Newcastle University Expedition 2010

Balkanism repackaged?
Contesting dominant presentations of ‘European integration’
in contemporary Bosnia & Herzegovina

(Source: Azra Ćaušević 2010)

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Acknowledgements

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Finally, my thanks go to the Newcastle Expeditions Committee for their financial assistance and encouragement and also to Alex Schiffmann for her constant support and proofreading capabilities.
Expedition background

Aim: To access the views and opinions of students in contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to challenge dominant presentations of Bosnia’s ‘European integration’

Project locations: Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina (BiH)
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The University of Tuzla

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OKC Abrašević (Youth Centre)

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Equipment used: 1 x digital voice recorder (leased from GPS)
1 x digital camera

Training attended: Risk Assessment course, Newcastle University 17/03/10

Visas: Not required for EU citizens²

¹ Attained through Dr Alex Jeffrey (GPS, Newcastle University) and through in-country networking
² Interestingly, the EU’s visa-free regime does not currently extend to Bosnian citizens
Total costs: £800.73 (see Appendix 1 for cost breakdown)

Total funding provided: £600: Newcastle University Expeditions Committee

Project Overview

This purpose of this expedition was to access the often-neglected views and opinions of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to use them to challenge dominant political presentations of ‘European Integration’. Although neither overseas fieldwork nor the practice of ‘audience interpretation’ are common practice in the traditional study of (geo)politics, I was always eager to visit the places that I would be writing about and to interact with the local people on who the study was based. I am grateful to the Expeditions Committee at Newcastle University for providing me with an opportunity to travel to Bosnia and Herzegovina in the summer of 2010 and do just this. The findings of the study formed the basis for an International Politics MA dissertation thesis.

I arrived in Sarajevo on 12th June 2010 to be greeted by my host Zlatan Musić and was quickly made to feel at home in a city 1000 miles away from the UK. This was through the open and friendly approach of local people and their willingness to assist my studies by introducing me to colleagues, friends and family across the country. Making early contact with local academic institutions (the University of Sarajevo) proved to be a crucial steppingstone as I began to access and interview students in the cities of Sarajevo, Tuzla and Mostar (see Appendix 2 for field diary). The close relationship between students and lecturers in BiH meant that Dr. Damir Arsenijević, Dr. Danijela Majstorović and Dr. Asim Mujkić were extremely useful host country contacts. They were in a position to introduce me to the leaders of student activist groups (such as Adis Sadiković) whose networks traverse the entire country. The biggest challenge upon arriving back home was not finding the words to write up the project, but instead condensing the rich sets of collected data into one final report.
Abstract

This study uses audience interpretation as a methodological tool to contest dominant geopolitical discourses of ‘European integration’ in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). This approach is based on the theoretical premise that meaning is not naturally-occurring within geopolitical text but instead established through the critical process of interpretation (Dittmer & Dodds 2008). The research draws upon qualitative data generated by a focus group and sixteen interviews with student participants in BiH to re-establish the (geo)political complexities of the process of EU integration. It finds that the crude, linear frameworks invoked by the rhetoric of European officials are challenged by local expressions of cynicism, anger, frustration, and mockery. It also identifies instances of Bosnian audiences reproducing the dominant discourses of EU institutions in a manner supportive of Judith Butler’s renowned writings on ‘performativity’ (1997). The study uses such findings to argue that far from marking the arrival of a new and inclusive politics of the ‘future’ in BiH, the EU’s integration dialogue instead represents a continuation of the crude and solidifying geopolitics of the past; alienating perceptive Bosnian citizens from a crucial geopolitical discussion.

Key words: Discourse, Audience, Interpretation, Performativity, Critical Geopolitics
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### Expedition Summary

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1. Bosnia within the Geopolitical imagination of ‘Europe’

1.1 Background

The idea of ‘Europe’ today remains as hotly debated and geographically inconsistent as it did prior to the formation of the European Communities in 1960s. Despite appearing to promote the uniting of groups of different political and cultural affinities, the ambiguities that underpin constructions of ‘Europe’ have long been manipulated in order to serve the interests of national and sub-national political groups and institutions.

![Figure 1.1. Map of the eastward expansion of the European Union (Source: after Wordpress.com 2009)](image)

The sweeping tides of ‘Europeanisation’ have arrived at the borders of the former communist block, or contemporary ‘Eastern Europe’ (see figure 1.1). This has encouraged a new wave of dialogue on what it is to be ‘European’, and a fusion of the notion of ‘Europe’ into the rhetoric of regional party politics. This discussion has much currency within contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), which is being encouraged by European and domestic institutions to follow in the footsteps of Slovenia, Bulgaria and Croatia on the path of accession to the European Union. However, the prospect of BiH’s European integration is both more morally contentious and geopolitically significant than that of its territorial neighbours. This is due in
no small part to the controversial role played by the European community in the 1992 Bosnian war⁴, and the continued involvement of European institutions in the day-to-day functioning of the Bosnian state. Indeed, the historical shortcomings of the European community in this part of the continent arguably endanger the very idea of ‘Europe’; prompting Slavenka Drakulić to ask the important question: ‘what is Europe after Bosnia?’ (1996: 213).

Scholars of critical geopolitics have long sought to deconstruct the assumptions that underpin dominant spatial imaginations of the world⁵. Indeed, through their critique of crude geopolitical designations they seek to ‘disturb those [political] practices that are settled[…] and render produced what seems to be naturally emergent’(Campbell 1998a: 4). Despite the growing number of politicians that discuss the process of EU integration through naturalised expressions ‘cultural identity’ and ‘European values’, its intense concern with territorial borders and socio-political influence demarcate it as ‘profoundly geopolitical’ process (Kuus 2007: 4). As such, there is a rapidly growing body of critical geopolitical literature that seeks to unravel the dominant socio-spatial imaginations invoked by the EU’s Eastern enlargement⁶.

Notions of ‘Europe’ are then loaded with complex socio-political connotations in those countries that fall outside of its territorial borders. These connotations are particularly significant amongst the young generations of BiH who, devoid of memories of the war, are becoming political actors for the first time up to Bosnia’s position with regard to ‘Europe’. The prospect of EU integration has an added poignancy within student populations due to its potential everyday implications on culture, travel and education⁷, and the supposed position of academia at the forefront of critical political debate. Of crucial importance then are the ways in which young Bosnian students interpret the dominant integration discourses of economic opportunity, ‘visa liberalisation’ and ‘European identity’. This leaves us with a critical geopolitical question: how are dominant presentations of Bosnia’s ‘European integration’ contested by students in BiH? This research will attempt to answer the question by using audience interpretation as a means to challenge monolithic images of ‘Europe’ in BiH.
1.2 Aims and objectives

**AIM:** To conduct an in-depth study of students in BiH in order contest dominant presentations of Bosnia’s ‘EU integration’

The above aim will be tackled by three key research objectives:

(a) To outline the ways in which the idea of ‘European integration’ is presented by EU officials in BiH

(b) To explore the ways in which these discourses are contested by Bosnia’s student population

(c) To examine the potential impact of these interpretations on BiH’s integration into European structures

1.3 Argument and approach

This research will argue that far from encouraging a new geopolitics of inclusion and political mobilisation, the EU’s framing of ‘European integration’ in Bosnia and Herzegovina is instead furthering a sense of European exclusion and disillusionment amongst Bosnian citizens. This is through its failure to engage with the specificities of the integration process, its insensitivity to regional and domestic political complexities, and its continued communication of ambiguous and over-simplistic messages.

A number of critical geopolitical studies have targeted the spatial imaginations invoked by conventional discourses of ‘Europe’ and ‘European integration’. These include in-depth, discursive analyses of their influence on regional identity and security, conflict transformation and domestic political dynamics. However, through their methodological detachment from local (geo)political audiences, such studies have been critiqued for their ‘distance’ from on-the-ground events. In response to such criticism, this study uses
'audience interpretation' as a methodological tool to access the views and interpretations of the local population in BiH. This approach is based on the theoretical premise that meaning is not naturally-occurring within geopolitical text but is instead established through the act of interpretation. As such, it is imperative to access the interpretations of an audience in order to determine the meaning and implication of geopolitical discourse. In the case of BiH's European integration, this necessitates an in-depth qualitative engagement with Bosnian citizens. It is hoped that this framework will allow the study to re-establish the geopolitical complexities central to the process of EU integration.

1.4 Structure

The following chapter attempts to situate this research within the existing body of literature on critical Balkan geopolitics and imaginative geographies. The theoretical and methodological approaches of the project are then outlined in chapter three. Research analysis is divided into two sections that examine the dominant discourses of BiH's EU integration (chapter four), and the treatment of BiH in the context of the Balkan region and wider Europe (chapter five). Finally, the conclusions of the study are drawn in chapter six.
Notes to Chapter 1.

1 See Juncos (2005), Zielonka (2006), and Gromes (2009), amongst others

2 Croatia is currently considered a ‘candidate’ country along with Macedonia and Turkey

3 This manifested itself in Bosnia’s signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) in June 2008 (see EU-UN Partnership 2008)


6 For example, see the work of Gromes (2009), Kuus (2004), Jeffrey (2008) and Juncos (2005)

7 For example the ongoing processes of visa liberalisation and Bologna reform

8 For the purpose of this study, the terms ‘Europe’ and ‘European’ will be used exclusively in reference to the officials, institutions and member states of the European Union, unless otherwise stated. Similarly, the reports and quotes of EU officials remain attributable to these individuals as representatives of the EU, rather than the final word of the institution itself. These designations will be used carefully so as to attempt to avoid the sweeping homogenisation of a diverse and multi-layered political organisation.

9 See Kuus (2004), Juncos (2005)

10 See Gromes (2009)

11 See Jeffrey (2008)

12 See Sharp, J. (2007), Dowler & Sharp (2001), and Pain & Smith (2008), amongst others

13 This is similar to the approached promoted by Ó Tuathail (1996b) as an ‘anti-geopolitical eye’
2: Balkanism and the ‘new’ geopolitics of EU integration

2.1 Introduction

A wide breadth of literature introduces the theories and approaches that inform this study. This chapter seeks to reconcile the geopolitical binaries introduced by traditional approaches to imagined geographies with contemporary discussions of the complex socio-political signifiers of European integration. This is with the intention of justifying a personalised engagement with ‘audience interpretation’ as a rationale for this study. It starts with an examination of conventional notions of Orientalism, before charting the development of post-Cold War attitudes to the Balkan region. Finally, it explores the geopolitical performances of such imaginations, before applying these to contemporary approaches to Bosnia & Herzegovina.

2.2 Imaginative geographies and the Balkans

Edward Said’s much acclaimed work on Orientalism (1978) is often the starting point for studies of imagined geographies (e.g. see Todorova, 1997, Juncos 2005, Jeffrey 2008). The term ‘Orientalism’ was coined in reference to what Said saw to be disparaging imaginations of the Orient present in pre-19th Century Western European art and literature. These arguably served to demarcate the Orient as an inherently foreign, violent and ‘backward’ space, against which an overtly positive and ‘modern’ presentation of Europe could be emphasised (1978). It is said that this imagination invokes the binaries of ‘us’ and ‘them’; designating ‘in one’s mind a familiar space which is ‘ours’ and an unfamiliar space [...] which is ‘theirs” (Said 1978: 54). Such an imagination folds ‘distance into difference’; homogenising entire regions as containers of particular values and cultures (Gregory 2005: 17). This process is central to the project of imagined geographies; invoking historical stereotypes to ‘allow one to see new things, things seen for the first time, as versions of a previously known thing’ (Bhabha 1983: 25). As such then, they traverse a thin line between ‘something fictionalized’ and ‘something made real’, taking the form of ‘imaginations given substance’ (Gregory 2005: 17).
While it could be said that Orientalism, in its original form, has been superseded by post-colonial thought and the changing geopolitical agendas of the day, we might argue that ‘a new spectre is haunting Western culture – the spectre of the Balkans’ (Todorova 1997: 3). Indeed, a significant body of literature emerged following the conclusion of the Cold War dedicated to the critique of contemporary representations of the Balkans emanating in large part from Western Europe. This ‘distinct form of discursive critique has been termed ‘Balkanism’ (Jeffrey 2008: 428). However, despite its recent theoretical reinvigoration, the practice of Balkanism has arguably been prominent for hundreds of years. Indeed, in the critically acclaimed *The Days of the Consuls* (2000, first published in 1941), the Nobel Laureate Ivo Andrić, satirically views his Bosnian hometown through the eyes of a young French diplomat. A deliberate representative of Western Europe, the diplomat describes the town as ‘violent’, ‘wild’, ‘impossible’ and ‘uncouth’ (2000: 24). Such imaginations gathered potency with time and at the beginning of the twentieth century ‘Balkanization’ had become a synonym for the European ‘Other’ and a reversion to the tribal, the backward, the primitive, the barbarian’ (Torovorova 1997: 3).

Aside from demarcating an ‘Other’, the binaries that underpin such understandings also invoke an idea of the ‘Self’ in much the same way as the Orientalist discourse. Indeed, the work of Maria Todorova (1997) and Ana Juncos (2005), amongst others has critiqued Balkanism for its construction of ‘positive and self-congratulatory’ image of Europe (Todorova 1997: 188). The impacts of spatial imaginations are therefore two-fold, invoking an idea of both ‘here’ and ‘there’. With regard to Balkanism, these imaginations are manifested through a range of popular materials far wider than those originally deconstructed by Said (1978). In *Inventing Ruritiana* (1998), Vesna Goldsworthy explores the presence of nested Balkanism in the writings of Western European travel writers and novelists. Similarly, the work of Klaus Dodds is critical of the influence of European filmmakers (1998), authors and cartoonists (2005). Through their fusion of identity to territory and their playing on the same binaries of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’, it is argued that even popular, ‘everyday’ materials are responsible for the conjuring of ‘imaginative colonialism’ (Goldsworthy 1998: 3).
There are, however, points on which the Balkanist and Orientalist critiques diverge. Despite being based on similar understandings of power, ‘otherness’, and the invention of tradition, critical theorists of Balkanism have questioned its position as a mere ‘subspecies of Orientalism’ (Todorova 1997: 8). Firstly, it is important to assert that where ‘the Balkans’ are geographically and historically concrete, Said’s ‘Occident’ and ‘Orient’ ‘correspond to no stable reality that exists as a natural fact’ (Said 1995: 3). Indeed, the Orientalist binary refers to a ‘project rather than a ‘place’” (Bakić-Hayden 1995). Secondly, the Balkans have not been subject to the direct colonial rule of Western Europe and therefore represent a departure from the colonial thrust of Orientalism. Finally, the imagined landscape of the Balkans is one of continuous conflict and violence between different ‘tribes’ or factions, which, by its very observation prevents the complete homogenisation of the internal population. As such, the rhetoric of Balkanism is underpinned by a more complex set of socio-spatial relations to that of Said’s ‘Orient’ that cannot be reduced simply to a ‘colonial West’ and a ‘colonised East’ (Jeffrey 2008: 431). This is an important observation for the purpose of this report where our focus is on the complexity of the notions of ‘Balkan’ and ‘European’ and the ways in which they are habitually contested. This approach is also sensitive to the intricate and convoluted methods by which Balkanism may be appropriated to further geopolitical ambitions.

2.3 Balkanism as a geopolitical force

Clearly then, the rhetoric employed by the Balkanist and Orientalist discourses is deceptive in its homogenisation and dismissal of entire populations. However, it is possible to question whether such frameworks are worthy of the critical attention of geopolitical scholars. In response to this, Judith Butler has argued that such discourses are not simply aesthetic; they are performative in that they produce the effects that they name (1993: 2). A number of scholars have reapplied this thesis to the field of international relations, with Cynthia Weber asserting that ‘sovereign nation-states are not pre-given subjects but subjects in process’ representing ‘the ontological effects of practices which are performatively enacted’ (1997: 78, emphasis added). As such, ‘the idea of representation [becomes] a theatrical one’ and the Balkans ‘a theatrical stage affixed to Europe’ (Said 1978: 71). It follows then that Balkanism
could be acted out as an active geopolitical agent to encourage particular performances both in and out of the region.

This is the line of argument levelled at states in Western Europe for their reluctance to intervene in the region in the wars that followed the fragmentation of Yugoslavia. The violence that marred the region in the early 1990s was dismissed as the result of inevitable ancient ethnic hatreds by European commentators. This perhaps best encapsulated by the fact that in 1993, the Carnegie Endowment saw fit to provide an insight into the war by simply re-printing a report into the 1913 regional conflict entitled “The Other Balkan Wars” with a new introduction. In the only updated section, the Balkans are described as “a salient of non-European civilisation which has continued to the present day to preserve many of its non-European characteristics,” (Kennan 1993: 4). Prominent politicians invoked similar demarcations with Tony Blair describing the conflict as a historical test ‘on the doorstep of Europe’ (Goldsworthy 2005: 29). Such language framed the response of the international community in the region: the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina was divided along ethnic lines and thus ‘the very measures used to mediate the worse excesses of nationalistic politics created the conditions for its continued survival” (Jeffrey 2008: 432).

Such actions have led scholars of geopolitics to claim that Balkanism has been historically manufactured “to justify covert geopolitical games [...] in Europe’s unruly south-eastern corner,” (Schierup 1995: 32). Over a decade has passed since the end of the last war in this ‘corner’ of Europe, yet academics continue to draw upon the framework of Balkanism to explore contemporary developments in the region. Interestingly, rather than being invoked to explore the rhetoric of exclusion employed by the international community, it is increasingly being adopted to explore the language of inclusion (or integration) used within the corridors of power at the European Union.
2.4 Geopolitics and the European Union

With the war in Kosovo and the introduction of the Stability Pact for the region in 1999, the term ‘Balkans’ suddenly disappeared from popular circulation to be replaced by ‘Southeast Europe’ (Bjelić 2005: 16). Far from a coincidental amendment, this switch in terminology arguably signalled the beginning of a new relationship between Western Europe and the Balkan states and an end to the negative stigmas of ‘Balkanism’. No longer a problematic ‘non-European Other’ on the ‘doorstep’ of Europe, the Balkans now appeared to be on the road to European integration. So what explains this shift in the geopolitical approach of the European powers?

A number of critical geopolitical readings of the European Union associate it with empire; as a political unit perpetually seeking control over territory. The spatial expansion of the EU has been approached both as an example of a collection of core states’ exertion of power over a periphery (Behr 2007), and as a ‘neo-medieval model’ in which no single member is able to gain dominance over another (Zielonka 2006). Either way, it could be said that the tides of ‘Europeanisation’ have arrived at the borders of the Balkans. European officials have framed this advancement in stark geopolitical terms as the arrival of ‘democracy’, ‘freedom’, ‘security’ and ‘justice’ in the region (Ashdown 2005a, 2005b, Ashton 2010, Rehn 2008). They have also encouraged Balkan states to adopt the ‘European’ values of compromise and ‘open dialogue’ when reconciling the past (Ashton 2010). Such language is supportive of the claim that the EU is attempting to (re)invent itself as a ‘regional normative power’ by drawing upon a cosmopolitan framework of ‘European identity’ (Juncos 2005: 88).

Critical geopolitical commentators such as Glenny (1999), Jeffrey (2008) and Ó Tuathail (1995) have questioned the usefulness of the dominant narrative frameworks invoked by European representatives in the Balkans. It is argued that rhetoric such as that explored above only serves to conceal the tensions integral to the region’s political history and erase the power relations implicit in the process of EU integration (Jeffrey 2008). This has the effect of blurring the borders that separate the several independent states that populate the region.
Indeed, rather than addressing current socio-political conflicts on a case-by-case basis, it is argued that the EU has instead attempted to establish a form of ‘moral equivalency’ (Jeffrey 2007b) whereby all groups are expected to move forward with the same set of rights and responsibilities\textsuperscript{15}. Ironically however, due to the temporal proximity of the war and the continued influence of its legacies\textsuperscript{16}, such an approach overtly ‘serves the interests of one side while violating [those] of the other’ (Gromes 2009: 431).

The work of Merje Kuus (2004, 2007) is similarly critical of the dominant European narratives in the Balkan states. Her writings on ‘Europe’s eastern expansion’ (2004) reflect the emphasis here on unwinding the ‘official’ discursive threads of ‘Europe’ (albeit without drawing upon audience interpretation). Meanwhile, in Geopolitics Reframed (2007), she explores the ability of such discourse to ‘frame’ a course of events and in the process make certain outcomes ‘more possible’ than others. On this understanding, the popular language of ‘European integration’ has made constructive discussions into region’s socio-political disconnections less possible than previously; representing a backward step that flies in the face of the idea of a progressive ‘European future’. The Serbian academic Tanja Petrović has investigated the spatial imaginings that underpin such EU rhetoric in her work entitled ‘the Western Balkans is in the South’ (2009). Developing the findings of such material, it could be said that the current European discourses of integration in the region closely resemble the rhetoric of exclusion (or non-integration) present during the 1990s. This is an irony that that supports claims that the Balkans are ‘neither here nor there’ in the popular geographical imagination of Europe (Bjelić 2005: 16).

One possible explanation for the lack of a historically coherent European approach to the Balkans is the varying geopolitical agendas present within the EU itself. There is a body of literature united under the umbrella of what may be termed ‘Euronihilism' that denies the presence of any single naturally emergent European identity or ‘culture’. Indeed, in his work on the ‘Invisible Walls of Europe’, Ugo Vlaisavljević contests the existence of ‘Europeans’ as a political people; noting that “Europe today does not exist as a state but instead a cluster of states, moving within different orbits […] at different speeds of integration,” (2009: 115). On
this understanding, a unified ‘European’ approach to the Balkans appears impossible where Europe itself is not united. Indeed, the cultural anthropologist Carl-Ulrik Schierup has noted that the ‘opposing (geo)political interests’ of the European powers have themselves directly led to the ‘paralysis of any concerted long-term policy’ in the region; instead encouraging a ‘stalemate game of intervention-non intervention’ (1995: 38). Similarly, commentators have observed that this ‘ambivalent’ status of the EU in the Balkans provides it with ‘a decisive influence on the political order […] without the minimum of responsibility’ (Sarajlić 1998: 79). This is arguably a product of what Schierup terms ‘Fortress Europe syndrome’, whereby the reluctance of European states to engage with local dialogues in the Balkans is born out of a need to re-affirm their own, European identity (1995). On this reading, the creation of any lasting relationship with the Balkan peninsula may be dependent on a ‘debalkanization’ of Europe (1995: 42).

Assuming the Balkans exist in the liminal position – between West and East - envisaged by Balkanism, Bosnia and Herzegovina is at the centre of this representation. Indeed, it could be said that ‘the best and the worst of the imaginary Balkans meet on this small territory’ (Juncos 2005: 90). However, neither the idea of a settled multiethnic state present before the war, nor that of a violent ‘Balkan’ landscape present after the war does justice to the socio-political complexities that underpin contemporary life in BiH (Juncos 2005). The legacies of the post-war Dayton Agreement include ethnic segregation, economic stagnation and the operational breakdown of the state apparatus (Campbell 1999). Indeed, the ‘messiness’ of everyday interaction in BiH has become the focus of a considerable number of political studies, ranging from the role of state governance (Bieber 2006), ‘democracy’ (Chandler 1999) and NGOS (Jeffrey 2007a).

The prospect of EU integration in BiH is further complicated by the population’s multi-ethnic make-up: a demographic unconventional of a European nation state (Zielonka 2006). Indeed, Margaret Moore suggests that the tri-national ‘loose federation’ installed by the international community is constitutive of an ‘imaginative agreement’ that ‘moves beyond the Westphalian nation-state model’ (2001: 238). Furthermore, Bosnia’s current arrangement
features the double stigma of ‘Balkan’ and ‘Muslim’, an issue that many see as a major obstacle on the path to ‘European integration’. The ‘special treatment’ of BiH by the European powers is underlined by the fact that it is yet to be granted the EU visa free regime present in neighbouring Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro; an issue that many regard as ‘humiliating’ and ‘exasperating’ (Vlaisavljević 2009: 120). As such, the ‘imagined’ border separating the Balkans from Europe has become manifestly real for the citizens of BiH, as a daily reminder that they are still ‘out of Europe’ (Juncos 2005: 91). While such restrictions may be inconvenience at a demographic level, they project a sense of ‘we’ and ‘them’ ‘very significant at the level of political imaginary’ (Brown 2010).

The implication of this (non-)relationship between Europe and BiH has led Susan Woodward to note that ‘the main fault line of conflict’ in post-Dayton BiH has been not between the three constituent national groups, but instead ‘between Bosnians (of all three groups) and (representatives of) the international community’ (1999: cited Bose 2002: 6). It is poignant that the apparent ‘European values’ of open dialogue and reconciliation appear to be missing from the EU’s own approach in BiH. Instead, the rhetoric is that Bosnia is expected to move from a ‘Balkan past’ to a ‘European future’ (Jeffrey 2008: 428), an outlook that shifts responsibility from the shoulders of the European powers onto those of domestic politicians. This has led academics to call the EU to strengthen their commitments to BiH and to give ‘a clear signal that BiH is really welcome’ (Juncos 2005: 93, emphasis added).

So, the literary framework used to explore the relationship between Europe and the Balkans here reflects our interest in the performance of geopolitical discourse. As such, the focus is not on the financial and political institutions of the EU, but instead the type of rhetoric ‘used to provide legitimacy for Europeanisation’, that is, the process of ‘cognitive adaption to the EU,’ (Grabbe 2006: 50). The intent here is to investigate the positioning and weighting of such discourses within the intricate socio-political makeup of contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina. Parallels can be drawn between this approach and the Critical Geopolitical approach present in the work of Gearóid Ó Tuathail (1996a, 1996b, 2002). This work warns of the dangers of classical geopolitical performances through their erasure of heterogeneity and
‘spatialisation of difference’. In response, Ó Tuathail emphasises the importance of the personalised on-the-ground or ‘anti-geopolitical’ view in re-establishing the intricacies of conflict (1996c).

2.5 Personalised geopolitics

This chapter has focused so far on the historical crux of popular geopolitics: the act of geopolitical representation and discourse projection. Although undoubtedly important in its unravelling of the power relations that underpin political agendas, critical approaches to geopolitical discourse have been reproached for their ‘distance’ from on-the-ground events. In response to this, a new body of geopolitical literature is emerging with a central focus on ‘audience interpretation, consumption and attachment’ (Dittmer & Dodds 2008: 437). Implicit in this literature is an emphasis on local people as readers and interpreters of geopolitical text. Its proponents argue that it is not until a discourse interacts with an audience that it is truly ‘meaning making’ (Dittmer & Dodds 2008). Indeed, within a single text a ‘consumer’ may select from ‘multiple intersecting discourses associated with various aspects of their identity’ (Dittmer & Dodds 2008: 447). As such, there is a distinct gap between the geopolitical idea projected and the final ‘meaning’ interpreted by a recipient. So how is it that certain discourses hold more weight in some audiences than others? Livingstone (2005) argues that people who respond similarly to textual stimulants constitute a distinct geopolitical culture.

This understanding is arguably suggestive of a different relationship between agency and power/knowledge to that present in Judith Butler’s discussions of ‘performativity’ (1993). Indeed, the cultural geographer Matt Hills coined the term ‘non-volitional volition’ (2002: 159) in response to the separation of agency and power/knowledge central to ‘performativity’. He proposes that ‘fans’ (or national citizens) neither consciously project a preferred identity (or idea), nor act out an identity entirely the product of ‘performative’ geopolitical media. Instead he makes the case that that:
“Fans are ‘self-absent’ to the extent that they are unable to account, finally, for the emergence of their fandom, but they are also highly self-reflexive and wilfully/volitionally committed to their objects of fandom”

(Hills 2002: 159)

It follows then that no geopolitical text has a distinct pre-assigned ‘performance’. Instead its meaning is fluid, fragmented and open to the act of interpretation. This emphasises the need for researchers to take seriously the views and perceptions of geopolitical audiences.

This issue is no more poignant than in present day Bosnia & Herzegovina, a country in which the voices of the citizens have long been pacified by both domestic politicians and international commentators (Todorova 1997). With regard to the popular discourses of ‘European integration’, we may argue that critical geopolitical material such as that offered by Jeffrey (2008), Juncos (2005) and Ó Tuathail (1995) is then insufficient in its distance from the audience with which it is concerned. Indeed, for us to truly understand the significance of this rhetoric, there is a pressing requirement to engage with the citizens of BiH. This is arguably best done through extended periods of qualitative research: an area in which Feminist scholars have long been making considerable inroads. The work of Joanne Sharp (2003, 2007) is at the forefront of the feminist movement within political geography, making the case for a more ‘personalised’ approach to geopolitical research. It is argued that such a framework allows scholars to challenge ‘the basis for dominant forms of knowledge’ by contesting the division of the world into ‘political and apolitical’ (2003: 59). This involves an in-depth engagement with ‘everyday life’ beyond that provided by conventional geopolitical accounts, based on the premise that ‘the personal is political’ (2003: 60, emphasis added).

Such investigations are also central to the writings of Rachel Pain, which explore the complex relationship between geopolitics and everyday experience and interaction (2010). In Fear: Critical Geopolitics and Everyday Life (co-authored by Susan Smith), Pain charts the everyday experiences of people outside of the sphere of formal politics in order to deconstruct metanarratives of the ‘globalised geopolitics of fear’ (2008: 2). This is done by revealing dominant discourses such as the ‘War on Terror’ as being largely insignificant in the lives of everyday citizens. In a similar vein, the political geographer Nick Megoran has long promoted
the role of ethnography in geopolitical research (2006). His work argues that an in-depth anthropological engagement is a crucial response to the tendency of conventional geopolitical accounts to ‘erase people’s experiences and everyday understandings’ (2006: 622). This approach is reflected in his influential writings on local interpretations of boundary closures and ‘geopolitics of danger’ in Central Asia (2005, 2006).

With regard to the Balkan region, ‘personalised’ accounts of the trials and tribulations of everyday political life have been provided by Stef Jansen (1995, 2010) and Slavenka Drakulić (2006), amongst others. Jansen’s (1995) work expertly intertwines the different narratives of social interaction present in post-conflict Bosnia, with a focus on inter-ethnic tension. In contrast, Drakulić (2006) draws on her own experiences as a Croatian woman struggling to come to terms with the idea of ‘Europe’ along the border controls of BiH and Croatia. Such material provides a crucial anthropological edge to critical discursive accounts through its exploring of the everyday unfolding of geopolitical narratives in the Balkans.

Encompassing this approach, it is our aim here to use a critical geopolitical framework similar to that adopted in Merje Kuus’ (2004) deconstruction of ‘Europe’s eastern expansion’, and to personalise it through interaction with local audiences in BiH. It is hoped that this approach will allow us to use the interpretations of Bosnian citizens to contest the dominant rhetoric of EU officials and subsequently re-establish the complexities of the integration process in BiH.

2.6 Conclusions

This chapter has explored a broad spectrum of critical, post-colonial and ‘personal’ geopolitical literature in order to develop a coherent literary justification for this research. It has established a critical geopolitical framework such as that present in the important work of Merje Kuus (2004), and outlined the importance of personalising this through interaction with the views and perceptions of local political actors in BiH. The following section aims to engage with the theoretical and methodological frameworks of the study, before focusing on the analysis of the collected material.
Notes to Chapter 2.

1 The 'Orient' here represents the space East of Western Europe: focusing in particular on Northeastern Africa and Eastern Asia.

2 This process is one which is also attributed to the role of Classical Geopolitics (see O'Tuathail).

3 The past two decades have seen a shift of geopolitical interest from North Africa and East Asia to the Middle East, to which the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are testament.


6 This standpoint has been identified as an ambiguity at the heart of the Orientalist critique where, by attacking materials that distort or manipulate the 'authentic characteristics of the Orient', it is argued that Said gives it a 'genuine ontological status' (Todorova 1997: 11).

7 E.g. the 'ancient ethnic hatreds' discourse often used in reference to the Balkan wars (see Jeffrey 2008, Ó Tuathail 1996a).

8 Appropriated from his discussion of the 'theatre' of the Orient.


10 This is a reference to the US-led 1995 Dayton Agreement in Bosnia & Herzegovina.

11 In a similar manner to the approaches of 'tribalism' and 'the white man’s burden' explored in postcolonial literature.

12 For example see the recent work of Jeffrey (2008), Juncos (2005) and Kuus (2004).

13 BiH signed the EU's Stabilization and Association Agreement in 2008 (see EU-UN Partnership 2008).

14 For example see the work of Zielonks (2006) and Behr (2007).

15 This approach is closely aligned to that of ‘multiculturalism’; an approach that is heavily criticised by the writings of the post-Foucaultian philosopher Wendy Brown (2006, 2010).

16 For example, the ongoing issues of war crime tribunals, boundary disputes, population repatriations and missing persons.

17 It could be said that all European states are to an extent multi-ethnic or multi-national but that they are consolidated due to the domination of one core nation (Vlaisavljević 2009).

18 This is a case strenuously denied by EU representatives but often made by scholars who point to similar case studies in Turkey and Albania. For example see the work of Talal Asad (2002).

19 This is a temporal adaptation of Said’s critical discussion of Orientalism (1978). In BiH, it has been similarly encapsulated as a move from 'Dayton to Brussels' (Ó Tuathail 1995, Sarajlić 2008).


21 As termed by Ó Tuathail (e.g. see 2006).
3. Investigating audience interpretation

3.1 Introduction

This section seeks to establish a firm methodological footing for the research project. It starts by outlining an appropriate theoretical framework for the study, before exploring the usefulness of the cities of Sarajevo, Tuzla and Mostar as sites of field research. It then examines the chosen methods in relation to the research objectives outlined in the first chapter and concludes by negotiating the important issues of communication, ‘positionality’, and research ethics.

3.2 Theoretical framework

Mirroring the various theoretical threads present within the literature, this research will appropriate aspects of both Postcolonial and Postmodern theory. It starts with the understanding that power and knowledge are relational, as originally proposed in the work of Michel Foucault (1970, 1980). Following Foucault’s lead, the study maintains that power is not contained within state structures but instead dispersed and fragmented throughout the fabric of everyday life and interaction. As such, dominant forms of knowledge are understood as ‘inseparable’ from dominant relations of power and are therefore ‘creative of the world, not just reflective of it’ (Sharp 2003: 59). This Poststructuralist thrust to the study is reflected in its focus on the deconstruction of the metanarratives and ‘common sense’ understandings projected by European institutions. As such, our general approach may be situated under the umbrella of ‘Critical Theory’. However, the pursuit of critique integral to this framework need not necessitate the abandonment of all normative argument, where we are concerned with the views and experiences of a potentially vulnerable human population. Instead, we may appropriate a broader understanding of Critical Theory; where the aim is to ‘explain what is wrong with current social reality[…] and provide both clear norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social transformation’ (Bohman 2007, emphases added).
Also influential to this study is the extensive body of literature negotiating the issues of identity, nationalism and ‘the invention of tradition’. Much of this material uses the phenomenology of ‘otherness’ as a framework to explore such practices. It is our aim to expand such post-structural understandings of socio-political practice to the scale of ‘imagined geographies’. It is tempting here to appropriate a Saidian politics of ‘Othering’ such as that central to *Orientalism* (1978). However, to adopt this understanding is also to adopt the significant theoretical baggage attached to it. For our purposes then, we may develop a broad framework of ‘otherness’, sensitive to the socio-political specificities of contemporary Bosnia-Herzegovina that seeks to deconstruct, not establish, homogenous (geo)political designations. This builds on the approach present within the Balkanist critique, where our aim is to restore ‘historicity informed by the complexity of everyday life’; accounting not only for those issues that unify, but also ‘for those diversities in space and time’ that are undesirable to geopolitical agendas (Dirlik 2007: 123).

These diversities will be examined in Bosnia-Herzegovina through a focus on ‘audience interpretation’, accessed through a mix of in-depth, qualitative methodologies. Discursive practices will be implemented as a means to ‘disturb those practices that are settled, untie what appears to be sewn up and render produced what seems to be naturally emergent’ (Campbell 1998a: 4). As such, the study aims to develop a Post-structural account of everyday political interaction in contemporary BiH informed by extensive readings of Feminist geographies and Critical Geopolitics. Theoretical traps implicit in this approach may include that of ‘comparative trivialisation’, whereby the responsibilities of BiH become distanced or marginalised by an unrelenting focus on the conduct of the European institutions. In addition, our multi-theoretical framework may also be open to over-complication due to the absence of a *single* coherent theoretical standpoint. However, in response to this we may argue that this approach reflects the depth of the aims and objectives set out in opening chapter; where the focus is on conducting an *in depth* study of the *dominant* European presentations of Bosnia’s EU integration.
3.3 Participants, places and practicalities

The opening chapter outlined the significance of accessing the views and interpretations of Bosnia’s younger generations for the purpose of this research. Students were subsequently selected as an appropriate target group due to both their added interest in the integration process, and their relative accessibility in terms of numbers and language.

It is important then to acknowledge the nature of the sample group created by this approach and how ‘representative’ this is of the wider population in BiH. Questions arise here with regard to both the type of student that was likely to participate, and the usefulness of the student community as a whole in representing Bosnian society. In response to these issues, it is important to re-state the aim of the research. This is ‘to conduct an in-depth study of students in BiH in order contest dominant presentations of Bosnia’s ‘EU integration’. It is plainly not plausible for such a study to be truly ‘representative’ within the confines of an MA dissertation. Instead, the aim is to be ‘illustrative’, and to better understand the ‘meanings people attribute to their lives’ (Valentine 2005: 111). Similarly, the discursive approaches are concerned with the persistent (and not necessarily ‘representative’) geopolitical narratives presented by European officials. This is a similar outlook to that present in the work of Merje Kuus (2007: 9):

“The primary concern of discursive analyses is not to reveal deep hidden meanings of political practice--what individual decision-makers ‘truly’ think or what beliefs are shared among the population. Their concern is rather with the persistent assumptions, themes, and tropes that both enable and constrain political debate and political practice”.

The cities of Sarajevo, Tuzla and Mostar were selected as sites for data collection due to their large, English-speaking student populations and accessibility in terms of both transport and accommodation. This allowed the researcher to maximise their exposure to potential subjects across three geographically distinct regions of BiH. Although politically significant, the city of Banja Luka was excluded from the study due to its comparatively high costs (in terms of transport and accommodation) and relatively low English-speaking student population. The
selected cities of Sarajevo and Mostar are of particular political and cultural resonance due to their targeted destruction during the 1992-1995 war.

3.4 Overview of methods

The methodology of this research was dependant on a triangulation of critical discourse analyses, semi-structured interviews and student focus groups. All qualitative methods were conducted during an extended period of residential fieldwork in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 12th June – 3rd July 2010. Each method was developed in response to the following aims and objectives:

(a) To outline the ways in which the idea of ‘European integration’ is presented by EU officials in BiH

This objective was addressed through the application of critical discourse analysis to the policy documents, advisory papers and speeches of supranational organisations in BiH. This information is public and has been sourced from the Office of the High Representative (OHR), the EU Commission, the Council of Europe, the UN, and prominent NGOs including the International Crisis Group. This analysis focuses predominantly on the rhetoric of written text and its invoking of ‘imaginative geographies’, representing a similar approach to that present in the work of Jeffrey (2008), Juncos (2005), and Kuus (2004). The aim of this was to unravel the dominant (geo)political themes present in the language of EU officials with regard to Bosnia’s European integration.

(b) To explore the ways in which these discourses are contested by Bosnia’s student population

The second objective was met through a mixture of focus groups and interview techniques with subjects in Sarajevo, Tuzla and Mostar. Five ‘framing’ interviews took place with professionals across BiH in order to identify and examine the dominant geopolitical themes of
‘European integration’ in BiH that could be then explored in more detail with student participants. These took place with a member of an EU department, a representative of International Crisis Group and various Bosnian academics (see appendix 1). A further eleven extended interviews were conducted with students across BiH, while a focus group took place at the University of Tuzla with a total of five participants from a range of academic backgrounds. Both interview and focus group subjects were obtained through internal round-robin emails, university contacts and the researcher’s contact with students while on-site. The majority of these took place on campus, after consultation with the relevant health and safety representatives.

Semi-structured interviews were selected as a means to gather relatively large volumes of qualitative data over short periods of time. Subjects were initially presented with open-ended questions regarding everyday life in BiH before being prompted to respond to a selection of the popular discourse emanating from the European institutions. Questions were then adapted in line with participants' responses, whilst aiming to keep all discussion on-topic.

In addition to interviews, focus groups (FGs) were used in order to generate higher levels of debate and interaction than that possible in interview situations (Ely 1994). They also reduce the input (and therefore bias) of the researcher. As such, FGs were identified as a useful method, albeit one that necessitates considerable planning and organisation. However, their drawback is that they tend to be compromised by a lack of moderator control and/or an insufficient system of data recording (Creswell 1994, Denscombe 1998). As an attempt to control this, the focus group in Tuzla was conducted in English (where interpreters were likely to prove ineffective) and recorded using a digital voice recorder. All qualitative data was analysed through the use of thematic coding; a simplistic approach that it was hoped would help to capture the depth and quality of the collected materials (see Kitchin & Tate 2000).
(c) To examine the potential impact of these interpretations on BiH’s integration into European structures

As objective (b) above.

3.5 Issues of communication

Clearly, where all interviews and focus groups are conducted in a language non-native to the field of study, communication becomes a crucial consideration\(^{14}\). As such, there are two factors to be aware of here: (a) the subject’s misinterpretation of a research question, and (b) the researcher’s misinterpretation of a subject’s response. Both of these issues have the potential to de-rail the research process and manipulate the analyses. In response to this, the researcher conducted prior consultations with participants both to pre-brief them on the interview topic and to ensure that they had a fluent command of English. Additionally, the researcher communicated a short summary at the end of each interview to ensure that the interviewee had not been misunderstood (as encouraged in Keegan et. al 2003). Overall, it was important to be constantly aware of these issues during the research process and to be clear and concise in the planning and conducting of all qualitative methods.

3.6 ‘Positionality’ and research ethics

Feminist scholars such as Linda McDowell (1999) and Donna Haraway (1988) have long argued that there is no such thing as a ‘view from nowhere’. Instead, all knowledge is ‘positioned’ or ‘situated’ (Haraway 1988). Here, it is important to outline my position as a young white male in Bosnia: a scenario that was likely to influence both my own perceptions, and other people’s perceptions of me. To reduce the impact of this, I endeavoured to abide by local cultural norms and to adopt a position of political ‘innocence’ or ‘nativity’ during data collection\(^{15}\) (Aitken 2001: 79). Beyond this, it was important to be self-reflexive at each stage of the research process (England 1994).
As part of this process it is also important to indicate my position as a student. This helped both to access participants through academic institutions, and also to build comradery with them during the interview process (through shared experiences and activities). As a result, subjects were often more open with regard to their views and interpretations; an outcome that undoubtedly aided the research process.

With regard to research ethics, measures were taken to avoid instances of ‘covert research’ or deliberate deception by ensuring that participants are aware of their being involved in a form of political investigation (ERSC 2005: 25). Where some of the issues under examination were potentially sensitive in nature, these were made explicit to participants prior to their involvement (Israel & Hay 2000). Such issues were communicated as part of the participant pre-briefing outlined above.

### 3.7 Conclusions

This chapter has navigated the major theoretical and methodological issues implicit in the process conducting of qualitative research in a foreign environment. It has appropriated a Foucauldian understanding of the dispersed societal presence of power, within a broad theoretical conception of Critical Theory. In addition, it has established a sound methodological framework closely aligned to that present in the research of Feminist scholars, sensitive to the aim of conducting an in depth geopolitical study to contest dominant presentations of EU integration in BiH. The following chapter introduces the findings of this research; outlining the range of different ways in which Bosnian citizens challenged and contested the dominant rhetoric of EU officials.
Notes to Chapter 3.

1 See Cannon (2001), Finlayson (2008) and White (1983) for an overview of the debate concerning the relationship between critical and normative theory.


3 For example the critique that it fails to differentiate the historical inconsistencies erased by the broad designations of ‘Occident’ and ‘Orient’ (see Dirlik 1997, Todorova 1997).

4 See note 8 in chapter 1 for an outline of the additional steps taken to conform with this objective.

5 As explored by Dittmer and Dodds (2008).

6 As termed by the American Historian Peter Gay in 1978 (cited Todorova 1997).

7 For example with the implications of both the European Council-led Bologna reform and the ongoing issues of visa liberalisation (for example with student exchanges).

8 The student population of BiH has contains the highest proportion of English-language speakers. Translators could not be accommodated in the research budget.

9 This is the question of how representative English-speaking (and potentially politically-mobilised) students are of the wider student community. Little was (or could have been) done to counter this besides seeking a diverse range of participants from all areas of the university.

10 It also happened that the researcher interviewed subjects from all of the three politically designated groups in BiH (‘Serbs’, ‘Croats’ and ‘Bosniaks’). This was not a deliberate objective of the research as such (post-structural accounts deem such categories to be manufactured), but instead an observation that restricts the possibility of bias towards one constituent group (be it ‘imagined’ or not).

11 Banja Luka is significantly less culturally diverse than the international city of Sarajevo, for example.

12 A participant number of 5 is relatively low within the spectrum offered by focus groups. This has been selected in order to minimise the likelihood of problems associated with a loss of control over the participants (Conradson 2005). This likelihood is heightened where there is a language barrier between the participants and the researcher (as explored in section 5.3).

13 The impact of such measures on the sample group was likely to have been minimal where the majority of participants had a fluent command of English.

14 Translators were not employed due to the high proportion of English speakers present within the student populations of Sarajevo, Tuzla and Mostar, and the fact that the associated costs are outside of those available within an MA thesis. It is also worth noting that translators themselves are not devoid of methodological complications (see Keegan et. al 2003).

15 This approach is particularly useful where researching sensitive topics (see Renzetti & Lee 1993).
4.1 Introduction

As the first of two analysis chapters, this section examines the ways in which the dominant European discourses used to frame Bosnia’s EU integration are both contested and embodied by local political actors in BiH. It uses audience interpretations as a tool to complicate and deconstruct much of the stock rhetoric employed by EU officials to delineate the relationship between BiH and ‘Europe’. This allows the study to propose that EU institutions are in fact increasing a sense of European disillusionment amongst Bosnian citizens through their continued communication of crude and simplistic messages to a sophisticated local audience.

4.2 Contesting EU discourse

As noted in Chapter two, we may argue that geopolitical text has no fixed or pre-assigned ‘performance’ and its meaning is instead formed upon its interaction with a particular audience (Dittmer & Dodds 2008). This was found to be the case in BiH, where the meaning interpreted from the language of EU politicians often directly contested the original discursive thrust presented by an author. We may explore this occurrence within three dominant EU discourses, identified through the analysis of official speeches and policy documents.

4.2.1 ‘Bosnia must get on the road to Europe’

Arguably the strongest narrative emanating from the popular language of EU politicians in BiH is the idea that Bosnia should be planted irreversibly ‘on the road to Europe’. Central to this narrative is the notion that European integration should be the key priority for BiH and that decision makers ‘must put EU-related reforms at the top of their political agenda’ (Rehn 2008b, emphasis added). This goal was supported by continual reiteration of the need for BiH to adopt ‘the European perspective’ and to take ‘the European course’ (Ashton 2010, Stiglic...
EU commentators appeared to be confident that such objectives were shared amongst local, with Catherine Ashton (High Representative of Foreign Affairs) asserting that:

“Everyone in Bosnia and Herzegovina wants to join the EU – every citizen and most elected leaders.”

(Ashton 2010)

Assuming that this statement is not based upon the result of some large-scale survey whose results are yet to be made public, it assumes a reflection of the goals presented by EU politicians in the views and perceptions of Bosnian citizens. This assumption was found to be false in the case of this study. Indeed, we may identify three separate ways in which such rhetoric was challenged and contested in BiH: through expressions of mockery and cynicism, concerted political engagement, and the de facto rejection of the geopolitical separation of BiH from ‘Europe’.

Firstly, the dominant interpretation of the prospect of European integration was one of mockery and cynicism. Participants were often quick to deconstruct the EU’s self-aggrandising framework of ‘European integration’. A student of Democracy and Human Rights satirically discussed this process as the idea of post-conflict societies ‘running to embrace the mother of Europe’, who takes care of them as ‘rebellious sons’. Similarly, a design student compared the EU’s approach to one of a supposed ‘liberator’ whose presence in BiH would make all the country’s problems ‘disappear’. In addition, many participants fervently questioned the notion of internal difficulties being erased by a ‘European future’; mocking the suggestion that ‘Bosnia is going to function as soon as [it] get[s] inside the EU’. Indeed, one subject approached the entire concept of European integration as a ‘joke’, asserting that ‘no one talks about Europe in a serious way’. Such interpretations deconstruct and trivialise the ideological constructions of ‘Europe’ implicit in the original language of EU officials.

We may argue that such cynical and sarcastic responses are a direct reaction to the crude and over-simplistic frameworks invoked by the rhetoric of EU commentators. Central to this
idea is the discussion of the EU as the only option for Bosnia on its quest to rid itself of the ‘burden’ of its past, where integration is associated with ‘opting for the future’ (Petrović 2009: 182). Significantly for citizens of BiH, this narrative is presented against a backdrop of widespread political inaction: both of domestic politicians in their reluctance to comply with EU conditions, and of European institutions in their failure to push through genuine change in a stagnant political environment. This clash between EU ideal and Bosnian reality generated a sense of mistrust and suspicion audible in the responses in BiH citizens. As such, the central discursive thrust of ‘Europe as future’ was blunted to the extent that it could be used as a tool to undermine the language of European commentators.

It is possible to note a second way in which participants deconstructed the significance of ‘the road to Europe. This was through an in-depth engagement with European integration as a political-economic process. Bosnian citizens were quick to draw out the specificities of this process by questioning ‘the kind of road that will lead us to Europe’ and the conditions attached to the journey. Indeed, a number of subjects rejected the EU’s current approach out of hand, arguing that it is ‘insensitive to regional issues’ and that it fundamentally fails to meet the ‘needs’ of Bosnia. Similarly, a handful of participants critiqued the lack of flexibility in the integration process and its failure to engage with ‘the specific background of each country’. Such observations often put the EU’s raison d’être under close examination, concluding that it is a powerful ‘economic community of nations’ that has no interest in accepting additional member countries ‘just like that’.

We may argue here that the desire amongst Bosnian citizens to engage with the specific dynamics of the integration process was a direct response to EU commentators’ depoliticising of a highly political process. Indeed, through their presentation of the ‘road to the EU’ as the logical and indisputable pathway to BiH’s future, such officials end the possibility of any substantial debate into the advantages and shortcomings of the integration process. A representative of the University of Tuzla described this process as the ‘reduction of politics to management’ through its assumption that people have a single demand, which, once met, will dissolve all other issues. This supports Kuus’ assertion that all discourses ‘constitute
particular political claims as natural and normal and thereby remove them from political
debate’ (2007: 9). It is also a similar critique to that levelled against the multiculturalist
discourse, which questions the establishment of ‘moral equivalency’ in the place of political
dynamics and inequalities (Brown 2010, Jeffrey 2007b). In this sense then, we may argue
that the above responses were attempts by Bosnian citizens to re-establish the (geo)political
complexities and uncertainties of the integration process in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A third interpretation of this discourse brought into question the very geopolitical logic on
which it was based; the spatial imagination that firmly positions BiH outside of Europe. A
number of subjects disputed this assumption by affirming that BiH is today in the ‘centre of
Europe’\textsuperscript{17}, and by questioning when the so-called ‘Eastern bloc’ was ever supposed to have
left the continent\textsuperscript{18}. These accounts were supported by local academic commentators who
accused the geographical imagination invoked by EU rhetoric of being based on a ‘completely
skewed’ delineation\textsuperscript{19}. This delineation clearly and visibly divides the territory of Bosnia &
Herzegovina from the continent of ‘Europe’. This is arguably constitutive of the Balkanist
geographical imagination, in which the Balkan region is envisaged as a problematic space ‘on
the doorstep of Europe’ (Goldsworthy 2005: 29). Although such observations may seem
straightforward, they in fact constitute some of the fiercest critiques of EU narratives through
their detachment of political community from territory: of the European Union from ‘Europe’.
This detachment is a process central to the project of Critical Geopolitics and the work of
Gearóid Ó Tuathail (2002, 2006), in particular. The ontological separation of Bosnia and
Herzegovina from ‘Europe’ was also a theme invoked by EU commentators to explore internal
problems in BiH.

4.2.2 ‘Bosnia must face up to its own problems’

“The leaders of Bosnia Herzegovina can either continue to quarrel and fall behind their
neighbours, or get on with reform and move forward towards the EU.”

(Rehn 2008b)
The reiteration of local responsibility invoked here by the language of Commissioner Rehn arguably reveals a contradiction central to the EU’s approach in BiH. This is that once on the ‘path to Europe’, Bosnia must face its problems alone in order to move forward ‘towards the EU’. These problems are portrayed as ones of corruption, political instability and ‘extremes of nationalism’ (Rehn 2008a), in an approach that arguably constitutes a ‘contemporary variant’ of Balkansim (Petrović 2009: 182). This narrative appears to shift responsibility from the European institutions to the domestic political circles in which we are told there is ‘no sense of urgency or responsibility to overcome stalemate;’ (Rehn 2008b). It is possible to identify two separate ways in which this idea was contested by student audiences in BiH.

Firstly, a number of participants drew parallels between the current problems present in BiH and those across the border in the EU, asserting that ‘they are talking about the problems in our countries, but they are universal’. Examples of this included state security issues in Belgium, uprisings of right-wing politics in Holland, and rioting and political rallies in France. A student of Industrial Design argued that these situations, coupled with the EU’s ‘fix this, do that’ approach to BiH, amounted to ‘two-faced politics’. He maintained that through its deep institutional presence in BiH, the EU has to take part-responsibility for the country’s current state and ‘help us to solve it - not just to pretend, to be on the side […], to put the big issues under the table’. Similarly, participants in Mostar appealed for more support with local issues of conflict resolution, instead of the current ‘it’s your conflict, you solve it’ approach. Such reactions poignantly challenge EU officials’ internalising of the problems in BiH. As such, they deconstruct the assumptions that prevent audiences from perceiving the ‘similarities between the two parts of the continent’ (Petrović 2009: 183), re-establishing the fact that ‘Bosnia is not an island’ with regard to its socio-political difficulties.

A second way in which participants contested the narrative of BiH needing to ‘get on with reform’ was through the poignant assertion that Bosnia was in fact ‘waiting’ for ‘Europe’. This is an ironic reversal of the idea that the EU is being made to wait by Bosnia while it picks up its ‘pace on the European path’ (Godinho 2007). To quote one postgraduate student in Sarajevo: “what is Bosnia for example? Because I know I’m ready, [my friend] Latifa’s ready, so many people are ready.” This testimony was supported by a representative of
International Crisis Group’s assertion that ‘the Balkans will not sit and wait for the EU to sort out its own internal issues’\(^{29}\). Indeed, respondents deemed the idea of the EU being held back by BiH’s reluctance to solve a number of intricate and multi-faceted problems as deeply ‘cynical’\(^{30}\). This was illustrated by the account of one lecturer at Sarajevo University: “It’s like you spot a guy in the ocean and you are in a huge boat and you say ‘I am waiting for you to climb on’: [they] need a ladder to climb up!”\(^{31}\). We may then argue that attitudes of restlessness, impatience, and accusation among EU officials only serve to further a sense of European exasperation and disillusionment amongst Bosnian citizens. Crucially, this dialogue is lacking in the genuine political support and encouragement necessary to influence political mobilisation and to make a difference in BiH.

4.2.3 ‘European integration will make a difference in BiH’

“It will be rewarding in the end.”

(Ashton 2010)

Finally, EU officials often alluded to the idea that integration into European structures would bring about positive change in the lives of Bosnian citizens. This understanding stems from the linear notions of a ‘European future’ and a new chapter in the history of BiH (Ashon 2010, Stiglic 2008). However, participants often approached this narrative with both scepticism and ambivalence. Again, we may identify two dominant ways in which this was manifested.

Firstly, a number of participants responded to this narrative by engaging with the socio-political shortcomings of EU membership: deconstructing prominent projections of Europe as ‘the promised land’\(^{32}\). The EU was instead often rationalised as ‘an economic community of nations’ driven by ‘money’ and ‘power’\(^{33}\) that ‘would change nothing’ in the lives of Bosnian people\(^{34}\). Respondents also highlighted the recent failings of the integration process in Romania, Bulgaria and Greece\(^{35}\) to argue that the EU may not be ‘so coherent and stable a structure as what people may [believe]’\(^{36}\). Such interpretations were supported by the testimony of one representative of an international research institute, which questioned the outward promotion of the EU while it is ‘tumbling and falling apart internally’\(^{37}\). We may draw
links between these perspectives and those promoted by theorists of ‘Euronilism’, in which Europe is approached not as a collection of set ‘values’ or ‘culture’, but instead ‘a cluster of states, moving within different [political] orbits’ (Vlaisavljević 2009: 115).

The second and most prominent response to the notion of ‘EU-influenced change’ was one of frustration and ambivalence. Although the benefits of a free visa regime were readily identified, students often admitted that ‘it is difficult to learn about those other things’38. Even participants with friends in the European institutions asserted that they had ‘no idea’39 what the institutions would change, arguing that their work was ‘not visible in everyday life’40. This was exemplified by the reaction of one mature student in Sarajevo:

“I have been working for an international organisation for several years and I don’t know what it means to be a member country of the EU: what am I getting except a visa?”

(Post-graduate student in Public Administration41)

Such testimonies were supported by the opinions of one official at International Crisis Group (ICG), who implied that despite having a number of benefits for the country, the EU ‘didn’t bother to communicate [these] properly to the local people’42. In addition, Bosnian academics were critical of EU’s supposed ‘integration dialogue’, arguing that outreach projects ‘go to universities, meet the Deans and go home’43. In this way, the approach of European officials in BiH appears reluctant to outline the specific changes that membership would bring to Bosnia and its constituent peoples. Instead, citizens are met by the nondescript ‘step-by-step’ approach of the European Institutions. We may link this to Petrović’s (2009) assertion that BiH is given one task, congratulated by EU politicians, and then informed of the next task. Such a narrow, short-term approach arguably prevents citizens from seriously engaging with the long-term specifics of the integration process. Interestingly, a representative of one EU institution acknowledged this criticism, asserting that the framing of Bosnia’s integration conveys a ‘dishonesty’ that does not go unnoticed by Bosnian observers44. Indeed, a sense of frustration was often audible in the responses of research participants. When queried on the ‘purpose’ of the EU institutions in BiH, a handful of subjects cynically responded that it was for
politicians to ‘get paid’\textsuperscript{46}, ‘sell their stories’\textsuperscript{46} and eat in ‘fancy restaurants’\textsuperscript{47}. Such assertions demonstrate both a lack of local understanding of the work of EU institutions, and a (perhaps subsequent) mistrust of their political representatives. We may then argue that through their continued rolling-out of hollow, short-term objectives, EU commentators keep citizens critically uninformed of the specifics of the integration process in BiH; alienating a number of perceptive local actors from a crucial (geo)political discussion.

This section has outlined the ways in which three dominant presentations of BiH’s ‘path to Europe’ have been contested and challenged by Bosnian citizens. Such findings arguably support Dittmer & Dodds’ (2008) discussion of the geopolitical audience as the key interpreter of discursive meaning, where the ideas invoked by the rhetoric of European officials were often mocked and disempowered by the interpretations of Bosnian citizens. It would however be misleading to conclude that such presentations have had no lasting influence or ‘performance’ on audiences in BiH. Indeed, there was some evidence of EU narratives being actively embodied by local actors.

4.3 Embodying EU discourse

Although habitually contested in the analyses so far, the dominant discourses of EU integration would not be so critical (nor the literature that analyses them so broad) if they were merely dismantled by every ‘reader’. Instead, they are to an extent embodied by an audience. We may identify two dominant examples of this within the testimonies of Bosnian citizens.

Firstly, at various points during the research process it was possible to identify strands of EU idealism within the language of Bosnian participants. A number of respondents asserted that there is at least ‘some kind of guarantee of stability’ in the EU\textsuperscript{48}, and that the European institutions would not ‘let another war happen here’\textsuperscript{49}. Such assumptions appear poignantly similar to those present in pre-war BiH, where the dominant public perception was that the international community would not allow war to break out in the region (Rusinow 1995,
Woodward 1995). Aside from their own assertions, participants also accused colleagues and fellow citizens of projecting EU idealism. This was often linked to education, with one student in Sarajevo asserting that ‘if they don’t read reports, everyone is overwhelmed by the integration process’. Such ‘overwhelmed’ understandings were thought to be based on the assumptions that ‘all of the big countries are in the EU’, and that integration would bring immediate economic opportunities to BiH. In response to these interpretations, students underlined the importance of maintaining a ‘critical mind’ when interpreting the dominant narratives of the European institutions. In this way, it could be argued that a number of Bosnian citizens were themselves proponents of Critical Geopolitics through their deliberate deconstruction of the ‘spatializing practices’ of politicians ‘who set themselves up as authorities on the totality of the world political map’ (Ó Tuathail 1996b: 60).

A second discursive thread that appeared to be embodied within Bosnian audiences was the idea that BiH is unable to take responsibility for itself. Despite the accusations of EU cynicism and hypocrisy explored earlier, a number of participants sympathised with this position. One student in Tuzla stated that BiH has been a ‘great country […] only when occupied by someone else’, while another stressed that ‘we don’t know how to rule by ourselves’.

Strikingly, a student of political science in Mostar explored the domestic political situation by simply stating that ‘most people here are stupid’. These interpretations are arguably comparable to those in popular circulation outside of the region during the Bosnian war; therefore constituting a form of self-Balkanisation (Schierup 1995, Todorova 1997). This thesis was supported by the testimony of a postgraduate student who claimed that his project on exposing limited European depictions of BiH had been vehemently criticised by Bosnians who had argued that BiH’s political reality was ‘even worse’ than the accounts projected by EU officials. It may be possible to draw connections between such observations and Judith Butler’s (1997) thesis on the ‘performativity’ of discourse. Here the Balkanist sentiment implicit in the dominant narratives of EU officials appears to have been performed by a segment of the Bosnian population.
With regard to the potential impact of such performances, it could be argued that through their reiteration of wartime Balkanist sentiment and the irresponsibility of the Bosnian population, they are furthering a sense of self-deprecation and national disillusionment, re-emphasised against overtly positive presentations of ‘Europe’. In this way, the reproduction of EU discourse appears to constitute the same act of political demobilisation as that present in instances of its contestation. Crucially however, the embodiment (as opposed to contestation) of the dominant integration narratives results not in distancing Bosnian citizens from Europe; but instead in dividing them from their own population; where participants were left disillusioned by the failures of their compatriots to challenge the crude rhetoric of EU officials. This added dimension of national alienation led one academic at Tuzla University to assert that the people of BiH have started to feel ‘isolation on both sides’.

4.4 Conclusions

This section has explored the ways in which the dominant geopolitical rhetoric of the EU integration process within BiH is both contested and embodied by the interpretations of local audiences. These findings were found to support Dittmer & Dodds’ (2008) emphasis of the act of ‘audience interpretation’, and Butler’s (1997) discussion of the ‘performativity’ of discourse respectively. Where Bosnian citizens’ contestation of the dominant narratives of EU integration were found to re-establish the complexities of the integration process, their ‘performance’ is a reminder of the power of geopolitical rhetoric to influence local events. Such observations often exposed the language of European officials as being insensitive and over-simplistic; distancing a sophisticated local audience from a crucial (geo)political discussion. This supports the argument that instead of presenting a new and inclusive geopolitics of the ‘future’, the EU’s ‘integration dialogue’ in BiH instead represents a continuation of the crude and solidifying geopolitics of the past. The following chapter explores the validity of this argument in light of the EU’s approach to the wider region.
Notes to Chapter 4.

1 This has also be referred to as the ‘European path’ (Godinho 2007)

2 BiH is not currently considered an official ‘candidate country’ and is therefore omitted from EU barometer statistics

3 Interview 3

4 Interview 12

5 Focus Group Participant 1

6 Interview 2

7 For example their continued failure to oversee the long-predicted closure of the Office of the High Representative

8 Such responses reflect those outlined by the UN (2003) in its discussion of the long-term impact of a lack of political mobilisation and change on young people in BiH

9 Focus Group Participant 2

10 Interviews 3, 4

11 Interview 1

12 Interview 4

13 Interview 15

14 Interview 20

15 Interview 15

16 Interview 8

17 Interview 16

18 Interview 6

19 Interview 14: A lecturer of Political Science at the University of Sarajevo

20 Interview 17

21 Interview 20

22 Interview 3

23 Interviews 6, 17

24 Interview 12

25 Ibid.

26 Interview 20
The words of a representative of EUPM in Sarajevo (Interview 7)

Interview 4

Interview 11, emphasis added

Interviews 3, 4, 7, 14

Interview 14

Interview 6

Interview 2

Interview 20

Interviews 5, 6, 13

Interview 6

Interview 11

Interview 16

Interview 20

Interview 12

Interview 15

Interview 11

Interview 9

Interview 7: A representative of EUPM in Sarajevo

Interview 15

Interview 21

Interview 19

Focus Group Participant 2

Focus Group Participant 1, see also Interview 21

Interview 4

Focus Group Participant 1

See interviews 2, 3

Interview 3

Focus Group Participant 1
55 Focus Group Participant 2

58 Interview 19

57 Interview 6

58 Interview 9
5. A ‘project’ of the EU? Challenging the European institutions’ special treatment of BiH

5.1 Introduction

Developing the previous chapter’s contestation of the dominant frameworks employed by EU officials to delineate BiH’s European integration, this section seeks to broaden our geographical focus by comparing the EU’s treatment of BiH to that of the wider region. It uses audience interpretation as a means to challenge the EU’s differential treatment of BiH, with a particular focus on its continued imposition of the European visa regime. The chapter proposes that this treatment is short sighted and insensitive to the recent history of the region; resulting in the igniting of regional and domestic tensions and the continued exclusion of the Bosnian public from a crucial (geo)political discussion.

5.2 Left behind: BiH, the Balkans and the EU

Despite the continued inroads made by Slovenia and Croatia on the path to and beyond EU accession, BiH continues to languish behind its regional neighbours. We have seen how EU officials have attributed this to internal ‘quarrelling’, ‘extremes of nationalism’ (Rehn 2008a) and a lack of ‘responsibility to overcome stalemate’ (Rehn 2008b). However, connections can be made between the current socio-political status of BiH and that of the neighbouring states of Croatia and Serbia. This is not only through their immediate territorial borders, but also through their direct role in Bosnia’s recent political history (Woodward 1999). As such, the EU’s treatment of these two states was found to be under the close scrutiny of audiences in BiH. By far the most accessible yardstick for Bosnian citizens to compare their political status to that of their territorial neighbours was the issue of visa liberalisation.
5.2.1 ‘Walled in’: the role of the visa regime in BiH

“You can debate if you are ‘free’ or not on a philosophical level but here it’s kind of obvious that you are not free.”

(Student of Modern Languages, Sarajevo University)

The EU’s continued imposition of the visa regime in BiH consistently elicited the most animated responses from Bosnian citizens. To quote a representative of International Crisis Group: ‘The only thing that ordinary people can relate to [with regard to EU integration] is, and has always been, a visa-free regime.’ It then represented something that was real and tangible in the lives of young people in BiH. This was demonstrated by one student’s discussion of it as ‘the most stupid thing that exists on planet earth’.

However, such responses were driven by more than simply the inconvenience of having to queue up outside embassy offices. Indeed, for the majority of Bosnian participants, the visa regime was deeply ‘psychological’, and ‘a matter of being a human being’. A number of personalised accounts of visa applications and border crossings catalogued the ‘prejudice’ and ‘humiliation’ encountered by Bosnian citizens when attempting to travel to the EU, in similar accounts to that provided in the work of Slavenka Drakulić (2006).

Poignantly, such experiences were not restricted to young students but also extended to elder professionals, as testified by one lecturer’s account of their invitation to speak at a conference in Slovakia:

“It was a two-day event and they gave me a three-day visa: give me a break! It’s humiliating, like ‘do your talk and get lost!’ ‘Go back to your country’.”

(Lecturer in Political Science, Sarajevo University)

Underpinning such animated accounts was often a sense of despair and disillusionment with the European institutions. Central to this is the idea of BiH citizens as ‘unwanted’ and uncarred for by ‘Europe’, leaving them with the patent feeling that they are ‘un-European’. This supports literary claims that BiH’s visa regime is the single loudest reminder that the country remains outside of the ‘European Fortress’ (Vlaisavljević2009: 122). It thus adds a real and concrete dimension the spatial imaginings of ‘here’ and ‘there’, ‘us’ and ‘them’.
invoked by the dominant rhetoric of EU officials, as explored in contemporary discussions of the Balkanist discourse. This delineation is arguably increasing a sense of European animosity within Bosnian audiences, as exemplified by participants’ assertion that they no longer ‘care’ about the European Union. A representative of one EU department supported this argument, acknowledging that ‘all of Europe is completely useless if [people] have to queue in front of Embassies to watch a football match somewhere’.

As such, we may argue that the European institutions’ continued failure to liberalise BiH’s visa regime has been deeply personalised by Bosnian citizens; pushing them further away from the EU ‘agenda’. Building on the divisive geopolitical rhetoric outlined in the previous chapter, the existence of a concrete border solidifies imaginations of BiH as being ‘outside’ of and ‘unwanted’ by the European Union, as a classical geopolitical reminder of ‘otherness’ (Juncos 2005). As such, instead of encouraging Bosnian citizens to conform with EU reform, it instead appears to be uniting them against the interests of those representatives on the ‘other’ side of the border. This development has arguably been
accentuated by the failure of the European institutions to communicate a coherent liberalisation timeline or strategy to audiences in BiH.

5.2.2 The role of the ‘visa dialogue’ in BiH

Many of the objections and accusations of local citizens explored above were aimed not at the practicalities of the visa regime itself, but instead at the continued failure of EU officials to clearly communicate the timing and conditions of its arrival. In March 2010, the Bosnian government appeared to have met all of the last EU visa liberalisation conditions, only for the visa to remain in place on account of ‘new’ technical requirements (Vogel 2010). The latest deadline for liberalisation has been set for November; a date that arguably represents an effort by EU institutions to influence the domestic elections that take place a month before (ESI 2010). This continual ‘moving of the goalposts’ with regard to BiH’s visa regime led one participant to compare the EU’s position to that of a father reluctant to let their son leave the house. He argued that what the son needs is a clear set of conditions that, if he completes, will allow him to ‘go out’. However, in the absence of these conditions he instead completes tasks at random (‘for example if I clean my room’), only to be told that he still cannot leave the house. In the context of BiH, it was thought that these ‘conditions’ were being changed ‘every month, two months or year’; a development that was seen as fundamentally ‘unfair’.

Set against this backdrop of continual setback and ambiguity is the occasional public ‘encouragement’ from European officials for BiH ‘to make all efforts to comply with all [EU] benchmarks’ (EU Council 2010). This is supported by sporadic assurances that ‘visa liberalisation is in reach’ for BiH (HR Ashton 2010). Such sentiment did little to reassure local audiences in Bosnia:

“I don’t believe them [the EU] any more. Anything they say I really can’t believe because so many times they have tricked all those people […] I don’t believe they will do anything for this generation.”

(Student of Journalism, Tuzla University)
Similar accounts described young people’s overt ‘disappointment’ and ‘frustration’ with the European powers for continually delaying visa liberalisation without apparent explanation15. This process was often personalised by citizens who vented defensive attitudes towards the EU along the lines of: ‘I’m never going to pay […] for a visa again because you’ve ****ed it up so often16. Initial expressions of anger often subsided into a sense of general powerlessness and defeat, with students in Sarajevo conceding that they no longer have the ‘strength’17 to fight the visa regime and simply have to ‘stop thinking about it’18. It is perhaps particularly concerning to find such dispirited accounts within the academic community of BiH that should be at the forefront of any meaningful integration debate.

So, we may argue that original animosities towards the visa regime in BiH have been deepened by the incoherent attempts of European officials to communicate a clear timeline and strategy for its removal. Participants contested much of the ‘throwaway’ rhetoric employed by the EU institutions through expressions of anger and hopelessness, in more animated accounts than those explored in the previous chapter. Such accounts may be attributable the EU’s decision to grant visa liberalisation to Serbia in 2009.

5.3 ‘Punished again’?

Against the backdrop of BiH’s stuttering progress towards visa liberalisation, the EU has granted visa free regimes to the states of Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro, while Croatia has never been subjected to its visa restrictions. Such developments have not gone unnoticed by audiences in BiH, with citizens particularly incensed by what they perceived to be the preferential treatment of neighbouring Serbia. Indeed, respondents frequently discussed the EU’s treatment of Serbia without prompt, describing it as ‘one of the biggest mistakes of the European countries’19. They were keen to readdress what they felt was an ‘unjust picture’ being painted by the EU’s approach to the region that related back to the legacies of the Bosnian war.20.
“You feel like they are the ones; Radovan Karadžić, Ratko Mladić, their citizens, they are the ones who did all of this and then they get rewarded for I don't know, sending Radovan Karadžić [to the Hague] after 15 years!”

(Student of Electronic Engineering, Tuzla University)²¹

Alongside such accounts of the ‘rewarding’ of the aggressors of the war were common perceptions that BiH was being punished ‘again’²². Indeed, it was the unbalanced approach of the EU in the region (as opposed to the treatment of BiH itself) that was found to be most ‘shameful’ and ‘insulting’ by Bosnian audiences²³. This was supported by one mature student’s claim that the ‘only’ reason that people are hurt is because they are not being put in the same ‘pot’ as other ex-Yugoslavian countries²⁴. Such a situation has arguably furthered imaginations of BiH as a ‘project’ and a ‘ghetto’²⁵ of the European Union; as [one of] Europe’s genetic, social and political laboratories²⁶. This is an approach similar to that present in the critical geopolitical literature on post-Dayton BiH such as that provided by Juncos (2005) and Ó Tuathail (1996a).

We may then argue that it is insufficient to invoke the conventional framework of ‘Balkanism’ to explore the contemporary approach of the EU in BiH. Instead, participants argued that Bosnia had been singled out as a Balkan ‘ghetto’ or a less-than-Balkan space within the geographical imagination of the European institutions. As such, despite the continued ‘carrot and stick’ rhetoric of European officials, it could be said that BiH remains a ‘paradox of post-imperial incorporation’ through its continued exclusion by EU policy (Vlaisavljević 2009: 122). This position is arguably influenced by prevailing sense of ‘Bosnia fatigue’ within the European institutions emanating from their heavy involvement in the country following the war (Juncos 2005). More poignantly, a small number of participants related this treatment to the domestic issues of religion and ethnicity.
5.4 Igniting domestic issues: visas, religion and ethnicity

As a multi-national state, the EU visa regime in BiH does not impact on all citizens evenly. Indeed, the majority of the Bosnian Serb and Croat populations are able to obtain visa-free passports from neighbouring Serbia and Croatia. The implication of this was not lost on local audiences:

“With this visa liberalisation in Serbia, now Bosnian Serbs can apply for a visa and travel freely, Croats could always have done it with Croatian passports, so who is remaining? Bosniaks. Who are the Bosniaks? Muslims. Oh, indeed!”

(Lecturer of Political Science, Sarajevo University)

Such religious comparisons are perhaps an inevitable result of the decision to grant visa regimes to neighbouring countries with dominant Catholic and Orthodox Christian populations. Participants described the impacts of this as a form of modern day ‘apartheid’ through its isolation of one of BiH’s three constituent populations. This was thought to endanger very future of the Bosnian state, with one academic asking the rhetorical question: ‘what can you expect from [Bosniak] people other than more radicalism, more bitterness, more frustration?’ A number of young Bosnians perceived the visa issue as attack on their very identity; ‘it’s enough having one of these identities but two? [Bosnian and Muslim] It puts you under pressure.’ Such sentiment was often conveyed in the personal accounts of young Bosnians at the borders of EU countries.

These drew reference to the term ‘terrorist’ to describe their treatment by boarder guards on the production of their Bosnian passport. Such observations are suggestive of the need to explore dominant spatial imaginations of BiH within the geopolitical frameworks that underpin contemporary discussions of the ‘War on Terror’ (see Pain & Smith 2008, Kuus forthcoming). These writings often draw upon militarised, Classical Geopolitical frameworks such as that present in Robert Kaplan’s often-cited work on ‘the coming anarchy’ (1994).
To invoke the logic of Kaplan’s article, BiH may have been singled out by the European powers as an ‘unstable territory’ home to ‘loose and shadowy organisms’ in need of containment and control (1994: 70). Interestingly, a participant in Mostar drew reference to such crude understandings by warning that visa liberalisation in BiH could give ‘terrorists’ a free licence to travel around Europe\(^{32}\). However, the vast majority of the audiences in BiH resisted such grandiose understandings. Instead, the dominant interpretation was that the European institutions were making major strategic errors based on a mixture of regional ignorance and a general lack of regard for citizens in BiH. So, although not necessarily the result of some ‘covert geopolitical game’ (Schierup 1995: 32), the EU’s approach in the Balkans was perceived to be deepening regional and domestic tensions in a fragile post war society. These observations contest the EU’s presentation of a new and ‘inclusive’ politics in the region, instead likening it to the Balkanist framework employed by European states to justify their neglect and ‘isolation’ of BiH during the war of 1992 (Todorova 1997). Such perceptions of BiH as a ‘victim’ of the European community were only accentuated by the relative successes of newly integrated EU states.

5.5 BiH versus newly integrated EU states

This chapter has so far explored the ways in which the European institutions’ framing of the issue of visa liberalisation in BiH has been complicated by the interpretations of Bosnian citizens; reemphasising the fact that BiH is not an ‘island’ with regard to its observation of events in neighbouring countries. Furthering this argument, local participants often demonstrated a keen interest in the developments of newly integrated EU states whose progress led to inevitable comparisons with BiH:

“\textit{My question is always: why? Why is Bulgaria before Bosnia in the European Union? And Hungary, I have been to Hungary before the war and it was a very poor country, so that is my question. […] Bulgarian or Romanian people are not better than us!}”

(Student of Tourism, Sarajevo\(^{33}\))
Such responses arguably draw upon an imagined, linear geopolitical framework in which states around the continent queue for EU membership in order of socio-political standing. On this logic, it is overtly unfair that ‘poor’ and culturally inferior ‘Eastern’ countries such as Bulgaria and Hungary should be accepted prior to Bosnia and Herzegovina.\(^{34}\) One local representative of ICG explored such perceptions by asserting that it was not long ago that Bosnian citizens would ‘look down’ on migrants arriving from Eastern European countries.\(^{35}\) As such, there remains an ‘ego issue’ whereby local people ‘have trouble comparing themselves with Poland, Czech Republic [...] Hungary etc.’.\(^{36}\) The geopolitical imagination invoked by such interpretations may be closely aligned that central to understandings of Classical Geopolitics. Within this, states are approached as territorial ‘containers’ of homogenous populations that may be objectively ranked in order of geopolitical resource and position (Ó Tuathail 2006). This solidifying socio-spatial framework would allow local participants, such as the student quoted above, to question the advanced position of seemingly ‘lesser’ states such as Hungary and Bulgaria. These understandings also appear riddled with ‘nested Balkanism’,\(^{37}\) allowing not only for the making of crude comparisons between different states, but also of that between different constituent peoples. Here they appear to have been re-invoked by Bosnian citizens in reference to Eastern European populations outside of the region. Drawing upon an imagined framework of stereotypical tropes, the people of Bosnia are understood as ‘better’ (or certainly no worse) than those of Bulgaria or Hungary.\(^{38}\)

It may be possible then to accuse young people in BiH of projecting the same narrow and crude geopolitical frameworks as those originally attributed to the European institutions. However, to pursue such an argument would be to disregard the dynamics of BiH’s geopolitical environment. Indeed, the rhetoric of Bosnian citizens (with regard to EU integration) does not exist within a discursive vacuum; it instead often represents a direct reappraisal of the ideals invoked by EU officials. In a similar fashion to the embodiment of EU discourse present in chapter 4, this process may be explored with reference to Judith Butler’s (1997) notion of ‘performativity’ and its adaptation in the work of Cynthia Weber. This argues that individual behaviour ‘must be understood in relation to
institutions,’ where ‘internalised consensual norms are a mediating variable between actors and institutions’ (Weber 1998: 85). Here then, we may argue that it is imperative that the reflections of Bosnian citizens are understood in the context of the narratives projected by the European Union (outlined in the previous chapter). Although these narratives are not *directly* present in the perceptions of Bosnian audiences, their underlying framework is consistently reproduced. For example, instead of *questioning* the logic underpinning the EU’s presentation of ‘European values’ and ‘the road to Europe’, participants often *reiterated* it by arguing that such values were *more* present in BiH than in other states, or that BiH should be *further* along this ‘road’ than its neighbours. In this way, the crude and restrictive geopolitical performances named by EU officials were (re)interpreted and (re)produced by the citizens of BiH.

### 5.6 Conclusions

This chapter has navigated a number of animated and disenchanted interpretations of the EU’s regional approach with regard to the crucial issue of visa liberalisation. It has used these responses to argue that initial grievances with the delayed removal of the visa regime in BiH have been magnified by the incoherent ‘visa dialogue’ enacted by European officials and the inconsistent treatment of states across the region. Reference has been drawn to Cynthia Weber’s (1998) adaptation of ‘performativity’ to argue that the interpretations and ‘performances’ of citizens in BiH are inextricably linked to the discursive frameworks invoked by the European institutions. It has been argued that such frameworks are underpinned by a similar set of ambivalences and insensitivities to that present within the wartime Balkanist narratives outlined in the writings of Maria Todorova (1997). These observations support the argument that instead of encouraging a new, open and inclusive geopolitics of ‘integration’ in BiH, the discursive frameworks produced by the European institutions (and reproduced by Bosnian citizens) instead constitute a regression to the narrow and solidifying geopolitics of the past.
Notes to Chapter 5.

1 Interview 17
2 Interview 11
3 Interview 17
4 Interviews 3, 12, 15, 17
5 Interview 15
6 See interviews 3, 4, 12, 17
7 Interview 14
8 Ibid.
9 See Juncos (2005), Todorova (1997)
10 See interviews 12, 21. One participant likened this development to being rejected by a girl and then telling yourself that ‘she is not that beautiful’; an immature approach that is ‘very immature but perhaps a way of coping’ (Interview 4)
11 Interview 7
12 Interview 15
13 Ibid.
14 Interview 10
15 Focus group participant 1, Interviews 12, 17
16 An EUPM representative’s discussion of the attitudes of his educated friends in Sarajevo (Interview 7)
17 Interview 12
18 Interview 16
19 Focus group participant 2
20 Interview 17
21 Focus group participant 1
22 Interview 17
23 Ibid.
24 Interview 15
25 Interview 6
26 Interview 8: A lecturer of Philosophy at the University of Tuzla
27 Interview 14
28 Focus group participant 5
29 Interview 14: Lecturer of Political Science, Sarajevo University
30 Interview 3
31 See interviews 3, 4, 16, 17
32 Interview 19
33 Interview 13
34 See interviews 13, 16, 21
35 Interview 11
36 Ibid.
38 Interview 13
6. Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

This research has argued that instead of marking a new chapter of ‘inclusion’ and political mobilisation in the region, the EU’s framing of ‘European integration’ in Bosnia and Herzegovina has instead solidified a sense of European exclusion and disillusionment amongst Bosnian citizens. The previous chapters have shown this to be both through the vehement contestation, and the open reproduction of the crude and simplistic narratives introduced by European officials. Crucially, despite the EU’s presentation of a ‘new’ and open geopolitics of integration in the region, its approach in BiH is instead a throwback to the concrete and divisive Balkanist frameworks present during the war of the 1990s. This final section explores these conclusions in relation to the aims and objectives set out in the first chapter before outlining potential ways forward for further study.

6.2 Conflicted presentations of ‘European integration’ in BiH

This study has employed a variety of discursive practices in order to isolate and deconstruct the metanarratives implicit in the EU institutions’ framing of BiH’s ‘European integration’. Central to these narratives were the ideas that Bosnia must ‘get on the road to ‘Europe”, ‘face up to its internal problems’ and focus on the immediate benefits of EU membership. Such discourses were reinforced through intermittent messages of encouragement and condemnation, revealing a teacher-pupil framework at the core of the EU’s ‘integration dialogue’ in BiH. These findings support Petrović’s discussion of the ‘step-by-step’ approach of the European institutions in BiH that serves to both conceal the long-term objectives, and erase the immediate socio-political realities of the integration process (2009). The resulting tone of ‘infantilisation’ and pacification can be likened to conventional performances of Balkanism such as those explored in the critical writings of Goldsworthy (2005) and Todorova (1997).
Reproducing such understandings, the dominant messages communicated by EU officials in BiH were perceived as crude and over-simplistic through their conjuring of an imagined linear framework in which integration is made synonymous with ‘opting for the future’. Such narratives were found to strip away the politics inherent in the intricate geopolitical process of EU integration through their labelling of a complex and controversial set of political claims as ‘natural and normal’ (Kuus 2007: 9). These claims were regularly challenged and contested by the interpretations of student audiences in BiH.

6.3 Re-establishing geopolitical complexities

Bosnian participants were found to contest the dominant integration discourses presented by EU officials through a mixture of mockery, cynicism, anger, frustration, ambiguity and concerted political engagement. Although such reactions represent a wide range of discursive interpretations, crucially, they all serve to complicate the linear narratives invoked by the rhetoric of European commentators. A number of these accounts were astute in drawing comparisons between Bosnia’s socio-political progress and that of EU member and candidate states, in order to re-establish the (geo)political complexities and inconsistencies central to the process of European integration. In this way, audiences in BiH themselves became Critical Geopolitical actors.

These observations were found to support Dittmer & Dodds’ (2008) assertion that discursive meaning is not ‘fixed’ by an author but instead moulded and ‘interpreted’ by an active geopolitical audience. Indeed, the notions invoked by the language of European officials were often completely undermined by the final interpretations of Bosnian participants. This distance between the rhetoric projected by official representatives and the ‘meaning’ interpreted by local audiences was largely attributable to the European officials’ communication of ‘very simplistic messages ’to a ‘very sophisticated audience’.

A number of Bosnian students felt marginalised and ‘insulted’ by such trivial messages; arguing that it left them distanced from, disillusioned by, and critically uninformed of the integration debate in BiH.
6.4 ‘Reproducing’ EU discourse

Despite the numerous contestations of the stock ‘integration’ rhetoric identified by this research, the responses of a number of participants were found to embody or reproduce the narrative frameworks presented by the EU. This was particularly significant in cases of citizens questioning the advanced position of ‘inferior’ Eastern European states along the ‘path’ to European integration. These observations were found to support Judith Butler’s (1997) renowned notion of ‘performativity’; whereby political actors in BiH appeared to be actively performing the crude, linear geopolitical frameworks employed by EU officials. In this way, individual behaviour in BiH was often contained within the framework of ‘institutional norms’ established by the EU (Weber 1998). To appropriate Merje Kuus’ understanding of geopolitical discourse (2007), this ‘framing’ of the integration process in BiH has made constructive discussions into its specific merits and limitations less possible. As such it has arguably erased the possibility for ‘disruptive thought’ and the opposition of the dominant Balkanist discourses presented in contemporary BiH (Mujkić 2009a: 210).

6.5 A ‘European future’ no more? Implications for the approach of the EU

The simplistic and unreflective rhetoric implicit in the language of EU officials often left audiences in BiH feeling angry and frustrated with their inability to ‘learn anything’ about the process of European integration. These findings support popular claims that the EU is ‘losing its credibility’ in the eyes of Bosnian citizens (Vogel 2010). The issue of the European institutions’ continued imposition of the visa regime in BiH consistently drew the most animated responses from participants. This development was thought to epitomise the EU institutions lack of understanding – or simple regard – for the affected Bosnian citizens: delineating Bosnia and Herzegovina as a less-than-Balkan ghetto ‘on the doorstep of Europe’ (Goldsworthy 2005: 29).

The arguments outlined here emphasise of the need for the European institutions to ‘debalkanize’ their approach in BiH and to move closer towards the needs and expectations
of Bosnian citizens if they are to influence the genuine political change necessary to prepare the country for EU integration (Schierup 1995). Only then will Europe ‘begin to become possible again’ (Balibar 2004: 6).

6.6 Further research

This study has walked a theoretical tightrope between the discursive practices central to Critical Geopolitical approaches and the personalised accounts celebrated in the work of Feminist scholars. Further research may catalogue the everyday experiences of the visa regime in BiH in more depth than was possible here. This could provide a personalised approach similar to that present in Drakulić’s Café Europa (2006), to contest the EU’s geopolitical framing of the ‘visa dialogue’ in BiH. Similarly, a comparative case study may provide an interesting context for the perceptions and experiences of Bosnian citizens, particularly if this were to take place in visa-free Serbia, Croatia or Montenegro.

This research could also be usefully expanded through the inclusion of participants of other age groups and professional allegiances. This may take the form of an inter-generational study that could chart the development of local understandings of ‘Europe’ in relation to the recent political history of BiH. Finally, where much emphasis has been on placed the perceptions of local students, further research may document the ideas of ‘Europe’ generated through experiences of the Bologna educational reform in BiH. This could provide a Critical Geopolitical edge to the recent work of Asim Mujkić (2009b).
Notes to Chapter 6

1 As promoted in the writings of Gearóid Ó Tuathail (1996b, 2006).

2 Interview 7: A representative of EUPM in Sarajevo

3 Interview 16
Expedition Summary

While the report's findings may provide evidence of a rigorous academic investigation, I feel that the success of the expedition is best exemplified by the number of Bosnian people that I continue to be in close contact with following my return to the UK. I think that this highlights a key benefit of being a solo traveller on an expedition: you will meet more people. At no point did I feel alone in Bosnia & Herzegovina and I was bowled over by the kindness and generosity of the local population.

I conclude with some recommendations for future expeditions:

• Prior to departure, attune yourself to local issues by reading local news sources and relevant blogs (I would recommend www.b92.net for BiH, Serbia and Kosovo)
• Be clear in your own mind about exactly what it is you intend to discover/research before you leave the UK (do not underestimate the length of this process: it is crucial to avoid wasting valuable time in the field)
• Mine as many contacts as you possibly can before departure: this may involve approaching academic staff in the UK, researching overseas departments/institutions and sending multiple email enquiries
• Plan your time overseas as much as possible before departure: even if meetings/events are not confirmed, they may give you an idea of how best to structure the expedition, which will save time later on
• Be open to following up leads and adapting your itinerary if it will benefit your research (so long as these opportunities are sensible and safe)
• If travelling to a politically unstable region, check the Foreign and Commonwealth website regularly for updates on the political situation (www.fco.gov.uk)
• Enjoy your time away! It can be a daunting prospect to travel alone so agree to meet your in-country contact(s) as early as possible: they immediately put my mind at ease and made me feel at home in an unfamiliar region of the world.
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OHR (2002b) ‘Speech By The High Representative of the International Community for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Wolfgang Petritsch, to the EU General Affairs Council,’ Office of the High
Representative [online] (http://www.ohr.int/ohr-dept/presseo/presssp/default.asp?content_id =6941, accessed 14/03/10)


## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Project costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1a. Funding secured</th>
<th>1b. Expedition costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Newcastle University Expeditions Committee</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal fundraising activities</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL EXPEDITION FUNDS</strong></td>
<td><strong>£850.00</strong></td>
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</table>

### 1b. Expedition costs

- Newcastle – London Heathrow train journey (*East Coast rail*)
  - £44.20

- Return flights London-Sarajevo (*Austrian Airlines*)
  - £164.60

- Accommodation in Sarajevo (21 nights) organised by Zlatan Musić
  - £288.00

- Local travel for 21 days (19 x £1.10/ tram journey)
  - £20.90

- Sarajevo – Tuzla return coach journey
  - £13.80

- Accommodation in Tuzla (3 nights at *Pansion Kipovi*)
  - £48.43

- Sarajevo – Mostar return train journey
  - £9.80

- Accommodation in Mostar (1 night at *Pansion Aldi*)
  - £16.00

- Sustenance (food and drink for 21 days)
  - £182.00

- Batteries
  - £13.00

**TOTAL EXPEDITION COSTS**

- £800.73

*Note: following the project proposal, translators were not employed as all participants had a fluent command of English*
## Appendix 2: Table of Interview and focus group participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview no.</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Postgraduate student in Gender studies</td>
<td>University of Sarajevo campus</td>
<td>15/06/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Student in Education Studies</td>
<td>EU Info Centre, Sarajevo</td>
<td>15/06/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Postgraduate Student in Democracy &amp; Human Rights</td>
<td>University of Sarajevo campus</td>
<td>16/06/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Postgraduate Student in Democracy &amp; Human Rights</td>
<td>Sarajevo Cafe</td>
<td>16/06/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Student in Economics</td>
<td>Sarajevo Cafe</td>
<td>16/06/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Postgrad Student in Democracy &amp; Human Rights</td>
<td>University of Sarajevo campus</td>
<td>17/06/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Senior Policy Advisor to Head of EUPM Mission</td>
<td>BBI Café, Sarajevo</td>
<td>18/06/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Lecturer in Philosophy</td>
<td>Hotel Tuzla</td>
<td>21/06/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Lecturer in Philosophy</td>
<td>Hotel Tuzla</td>
<td>22/06/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Student in Journalism</td>
<td>Sloboda Café, Tuzla</td>
<td>23/06/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Policy advisor, International Crisis Group</td>
<td>Metropolis Café, Sarajevo</td>
<td>28/06/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Student in Industrial Design</td>
<td>Café Meeting point, Sarajevo</td>
<td>28/06/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Student in Tourism</td>
<td>Home Café, Sarajevo</td>
<td>28/06/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Lecturer in Political Science</td>
<td>Political Science Faculty, Sarajevo</td>
<td>29/06/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Postgraduate Student of Public Administration</td>
<td>'Restaurant', Sarajevo</td>
<td>29/06/10</td>
</tr>
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<td>29/06/10</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>Café Tito, Sarajevo</td>
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<tr>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Student of Art</td>
<td>OKC Abrasević, Mostar</td>
<td>30/06/10</td>
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<tr>
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<td>30/06/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Student of Fine Art</td>
<td>Café Bilan, Mostar</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Student of Landscape Design</td>
<td>Bega Basagica, Sarajevo</td>
<td>02/07/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FG P1</td>
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<td>Student of Electrical Engineering</td>
<td>Philosophy faculty, Tuzla University</td>
<td>22/06/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>FG P2</td>
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<td>&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>FG P3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Student of Geography</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FG P4</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Student of English</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FG P5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Student of Economics</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NB:** **Bold** indicates framing interviews, FG indicates focus group.
### Appendix 3: Field diary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 June</td>
<td>- Train from Newcastle to London Heathrow. Arrive in Sarajevo (via a change in Vienna) at 9pm and establish contact with Zlatan Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-14 June</td>
<td>- Orientation exercises around Sarajevo. Signing up to Democracy and Human Rights Library on University campus. Establishing email contact with potential interviewees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 June</td>
<td>- Conduct interview 1 at post-grad centre on University campus and interview 2 at the EU drop-in centre. Write initial notes, transcribe interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 June</td>
<td>- Conduct interviews 3, 4 and 5 in Sarajevo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 June</td>
<td>- Conduct interview 6 with postgraduate student on-campus. Read up on EU/Balkan dissertations in the Human rights library. Make email contact with links at the University of Tuzla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 June</td>
<td>- Preparing for and interviewing EUPM representative at the BBI centre in Sarajevo. Confirming travel details for Tuzla (bus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 June</td>
<td>- Reading local materials/transcribing interviews. Afternoon off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 June</td>
<td>- Travel by bus to Tuzla to be met by Adis (PA to Dr. Damir Arsenijević) who provides tour of town and university campus. Check into Pansion Kipovi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 June</td>
<td>- Organise focus group for the following day with Adis. Interview Damir.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 June</td>
<td>- Prepare and conduct focus group with 5 students in the Philosophy building, University of Tuzla. Meet and Interview senior lecturer in Philosophy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 June</td>
<td>- Interview final student in Tuzla (Café Sloboda). Begin transcribing interviews from Tuzla, travel back to Sarajevo by bus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 June</td>
<td>- DAY OFF in Sarajevo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 June</td>
<td>- Visit University Library: meeting past MA students and transcribing previous interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 June</td>
<td>- Planning trip to Mostar, making contact with local universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 June</td>
<td>- Preparing for interview with Int. Crisis Group representative. Afternoon off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 June</td>
<td>- Interview with member of International Crisis Group (11) and two further interviews (12, 13) with students (Café Meeting Point, Home Café)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 June</td>
<td>- Interview 14 with Lecturer of Political Science in Sarajevo (Dr. Asim Mujkić). Three further student interviews in Sarajevo (15, 16, 17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 June</td>
<td>- Depart Sarajevo by train for Mostar. Check into Pansion Aldi and visit the Youth centre ‘OKC Abrasević’, conducting two interviews by chance. Interviewed an architecture student in the centre of Mostar in the evening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 July</td>
<td>Morning off in Mostar. Travel back to Sarajevo by train in the evening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 July</td>
<td>Writing up notes from Mostar, preparing to leave BiH. Conduct final interview by chance with a student of Landscape Design in Sarajevo in the evening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 July</td>
<td>Depart Sarajevo and arrive in London by plane</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4: Sample interview transcript

Interview 3: ST (23) Postgraduate Student in Democracy & Human Rights.
Sarajevo University Campus: 16/06/10

Interviewer: You have mentioned that you have seen the label ‘Balkan’ used in reference to the situation in BiH. How is this concept of ‘Balkan’ is employed?

ST: There is this idea about post-conflict and post-Communist societies running to embrace the mother of ‘Europe’ which takes care of us like we are rebellious sons. The image of the Balkans is one of lazy people, savage people, one of violent tribal ties. The old stereotypes and prejudices that are placed on this region. I think that people come and look to the physical appearance of Bosnian people and are shocked because they would to see us, as Muslim girls, covered in clothing and poor. These are the images shown in films such as Sex and the City 2, these traditional images of Muslim women. The worse thing is that people watch films like this and are not critical about them. This is why I love Marx when he says that having a critical mind is the only way to be free: when you learn the alphabet you start to be critical and then you are free. I feel so sorry that people will live their lives and will never know that what they have seen is completely wrong. It is the same for Bosnia as well: the main interpretation of the war is as some uprising of 90s Islamic aspirations for some republic of Bosnia. The people are seen as miserable, wearing tribal outfits and screaming at each other.

I: So what do you think when people come to Bosnia and Herzegovina and are surprised with what they find?

ST: Completely patronised, you have to explain yourself all the time. I work for this organisation that is based in Amsterdam and I meet a lot of people there that seem surprised that I am Bosnian. I have learnt not to blame them because I think people sometimes do not have access to information, they don’t travel. I think the easy thing for us as human beings is to make dichotomies because it’s easy to live like that (to make things simple). But hopefully this is the beginning of a process where people will question things and start to establish fact. So yes sometimes it is patronising but I think it important to be realistic and to say OK, it is part of the process. This is part of this idea that Bosnia = process, you know three processes: post-conflict, post-Communist and the third is integration into Europe.

I: Do you think these discourses of ‘Balkan’ are still strong?

ST: Yeah, I think the term ‘Balkan’ came at the end of the 19th Century and it is giving the us a bad name, in a sense. You know, if you see a poster in Berlin for a ‘Balkan party’, you assume that you will see girls with high heels, mini skirts, blonde hair and lots of makeup, guys who are really masculine with chains, and also this idea of Gypsies. I do not understand this association with the Roman people: if I was there (in Romania) I would see nothing in common with the atmosphere. The people who make these posters think they are spreading good news about happy, shiny Balkan people who drink Rakija, speak loudly, dance and don’t work that much and yeah, OK, it’s not like that. But I was locked inside studying for 10 days and then the Saturday when I came outside, I was observing people as a semi-outsider and I thought oh my god, look at the people, they are really funny, nicely dressed, stylish, and things like that.

I: That’s really interesting. We have talked about 19th Century literary discourses of ‘Balkan’, but then also their reproduction in Sex and the City. Do you think the message has stayed the same, despite the change in the medium?

ST: Yeah I think it is still the dominant one. I think that it is my task, or my fellow citizen’s task to change this. We should not expect some miracles to happen outside the borders. And yes sometimes we are lazy, sometimes we are typical ‘southern’ people, maybe not as lazy as Italians but lazier than the north. Of course it’s going to be different here but the thing is sometimes we have to realise that we are the ones that can change these perceptions.
I: Aside from perceptions outside of Bosnia, do you think that these stereotypes of Bosnian people exist within the country?

ST: The worst thing is that the majority of Bosnians don’t react to these kinds of labels. My thoughts are that either they agree with them, or they just don’t care. But there are a small number of people who don’t associate themselves with these kind of labels and are really conscious about them. I feel bad using the term ‘label’ it is almost too much: like we are a product. But I am conscious of it, especially, if I am allowed to say, from a religious perspective: being a Muslim it is like I have a double identity. When travelling around Europe, you have to always justify the dominant layers of your identity: belonging to a certain religion, belonging to a certain geographical area: being Bosniak. Sometimes it’s like OK, it’s enough having one of these identities but two? It puts you under pressure.

But I don’t know – we’ve been through the worst of the war and I can’t complain about this because I’m here and alive and there are people my age that had that opportunity taken away from them. So I guess it’s kind of a mission that we’re on and I’ll try my best (laughs)

I: You have mentioned some of the experiences you have had at European borders, could you explain what these were?

ST: Not problems. But, I mean, the thing is that people ask you questions and you are like…come on… I mean, you have to support your religion and they ask you ‘why are you this, why are you that’ and they think they know the agenda of your life. They ask you things like ‘why didn’t you choose a red instead of a blue colour of clothing’ and you ask why. It’s because they think you know that much of me because I have this identity and they think they know about it and to ask these questions. These people are not Hitler Youth or something; they are really nice, progressive people who just perhaps do not have that much time to explore; to go beyond the border of their minds. I don’t take it as though I am being attacked or something… I kind of know now, being 23 years old that these questions are going to be asked. People then tend to apologise and I think no [don’t apologise], at least you are being honest about what you thought.

I: So with regard to these issues around identity and travel: do you think that EU integration can provide any answers or solutions?

ST: I don’t think that with the European Union, with Bosnia signing the justice and stabilisation agreement that this is a full stop. I think there are lots of issues here with [them] having no regard, which is really frustrating in the sense that we are not doing our tasks. Of course with the visa liberalisation they gave us this roadmap to comply with and Bosnians, yeah we are to blame; the politicians, they didn’t do their job and then we were supposed to have it this summer and then it got delayed.

If I’m allowed to speak on behalf of young people in their 20s and what they think about European integration, I think the majority of them refer to it [the situation] as ‘yes: we are in; everyone is EU friendly, let’s go there… we are going to have job opportunities because everyone is unemployed here’, and they don’t question other things; like how it is going to be difficult to put our market and products there. I would love the young generation to say: ‘oh, we have the ERASMUS program finally established here, we have this mobility of knowledge’, but unfortunately they do not see beyond these very narrow, narrow, narrow perspectives of being able to go visit their family who left during the war to Germany and the Scandinavian countries.
Appendix 5: Sample focus group transcript

Focus group 1. Tuzla University, Philosophy faculty 22/06/10

1. **AD** (Student of Electrical Engineering, 22)
2. **MR** (Student of Law, 24)
3. **DS** (Student of Geography, 22)
4. **VS** (Student of English Language, 22)
5. **AS** (Student of Economics, 25)

[...]

**Interviewer:** So how much do you think joining the EU would help to resolve these domestic political issues of the past and the present?

**AS:** I think that; it’s like a joke: we are so divided here that if we enter Europe we will divide it.

**MR:** But there is some kind of guarantee of stability in the European Union. I think that they wouldn’t allow the things that happened in the past [again] and I think that if you see Belgium there are some problems but it will be OK in the end. I think that when you are part of a community that guarantees stability I think that things that happened before the war wouldn’t be possible again.

**AD:** I agree with him [MR]. I don’t think that either America or the EU will let another war happen here but I don’t think that entering the EU will help at all. We might become a stable country, we’re probably never going to fall apart unless they find oil here and then the Americans and Europeans are fighting. But I think it’s going to take years and years before the mentality of the people changes and they stop thinking about who is Muslim, who is this and that and start functioning as just normal people and keep religion as a private part of their lives.

**MR:** Generation and generation.

**AD:** Yeah, perhaps our great grandchildren.

**VC:** I think it’s specific for our region like when two neighbours fight over their property border! There’s a fence and one moves the fence to occupy the space and they fight, they go to court, it goes on for years and even when it’s settled they still don’t speak to each other. I believe that’s the case here.

**AS:** There is another joke! It goes like when Bosnia gets its visa-free regime, the last one to exit the country shut down the light!

**AD:** I actually hope that the new generations will act differently because they have more access to news and especially if we get the visa we can travel around and just see how life can be different and how things can be much better just through team work, if you work as a society because if that doesn’t happen then I don’t know what will.

**DS:** The EU won’t solve it. We’ve accumulated it over history, it’s our heritage that division.

**AD:** You can say a very good thing that it might stop when people have jobs and have money and don’t have to worry about stuff. That’s the problem: a lot of people don’t have jobs, they don’t do anything and then they are frustrated, they need a way to get rid of their stress.

**I:** The next question is: do you think that the EU should have any responsibility for the state of Bosnia & Herzegovina today?

**AS:** Some people say that responsibility of the international community is important for the war and for everything. You can find people that are talking like that in the Serbian ethnic
group and in the Federation. Serbs are mainly blaming everything as an American conspiracy and Bosniaks and Croats are blaming the international community for actually stopping the war because the Bosnian [Serb] army was almost defeated in Banja Luka and R.S. they were on the doorstep when they were stopped.

**MR:** I think they stopped it at the moment because they were afraid of some kind of revenge for Srebrenica and that was the region. I think their passive stance during the beginning of the war is to blame for that but I know the reason why it was like that because the EU was in a state of forming with the Maastricht in 1992. They didn’t believe that horrible things like in the Second World War could happen again and the things that happened proved them wrong.

**AD:** I think you will always have a lot of people, especially Muslims, who will always blame the complete international scene for what happened in Srebrenica.

**AS:** Especially the Dutch.

**AD:** Especially the Dutch and I still think we don’t like the Dutch but I personally think that, of course they have done some things that made this war escalate but right now they can’t help us and we are the only ones that can help ourselves. Not even one person from the EU can choose our government; we have to go to the elections and select some new people and we’re not doing it, we haven’t done it in the last 15 years. We’re too passive. That’s the thing; we’re waiting for someone from the EU to come and form our government, to vote for us, to do everything. We’re just supposed to sit and do nothing and that’s the typical Bosnian way of doing things.

**MR:** Not have any level of political consciousness; that’s the thing I’m pointing out all the time. No political responsibility; to all people not just a few.

**VC:** Someone should always hold the reigns.

**DS:** The EU could have stopped the war but they cannot mend it. Their donations were the wrong move at the time because they ended up in the wrong hands. There are people that made profit from the war. They could have made Serbia stop and make a situation like with Germany, where they should pay damages; war reparations.

**AD:** There’s also one more thing that I know some older people who are mad at the European Union because at this point Serbia is far ahead of us. You feel like they’re the ones; Radovan Karadíc, Ratko Mladic, their citizens, they are the ones who did all of this and then they get rewarded for I don’t know sending Radovan Karadíc after 15 years! I mean he was here, everyone knows that; even Radko Mladic he’s here somewhere, we know that. They don’t want to send him in and when they send him in they’re [the EU] like ‘oh you did a great job after 15 years…’

**MR:** That’s one of the biggest mistakes of the European countries. First Great Britain and France, especially Great Britain because I am born in Serbia and I know how it looks; we have links and now we have things with Juganic and British authorities act like that. I think that there are really stupid problems here because of that. You have to say that’s enough, enough and you have to impact on the consciousness of the Serbian people.

**VC:** But few people are willing to admit that they are much more advanced then us; they are far head in infrastructure, in politics, military.

**AD:** Croatia yes but Serbia I wouldn’t say as much. If you travel around the Serbian countryside...

**MR:** Those other two countries have other problems; we have more problems with things of ethnicity and citizenship and they don’t have that kind of problem, it’s silly that kind of problem, I can’t believe it is still hanging around. It should have been solved about 200 years ago and we are still concerned with it.
I: So how does the delay in the visa liberalisation make you feel?

AS: I am not the right person to ask because my mother is Croat and I have a Croatian passport!

AD: Aha! (Laughs)

MR: Five years ago I have been given double citizenship with Serbia and Bosnia Herzegovina. In that period of time when I got my Serbian passport they said ‘ah you are a war criminal!” and then when I got my Bosnian passport ‘ah you are an international terrorist!” (Laughs). In Bosnia I cannot believe that we are still not on the white list of Schengen with Albania but I think they are moving up and we, I don’t know, I think at the end of this year we will get on the white list. I know that in Serbia from January they have free travel but I hope from summer I will get this passport. Really I hope because the young people need to get visa liberalisation because after that you can go to the seminars and things across Europe. It’s a lot of things that young people don’t take the opportunities for. During my studies I was acting in some kind of organisation and I had a lot of friends across Europe who were inviting me but one of the things was the visa and you have the spend about €200 or something.

AD: Yeah, I actually had a problem when I was in 4th grade and I was supposed to go to a seminar in Poland and at the same time I had to submit my passport to the Spanish embassy to get a visa. So I couldn’t go to the seminar because I had no passport; it was in the embassy for a month. So it really sucks and I really hope that we get the visa liberalisation at the end of the year. But I think in a way I can’t blame the European Union because they are using this, this is what we were talking about, they need to be more strict and this is their way of saying ‘OK you can have the visa but only after you do this….’ So I mean I can’t say I’m happy with the fact that I still can’t travel somewhere but if it’s going to make our government bring in some new laws and do some more things then I can wait for another six months or a year.

AS: In Bosnia Croats and Serbs can go to Europe and Bosniaks cannot and Bosniaks are Muslims. It’s kind of apartheid, like black people cannot drive in bus with white people. It’s like Muslims cannot go and see London or Paris, Newcastle because they are Muslim.

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