8 November 2022]. Available from: <https://www.politico.eu/article/european-commission-western-balkans-north-macedonia-albania-accession-talks-eu/>.

⁷⁶ OSCE Conference - Freedom of the Media in the Western Balkans. Reden 2017. Press. Ministerium. *Bmeia.gv.at* [online]. [viewed 8 November 2022]. Available from: <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/ministerium/presse/reden/2017/02/osce-conference-freedom-of-the-media-in-the-western-balkans/>.

The Austrian and German speeches also present the values that the Western Balkan countries represent for their respective countries, especially practical economic values.⁷⁷ But when it comes to the practical economic values that the EU represents for the candidate countries, Germany often advises these countries to focus primarily on the framework of the whole value system with which the EU is associated, as opposed to the vision of the economic benefits of the single market: *“The European Union has always been more than a peace project and significantly more than a common market. First and foremost, it has been a Union of values. Tolerance, pluralism, nondiscrimination-, democracy, and rule of law are the core values of the EU. That's why they are also at the heart of EU accession processes.”*⁷⁸ The German discourse is the only one among those examined that deepens the values framework towards the ideals of a liberal, multi-ethnic, inclusive and civil society. Beyond the traditional values associated with the EU, the German set of discourses examined includes several on the topic of support for the LGBTI community in these countries, a value that poses a challenge for most Member States as well: *“With these conflicting global trends - a broad development towards LGBTI rights on one side, a backlash on the other side - we may wonder: In which of these two categories does the Western Balkans region fall? The answer is clear, as I myself have witnessed several times during my visits to countries of the Western Balkans. Although there is no open discrimination of LGBTI people by state institutions, homophobia is still a widespread problem.”*⁷⁹

3.4. Summary

All states show a positive attitude towards the Western Balkan enlargement, but it should be noted that Germany does so only after stating the conditionality of this consent, i.e. it chooses the approach “whoever shows effort and willingness will be rewarded”. All countries also stress the importance of perspective as a driver of complex reforms in the accession process. Three overarching communication frameworks have been identified - the accession

⁷⁷ Address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Frank-Walter Steinmeier at the opening ceremony of the "Forum on Prosperity and Jobs in Bosnia and Herzegovina". News. Reden 2014. *Auswaertigesamt.de* [online]. [viewed 8 November 2022]. Available from: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/newsroom/-/262450>.

⁷⁸ „Serbia's path to the EU - next steps after opening Chapters 23 and 24". Rede von Europa-Staatsminister Michael Roth vor Studierenden in Belgrad. News. Reden 2016. *Auswaertigesamt.de* [online]. [viewed 8 November 2022]. Available from: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/newsroom/160912-stm-r-belgrad/283334>.

⁷⁹ Eröffnungsrede von Europa-Staatsminister Michael Roth beim Post-IDAHO Round Table "Diversity and LGBTI Inclusion in the Western Balkans" im Auswärtigen Amt. News. Reden 2016. *Auswaertigesamt.de* [online]. [viewed 8 November 2022]. Available from: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/newsroom/160627-stm-r-postidaho/281722>.

process, security and values. To each of the frameworks were assigned sub-frameworks, i.e. individual smaller sets that may no longer be considered common to all selected states. The most surprising result of the analysis was the ambivalent use of the 'sub-frame' of regional stability described above, which was used by Austria and the Czech Republic in relation to the accession process framework, and by Germany, partly in combination with the security framework. Another surprising result remains the involvement of the issue of the protection of sexual minorities in the Western Balkan countries presented repeatedly in the German discourse.

The issue of the accession of the Western Balkan countries to the EU, in conjunction with the answer to the second research question, could be described as a very constant part of the foreign policy discourse of the selected countries in the selected time period. The variable factor that emerges in the given time period in connection with the Western Balkans is the framework of migration. Together with the way the situation in Europe has evolved in connection with the refugee crisis, we can also observe developments in individual national discourses. While at the beginning the need to urgently address the situation through cooperation and thus prevent strong migratory flows is emphasised above all, later on, as these flows diminish, we can also observe a relaxation of these appeals and a gradual increase in the association of the crisis with the symbol of a jointly managed task, which further reinforces the need for ever closer cooperation between the EU and its neighbouring countries.

In response to the third research question and the analysis carried out, it should be added that the discussion is taking place (apart from the EU and its institutions) within several international platforms and forums (the Visegrad Four or the annual Aspen Conference of European foreign ministers on Southeast Europe organised by the German Aspen Institute). The German foreign policy discourse has identified a rather bilateral approach, while the Austrian and Czech ones opt for multilateral statements, i.e. most often towards all Western Balkan states.

It is also necessary to evaluate the appropriateness of the hypothesis, i.e. that in the articulation of foreign policy discourse, which is undoubtedly part of the identity of the state, inputs from both directions are used - i.e. both from the domestic environment in the form of norms, values, templates and interests created by the domestic debate, and from the international environment, most often in response to the situation. The analysis of the selected outputs confirmed the possibility of identifying the nature of individual discourse manifestations through the interpretive frameworks found. The German discourse shows the

highest proportion of frames produced by the action of the international scene, but it should be noted that the set of examined utterances was many times larger than in the other two cases. The second state that showed a certain degree of reactivity to the international situation in the examined speeches is Austria, the Czech discourse reacted the least. In all three cases there were speeches triggered by the international situation in the security framework, which seems to be the best example to describe the combined nature of the development of foreign policy discourse. Although the speeches identified frameworks responding to the international security situation, we must not forget that, for example, in the context of the refugee crisis, the security of individual states was also at stake, which is undeniably at the centre of the needs and interests of each state. If, on the other hand, we look at the framework of values, it is clear that it would be difficult to demonstrate a response to the international situation here; values are strongly linked to developments on the domestic scene, although the impact of the international environment cannot be completely ruled out either, for example, in terms of the oversight of international organisations in the area of democratic and rule of law.

From the analysis of the relevant inputs, it should be noted that a minimum of linguistic tools were identified to facilitate the interpretation of the frameworks. This fact can be explained by the nature of the inputs studied, which, as official speeches of state actors with international impact, must adapt the form of their message to the needs of the expected audience. Since framing analysis is most often carried out in media outputs, the theoretical premises of these analyses, on the other hand, allow for a large number of linguistic turns of phrase that evoke certain emotions in the recipient of the information. However, if we are talking about an official performance of a statesman representing a certain position, emotional colouring could be considered undesirable in the final evaluation.

Conclusion

In the present paper, the common frameworks of the communication discourse of the selected countries - the Czech Republic, Austria and Germany - in relation to the accession of the Western Balkan countries to the EU were examined with an emphasis on three research questions that were answered. Although the use of framing devices, as presented by framing theory in the first chapter of the present thesis, in official foreign policy discourse is limited, based on the initial analysis, common frames (accession process, security and values) including their respective subcategories of frames were identified and subsequently evaluated. The change in the interpretive framework of migration in the selected time period was also pointed out, as a framework changing along with the escalation or calming of the refugee crisis. In the common security framework, the framework of terrorism was identified with the framework of migration, which is mainly presented as a security threat, but also marginally, mostly in the Austrian discourse, as an opportunity for cooperation in counter-radicalisation programmes. The values framework corresponds mainly to traditional values associated with the EU (democracy, rule of law), but also to solidarity and media freedom. The German discourse also shows a framing of the values of a liberal society, especially in connection with minority rights and the LGBTI community.

Based on the characteristics of the inputs, the form of the international debate was also assessed, i.e. through which platforms the debate takes place and to what extent each country uses them. A multilateral approach is preferred in the case of the Czech Republic and Austria, a bilateral one in the case of Germany.

For the Western Balkan countries, every voice of support from European countries is essential, especially given the region's conflict-ridden past and the associated problematic relations between the countries, but also externally. From the EU's point of view, the geopolitical importance of the region is crucial. If a realistic perspective of future development is not regularly offered to these countries by the EU, whether because of growing enlargement fatigue, a sense of fulfilled absorption capacity or simply because of an unwillingness to accept internal reforms of the enlargement process, it is quite likely that another major geopolitical player will seize this opportunity, which is also present in the discourses under study.

The thesis has shown that the role of frameworks in foreign policy is not insignificant. Although studies of frames are most often concerned with media images and the association with framing, the framing of official state discourse by ruling elites can be considered an important manifestation of national interest and identity. Indeed, as discussed in the first

chapter, according to the theory of sociological institutionalism, these frames are the result of a reciprocal influence between the individual and the institution based on social debate that will affect both the institution and the individual's behaviour. However, national identity and interests also emerge in combination with external influences coming from the international environment, either in the form of reactions to the situation at hand, or in the long term in terms of the adoption of values and principles stemming from participation in international institutions, which is based on the discussion conducted within social constructivism and the work of Wendt and Katzenstein.

As stated at the very beginning of this paper, the countries of the Western Balkans will have to overcome many obstacles before they can become members of the EU. Similarly, the EU as a whole and the enlargement process are likely to undergo a number of reforms. In the future, it will also be interesting to observe, in connection with further EU enlargement, how the accession negotiations of Ukraine, which was granted candidate status under the fast-track procedure following the dramatic developments of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in late June 2022⁸⁰, will affect the whole process and the interest of the states in the European project. Following the appeals of the Ukrainian President Zelenskyj, there has been much debate in the media discourse about allowing a fast-track regime for accession negotiations.⁸¹ However, no such regime officially exists, and the importance of proper implementation of reforms and alignment of the candidate state's national norms with European ones has always been emphasised in response to these calls, which is, however, an inherently lengthy process that depends on the efforts and will of the candidate state in question, as has been reflected in the discourses analysed in this thesis.

⁸⁰ Ukraine. Countries of the region. Neighbourhood. *Neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu* [online]. [viewed 8 November 2022]. Available from: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region/ukraine_en.

⁸¹ KABELE, Viktor. Ukraine may quickly gain candidate status, but EU membership is a long way off, Special Representative says. *Ct24.ceskatelevize.cz* [online]. 13 April 2022. [viewed 8 November 2022]. Available from: <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/specialy/rusko-ukrajinsky-konflikt/3471135-ukrajina-mozna-rychle-ziska-kandidatsky-status-clenstvi-v>; KAPERN, Peter. Perspektiven für die Ukraine How are the chances of a successful EU-Beitritt? *Deutschlandfunk.de* [online]. 24 June 2022. [viewed 8 November 2022]. Available from: <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/ukraine-eu-europaeische-union-beitritt-krieg-100.html> and WIESER, Thomas, LEHNE Stefan and Dietmar SCHWEISGUT. Welche europäische Zukunft hat die Ukraine? [online]. 23 Apr. 2022. [viewed 8 November 2022]. Available from: <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000135127296/welche-europaeische-zukunft-hat-die-ukraine>.

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"The first message: the EU will not be complete without the Western Balkan countries and despite the many challenges the EU is currently facing, the enlargement process remains on the

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"We should realise that, at least geographically, the EU is definitely not a finished project until the Western Balkan countries are also members of the EU." Cf. Die Globale Strategie der EU - Neue Perspektiven für die GASP/GSVP. Reden 2015. Presse. Ministerium. Bmeia.gv.at [online]. [viewed 30 September 2022]. Available from: <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/ministerium/presse/reden/2015/11/die-globale-strategie-der-eu-neue-perspektiven-fuer-die-gaspgsvp>