

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Political Studies
Department of Security Studies

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Aleksei Teplov

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

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**MIGRATION, TRAFFICKING, GENDER:
COMPARATIVE CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF
STATES ALONG THE BALKAN ROUTE IN THE POST-
2015 REFUGEE CRISIS ENVIRONMENT**

Master's thesis

Author: Aleksei Teplov

Study programme: International Security Studies

Supervisor: Mgr. Anna Kotvalová

Year of the defence: 2024

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on

14.06.2024

Aleksei Teplov



References

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Abstract

The Balkan Crisis of 2015-2016, when thousands of migrants flocked to the European Union exposing themselves in many cases to even more violence than they were running from, went down in the history books. This study aims to look at the gender aspect as a factor leading to discrimination and violence against migrants as a whole solid group and multiple groups of people within this category causing intersectionality. To study these hidden gender relations and power hierarchies, the research suggests using the post-structuralist theoretical foundation developed by Foucault (1984) and discursive strategies created by van Leeuwen (1996) to recreate a “*truth regime*” based on news articles from five newspapers covering the whole region to compare and contrast two periods: 2015-2016 and 2018-2019. The research finds a diverse use of discursive strategies to discuss migrants and fortify the relations of power with real security consequences for different genders. In line with Foucault’s approach, some “*seeds of destruction*” were evident as several sources over time were talking more about discrimination and violence against migrants provoked by their gender identities. Based on such findings, this paper suggests incorporating a more gender-sensitive approach that would help to reduce multiple types of discrimination, thereby leading to a more secure international environment not only for migrants but also for citizens of countries where asylum seekers aim to arrive.

Abstrakt

Balkánská krize z let 2015-2016, kdy do Evropské unie proudily tisíce migrantů, kteří se v mnoha případech vystavovali ještě většímu násilí, než před kterým utíkali, se zapsala do dějin. Cílem této studie je podívat se na genderový aspekt jako na faktor vedoucí k diskriminaci a násilí vůči migrantům jako jednotné skupině ale i více skupinám lidí v této kategorii v rámci konceptu intersekcionality. Pro studium těchto skrytých genderových vztahů a mocenských hierarchií výzkum navrhuje využít poststrukturalistický teoretický základ vytvořený Foucaultem (1984) a diskurzivní strategie vytvořené van Leeuwenem (1996) k obnovení "režimu pravdy" na základě zpravodajských článků z pěti novin pokrývajících celý region. Tak je možné srovnat a porovnat dvě období: 2015-2016 a 2018-2019. Výzkum zjistil různorodé využívání diskurzivních strategií k diskusi o migrantech a upevňování mocenských vztahů s reálnými bezpečnostními důsledky lišícími se na základě pohlaví. V souladu s Foucaultovým přístupem byly patrné některé "zárodky destrukce", neboť několik zdrojů v průběhu času více hovořilo o diskriminaci a násilí vůči migrantům vyvolané jejich genderovou identitou. Na základě těchto zjištění navrhuje tato práce začlenit genderově citlivější přístup, který by pomohl omezit více druhů diskriminace, a tím vést

k bezpečnějšímu mezinárodnímu prostředí nejen pro migranty, ale i pro občany zemí, kam žadatelé o azyl směřují.

Keywords

Migration, Trafficking, Gender, Sex, Violence, Critical Discourse Analysis, Balkan Route, Foucault, Truth Regime, Semiotics

Klíčová slova

Migrace, Obchodování s lidmi, Gender, Sex, Násilí, Kritická diskurzivní analýza, Balkánská cesta, Foucault, Režimy pravdy, Sémiotika

Title

Migration, Trafficking, Gender: Comparative Critical Discourse Analysis of States Along the Balkan Route in the Post-2015 Refugee Crisis Environment

Název práce

Migrace, Obchodování s Lidmi, Gender: Srovnávací Kritická Analýza Diskurzu Států na Balkánské Trase v Prostředí Uprchlické Krize po Roce 2015

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Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
INTRODUCTION	2
BALKAN ROUTE	7
LITERATURE REVIEW	12
THEORETICAL FOUNDATION	19
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	27
METHODOLOGY	29
SOURCES FOR DATA EXTRACTION	36
ANALYSIS	39
1. BALKAN INSIGHT	39
1.1 <i>Period of 2015-2016</i>	39
1.2 <i>Period of 2018-2019</i>	46
2. TURKEY	54
2.1 <i>Period of 2015-2016</i>	54
2.2 <i>Period of 2018-2019</i>	57
3. GREECE	58
3.1 <i>Period of 2015-2016</i>	58
3.2 <i>Period of 2018-2019</i>	61
4. BULGARIA	64
4.1 <i>Period of 2015-2016</i>	64
4.2 <i>Period of 2018-2019</i>	67
5. SERBIA	69
5.1 <i>Period of 2015-2016</i>	69
5.2 <i>Period of 2018-2019</i>	72
ANALYSIS RESULTS	75
CONCLUSION	79
LIST OF REFERENCES	81
LIST OF APPENDICES	99

Introduction

“Europe is facing a moment of truth. This is the time to reaffirm the values upon which it was built”

(Guterres, 2015)

A sinking inflatable boat in the Mediterranean Sea with people on board is one of the first visualizations that comes to mind when people think about the 2015 refugee crisis. About 1,3 million people entered the European Union (EU) to apply for asylum and avoid returning to war-torn countries with devastating economic, social, and cultural conditions (Pew Research Center, 2016). Although this wave of migration was comparable with migration flows after the First and Second World Wars or the Balkan Wars in the 1990s, it was truly outstanding in terms of its media coverage. Such cases as the March of Hope from the train station in Budapest to the border of Austria, sleeping outside parents with their children, refugee camps around Europe and beyond, and finally, panic and chaos caused by the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks and mass rape cases during Christmas Eve celebrations in Germany were widely covered worldwide. Tangible effects of and experience with refugees combined with a public discourse full of the news about the topic explain why the migration problem attracted so much attention and caused various debates at the EU and national levels.

Another effect of such fierce discussions is the securitization of migration because such endless flows of people coming from the Middle East were considered a threat to European and national identities, the EU and state institutions, the economy, and the embedded rule of life, leading to the so-called “fortress Europe” effect (Rigby & Crisp, 2022). What complicates matters further is that many people entered the EU area illegally, meaning that law enforcement agencies and border protection services did not have the capabilities to register and check everybody. For instance, at the peak of the crisis in 2015, around 709,920 people crossed the EU border illegally (Frontex, 2017). This means that radicalized individuals, together with terrorists, drug mules, and people with other illegal belongings or dubious pasts, had many opportunities to blend in with the crowd and travel across the borders freely. A significant influx of migrants also created favourable conditions for smuggling, as around 90% of migrants used smuggling services for primary and secondary migration purposes (Europol & INTERPOL, 2016). This, in turn, gave rise to forgery, drugs and human trafficking, property crime, and other illegal activities as smugglers tended to be involved in multiple types of crime simultaneously, with 220 people being subject to police arrest only in 2015 (ibid). Being so intertwined with other security topics, migration flows require comprehensive management tactics and cooperation with other countries as it is a highly international phenomenon that cannot be tackled solely from the receiving side.

Since it was an unusual situation that the EU was not ready to cope with, politicians had to respond somehow and implement specific retaliatory measures such as building fences along the borders (Rigby & Crisp, 2022), expanding funding and scope of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) (Deleixhe & Duez, 2019), complicating the process of asylum application (Heschl, 2018) to name just a few. These measures contributed to creating of a particular discourse, an “image,” that migrants were a threat and that actions were justified to guard the sovereignty of countries and preserve the consensus within the EU. Since the media coverage of the problem was comprehensive, including newspaper articles, news and radio broadcastings, and other channels, it played a vital role in creating this divide between migrants (“them”) and residents of the EU countries (“us”). This positioning of a crisis found a positive response in many countries, especially in the Visegrad group, Austria, and nationalist movements in states along the migration route (Weber, 2017). In this light, it has become relatively complicated to deal with the crises, preserve unity among the EU member states and relations with those outside, and finally stick to universal and human values.

It is also safe to argue that only some have a high interest in politics, and news stories have become the primary source of explanation for the events for many. For instance, many people read only news headlines on the way to work in the mornings to get a snapshot of what is happening worldwide. However, due to the apparent time and space limits of live news and articles respectively, migration issues were often described superficially. This means that many details were omitted, and refugees were put under the same roof without any differentiation of their origin, culture, background, family status, and so on. For instance, Jelínková (2019) studies newspapers in the Czech Republic and finds out that refugees were “dehumanized” and positioned as one unified category. Personal stories, their experience on the way to Europe through the Balkan states, circumstances that persuaded some to stay in Serbia or North Macedonia, or their life once they reached the EU consist only a tiny share of all of the publications (ibid). Admittedly, this has been partly fixed afterwards because of a broad involvement of non-state actors that helped to “empower” migrants by covering their real lives and working with them directly. However, certain prejudices and echoes of an exclusion approach remained in the air.

This discussion so far demonstrates that the discourse formed by media outlets can be a relatively powerful phenomenon because, in spite of being highly abstract and complex to grasp fully, it can influence how people perceive the world and identify themselves in it. It also seems that the discourse that appeared during the 2015 refugee crisis was one-sided, without any emphasis on the agency of migrants and their experience as independent human beings. More than that, human beings can be divided into sexes, including not only women and men but also nonbinary categories. Because of various gender roles, expectations, and prejudices that are

connected with sexes, it is relatively straightforward that many of them might have experienced migration diametrically opposite. The current line of thought becomes especially relevant when it comes to the layering of different categories, which might cause more discrimination or violence, in addition to individuals from the LGBTQIA+ community. They might include not only skin colour but also age, professional or social background, race, religion, disabilities, education, ethnicity, nationality, other factors, and their interweaving.

The category of women can also be divided into many social categories, for instance, pregnant women, mothers with one or several children, widows, dark-skinned, LGBTQIA+, highly religious and many other statuses that influence how women experience migration. Such exclusions tend to be maintained by a number of biases in the scope of this work, mainly gender and discourse (see the theoretical foundation below), which make women perceived as innocent and in need of help. At the same time, men are recognized as more culpable and robust, thereby automatically becoming suspects of illegal activities such as smuggling or human trafficking (Ivnik, 2017). A recently published assessment by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2023) confirms this argument as criminal justice practitioners most of the time lack gender-sensitive strategies to target women within transnational criminal networks or ensure safe ways out of them (ibid). This is only one of the dangerous implications that the absence of a gender-sensitive approach is capable of producing.

Gender identities can also change from time to time, meaning that the power that subjects possess tends to fluctuate from one social scenario to another. They need to be taken into account to fully grasp the migration and refugee phenomena and challenge a well-established idea that all migrants experience everything equally and, thus, should be treated similarly. This requires a critical stance that would analyse not only the discourse that structures these power relations but also the gender aspects and experience of refugees in transition to Europe that were mostly omitted from debates (Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017). This would be a step forward in the migration and discursive studies to develop inclusive and comprehensive approaches to account for different needs, capabilities, and security concerns that arise when a crisis erupts.

Since one of the “entry points” to Europe during the 2015 crisis was the so-called Balkan route, it is essential to look closely at the discursive representation of genders and sexes of migrants as well as illicit traders and smugglers in countries along it. The current research aims to pursue a critical comparative discourse analysis of two periods, namely 2015-2016 and 2018-2019, with 2017 being a partition wall between the two for more precise findings. It intends to uncover how such sensitive topics were depicted in the media discourse, what were the consequences of this, and finally whether any progress has been made over the years. By analysing discursive strategies employed by selected media outlets through van Leeuwen’s set (1996) of discursive representation

strategies, this paper will reveal not only different patterns present in transit states but also their impact on gender-based violence and women's emancipation. These issues are also of paramount importance to illegal activities, namely, trafficking and smuggling, as these activities are linked with solid prejudices that can lead to the exploitation of people, regardless of their sex or gender, and failure to detect it on time. Finally, such findings will also help to classify states according to their progress in gender sensitivity and tolerance, which in turn are connected with other aspects, whether it is economic development or social progress.

To arrive at such findings, the current study suggests using post-structuralist feminism as a broad theoretical umbrella to study the discourse and all its narratives. Such a feminist view will be helpful to uncover layers of discrimination and violence against different sexes and genders, as well as the influence of stigmatization that some categories of people find themselves under. By answering the research questions below, the paper intends to shed light on patterns and invisible prejudices and expectations that resulted in the self-fulfilling prophecy:

Q1: What were the discursive strategies utilized by each of the sources to depict genders and sexes in each of the analysed periods?

Q2: What changes have gender and sexes representations undergone between the first and second periods?

Q3: How did the narrative of transnational crime and its links with gender evolve over the two periods?

These questions connect the chosen methodological approach through a theoretical base with the findings that this scientific exploration aims to discover. A deep dive into both periods will produce various gender-related patterns in texts, thus enabling the comparison between periods and sources. The third question also suggests narrowing the focus down to gender-based violence and the evolution of this narrative over time to track the progress in the region towards gender equality and bias-free assessment.

This research is divided as follows. The introduction is followed by a brief timeline of the 2015 European migrant crisis and states' reaction to a range of challenges caused by it. Then, the focus goes to a literature review to examine and group the existing publications. The theoretical foundation with emphasis on post-structuralism, Foucault concepts of governmentality and biopower, and feminist studies, in general, come next to establish a connection with methodology and provide a solid conceptual background for the rest of the paper. Following the methodology

part that studies in depth the textual representation of van Leeuwen's set (1996) of discursive strategies, the work limits the analysed sources to one Balkans-pervasive source and a few media outlets located in Turkey, Greece, and Bulgaria, Serbia to shed more light on local narratives. Then, the parts of the analysis deal with constructed narratives for each source over the periods of 2015-2016 and 2018-2019 to study how gender aspects related to asylum seekers were positioned. This will help to compare and contrast them to define common challenges and highlight relations of power. The conclusion summarizes the findings, answers research questions, and provides ideas for further research.

Balkan Route

The security situation in the Middle East was deteriorating in the years preceding 2015, leading to an increased number of people who had to leave their places of permanent residence. For instance, Frontex (2015), in its reports, notes that more than 40,000 people attempted to cross one of the EU borders illegally in 2013, while next year, this number increased by 27 per cent, resulting in more than 66,000 illegal border crossings from the Balkan region. War, instability, human rights violations, and the inability of governments to fully control their territories (failed states) and provide necessary services to their citizens in Libya, Syria, and Iraq resulted in devastating living conditions, thereby persuading people to abandon their homes. However, people from other countries were also applying for asylum, such as Kosovo (5%), Albania (5%), Pakistan (4%), Eritrea (3%), and others (Eurostat, 2016). The primary rationale for Balkan nationalities was mainly poor economic conditions, while for Pakistanis, it was terrorist activities of Islamist militant groups from Afghanistan and for Eritreans - human rights violations and high chances of being conscripted for the life-long term (Kingsley, 2015). This situation provoked a massive influx of people to the territory of the EU through the territories of Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, and Austria with various changes in the route due to abrupt changes in regulations and measures aimed at regulating the flow of people (Arsenijević et al., 2017). This made the route highly flexible and stretched over the years, opening up much space for many actors, including not only state officials and NGOs but also enterprising individuals, such as smugglers or merchants, who did not want to miss opportunities to get some financial gains. Visual representation of the route in 2014 and 2017 can be illustrated on the map as follows:



Map 1. The Balkan route in 2014 (Oruc et al., 2020).



Map 2. The Balkan route in 2017 (Weber, 2017).

The spring of 2015 marked the beginning of a full-scale crisis when about 8,000 asylum-seekers entered Greece from Turkey, thereby leading to some issues with application processing, accommodation, and provision of essential products in refugee camps (UNHCR, 2015; Weber,

2016). The situation worsened during the summer when about 108,000 people entered Greece, resulting in even more severe problems and culminating in about 210,000 migrants crossing a border in October (ibid). Such an increase is explained by two reasons: first, an upcoming winter which would make the travel process more dangerous, complicated, and expensive; and second, attempts of countries to limit the number of arriving people by closing borders. In the middle of November 2015, Slovenia announced that it was not going to accept any refugees, except Syrians, Iraqis, and Afghans (the latter were also banned from entering at the beginning of the following year), leading to a sort of chain reaction in the Balkans because states also started closing their borders for other nationalities (Weber, 2016). Milan (2018) explains this chain reaction by stating that states in the Balkan region perceived the crisis as something temporary and highly unusual, implying that all those newcomers will depart to the EU eventually. Such cooperation with the Western allies would also improve their international status and help to remove the label of the region being full of conflicts and struggles. When the EU states started deviating from an open-door policy, Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, and other transit zones followed suit, making it more complicated to cross borders. Notably, such policies also violated many EU and international treaties on non-discrimination of refugee application and human rights.

A few countries initiated a building of tangible obstacles for migrants along their borders – fences. By the end of September 2015, Hungary managed to finish the construction of a fence on a border with Serbia and a few weeks later on a border with Croatia, thus modifying the route for migrants. Croatia, in turn, started supervising its borders more strictly, thus leading to push-backs on the border with Serbia. Slovenia followed the same way but faced many issues in controlling its borders; it decided to cooperate with Serbia and facilitate the flow of migrants towards the refugee camps. North Macedonia also did not stay behind and decided to build a fence to protect its territory from incoming migrants from Greece. As can be seen from this overview, the crises persuaded many countries within the EU to step away from the founding treaties that established freedom of movement within the entity. States had to introduce border controls to check documents and prevent people from travelling with invalid documents. This also worsened the situation inside states along the way because many people were stuck there without clear opportunities to go forward, leading to many refugee camps in the streets, social pressure, and various security concerns. The circumstances became extremely tense when various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international organisations (IOs) gradually stopped providing food and necessities required to sustain life in refugee camps (Milan, 2018). This has been exacerbated to a greater degree by March 2016, when the Turkish deal was struck, and the Balkan route was finally sealed.

Before considering the Turkish deal, it is essential to look at the role of Bulgaria, which provided a new path for many migrants to Serbia because the path via Greece has become much more challenging. Bulgaria has a fence on the border with Turkey, but many refugees still managed to cross the border, many of whom were violently pushed back to Turkey (Weber, 2017). This means the route was highly flexible, and people had to change countries to find ways to enter the EU. This also signifies that people could cross the border unseen and smuggle prohibited goods and substances. More than that, as Weber (2016) highlights, even in the traditional version of the path, people had to cross borders in the forests or fields, sometimes in dangerous weather conditions, and change means of transportation numerous times, thus resulting in unfavourable conditions for both genders, especially women who might have been subjected to exploitation, violence, and abuse. This was even more complicated for mothers with one or several children, women with no means of subsistence or children who lost their parents. Since Turkey was one of the countries where this flow of people to Europe began, it was reasonable to strike a deal with President Erdoğan to decrease the number of arriving refugees substantially and, at the same time, minimize the level of violence and fatalities.

The Balkan route was sealed in March 2016 due to the agreement signed between the EU and Turkey that followed the Joint Action Plan signed between both parties in November of the previous year. It was based on the premise that Turkey should strengthen its border patrols and visa regime for incoming people, while the EU promised to financially support refugees from Syria in Turkey in the amount of 3 billion Euros (European Commission, 2015). The main guiding principle was to preclude people from travelling via Turkey further to Europe by creating certain benefits, such as education and work permits, and making crossing borders without valid visas and documents complex. Although the number of people travelling to Greece from Turkey dropped significantly from 151,249 in November 2015 to 67,415 in January 2016 (UNHCR, 2016), this was mainly due to winter weather conditions that did not allow them to cross the Aegean Sea safely (Weber, 2016). He also notes that the Action Plan dealt neither with structural problems (e.g. high unemployment in Turkey) nor geographical concerns (e.g. wide Greece-Turkey water border), leading to the same number of refugees when spring comes (ibid). These developments, combined with rising political pressure and disunity of European countries, led to the new deal mentioned above.

It was an expanded version of the previous Plan because it included an additional 3 billion Euros, the ability to deport refugees from Greece back to Turkey, and the relocation scheme dependent on quotas and the political willingness of the EU member states (International Rescue Committee, 2022). The EU, in turn, promised to continue negotiations on Turkey's membership in the EU, simplify the visa regime, and close its eyes on some political developments (ibid). This

deal decreased the number of arrivals from Turkey from around 27,000 in March to less than two thousand monthly (UNHCR, 2017). Although crowds of migrants evaporated gradually both from the streets and the media, the Balkan route has never ceased to exist. People kept using the services offered by smugglers and preferred Bulgaria instead of Greece (Weber, 2017). Because of high demand, prices for smuggling services were high, meaning that people might have been engaged in illegal activities, such as couriers of prohibited products, to pay off the smugglers.

The deal between the EU and Turkey was not concluded on equal terms. The EU was experiencing various internal problems and saw a light at the end of the tunnel in the form of Turkey closing the gates. Various deficiencies appeared later when Turkey started blackmailing the EU with the possibility of opening borders and igniting the migration flow again to get political concessions, new donations, and a positive attitude towards the country (Weber, 2017). More than that, Turkey also tried to achieve the fulfilment of the EU parity obligations as it promised to take one migrant from Turkey for every migrant returned to Turkey from Greece. Because of such problems, a chance persisted that new migration waves could appear. This necessitated well-designed resilience and engagement plans to prevent violence, suffering, and occasional casualties.

Literature Review

The topic of the research is highly multidisciplinary and incorporates such fields as discourse, gender, migration, and trafficking. Although this allows accounting for a substantial body of literature and discovering numerous cross-disciplinary links, this abundance also brings specific challenges. At first glance, it might seem challenging to sort reports, articles, and books into separate topics and unearth a common umbrella that would unite them because of various connections with similar approaches and topics. This paper instead suggests focusing on the discourse as a uniting approach to these security concerns. This aligns with the theoretical basis (see below) because it uses feminist post-structuralist lenses that point out that social reality can only exist in the discursive reality. Furthermore, this framework has also been used by a number of scholars to study international affairs, along with topics of exclusion and subordination. This means it is broad enough to concentrate on the discursive side of gender, trafficking, and migration and find relevant published materials.

The gender block focuses on social relations and how “gender” is constantly constructed and maintained through different interactions (Freedman, 2016; Wodak, 1997; Foucault, 1984). This usually involves relations of power and dominance that allow to “normalize” the social context of subordination and exploitation. The social reality structures gender behaviour, which provides expectations from others and further institutionalizes unequal power relations in the social environment (Sunderland & Litosseliti, 2002). The aim of modifying long-lasting discourse of exclusion and absence of agency with an impact on all walks of life has become one of the essential goals of feminist post-structuralism. The second block of literature – trafficking – highlights that women play a vital role in this black-market, contrary to the common opinion that females are excluded from it. For instance, August (2013) and Anderson (2005) draw attention to the unique way women enter the industry due to romantic or family relations, leading to a supporting role for men that women eventually start playing. Trafficking is also related to the “doing gender” approach because women tend to adopt different roles, depending on the context, “street masculinity” or feminine business strategy to be able to achieve desired goals better.

Nonetheless, most women in the industry remain at a low level of hierarchy because of a lack of independent agency (Grundetjern, 2015; Maher & Hudson, 2007). Finally, the migration field of publications advances a view that women have to submit to dominant masculinity, which alienates their agency. This means that many women become passive subjects, thereby leading to being easily predisposed to different versions of exploitation and subordination (Cook, 1995; Morokvašić, 1984). This embedded approach made women invisible in the migration field, eventually resulting in problems with differentiating distinct categories of refugee-seekers. For instance, they smuggled women from sex workers or exploited individuals from drug mules. This

has led to an oversimplified and standardized approach to such a versatile and deep problem, thus failing to develop solutions for people in need on time (Saunders, 2005). This brief introduction supports the idea that all these branches are highly interrelated and can be combined under a discursive umbrella, making it viable to cover them more in-depth.

To begin with the first branch of literature, the field of discursive studies provides an opportunity to contemplate the relations of power that constantly change, reproduce, and determine people's lives. The most traditional author, and at the same time whose thoughts are some of the most difficult, is Foucault (1984). He invented the idea that meaning exists only within the social context or reality, meaning that certain practices, traditions, and even institutions can only be given meaning and understood by humans within social categories. Such practices tend to be institutionalized because of constant repetition and lead to a situation of the panopticon in this context, meaning that they become so innate that no other processes of assimilation of norms are required (ibid). This is directly linked to gender roles because norms and patterns of how to behave given by them become structuralized and dispersed, thus playing a vital role in socializing actors.

Various attempts to research post-structuralist ideas further developed Foucault's line of reflection, including post-structuralist feminist scholarship in international relations. For instance, Stern (2011) reviews the European Security Strategy from this perspective and discovers that it positions Europe as a developed and superior region to barbaric, underdeveloped, and "colonized" countries beyond its borders. This reading is only possible from a critical perspective and demonstrates how identity is constructed based on gender formations in contrast to other actors in the international system. Gender can be a power tool in regional conflicts as Hansen (2001) studies the case of mass rape in Bosnia and discovers that one of its reasons might have been a patriarchal and matriarchal divide, including masculine and violent patterns on the side of Serbia and more peaceful and defensive behaviour from Bosnia's side. She also states that the enthusiasm of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) to consider cases of mass rape in Bosnia exemplified that they are a threat to collective security, meaning that gender attributes and behaviour can be of paramount importance in explaining the behaviour of conflicting sides and wartime brutality (ibid). Another unconventional manifestation of gender patterns in regional conflicts was described in detail by Moon (1997). She paid attention to prostitutes who served American soldiers in South Korea at the beginning of the 1970s and were used by the South Korean government to retain battalions in the country, especially in the wake of the Nixon Doctrine. She manages to highlight two opposing claims that women played an essential role in international politics but at the grass-roots level, along with objectification of women who were just means utilized by powerful men in the government. She states that women were "*responsible for improving U.S.-Korea civil-military relations through their sexual relations with GIs*"

highlighting that their life experience boils down to sexual exploitation and the most vivid representation of power relations (ibid). All of this demonstrates that gender as a category is co-created at the international level and has a direct impact on the lives of people everywhere with some sharp embodiments during conflict times.

Concerning gender and discourse, Wodak (1997) states that gender resembles a “social construct” which tends to change from one generation to another. Moreover, such constructs also can be modified within the same generation due to apparent differences in social classes, cultures, religions, and other categories that reflect social practices and social sentiments (ibid). This line of thought correlates with social practices introduced by Foucault (1984) earlier, but he focuses more on them than cultural and ideological ways of doing and knowing. Nonetheless, Connell (1995) still notes that such practices privilege males and give them a “patriarchal dividend,” as she calls it. This means that social relations provide men with a more privileged position in the system of power relations, leading to higher positions in politico-economic, social or symbolic environments. Connell (1995) continues by documenting the effects of this dominance and discovering that violence is routinely utilized to intimidate others and declare the state of belonging to this social group, opening up the way to segregation at all social levels.

Gender discrimination can also be combined with other types of discrimination, making it challenging to discover cross-category links. Crenshaw (1989) criticizes feminist efforts to fight discrimination because black women were mostly excluded from such efforts due to their belonging to two categories at the same time: black people and women. She goes on to argue that *“their femaleness made them sexually vulnerable to racist domination, while their Blackness effectively denied them any protection”* (ibid). That is how she arrived at the concept of intersectionality, which mainly states that discrimination tends to happen based on a number of factors that reinforce each other. For instance, if a person is a bisexual-aged black lady who cannot walk independently, she might be subject to biphobia, ageism, racism, and ableism at the same time.

Collins (2000), who continues the argument provided by Crenshaw (1989) on the problem of dual categories, such as black women and white women, focuses on the economic part and raises the issue of women acquiring property. She states that women usually do much housework or take care of children, but they are usually not getting paid for that. At the same time, women do not have time to work, leading to the fact that they have to marry a man and be in a relationship with a person for a relatively long period to avoid staying with nothing. This is aggravated by the institution of marriage, which, in many countries, allows only one woman and one man to get married (ibid). This led Collins (2000) to argue that marriage is a forced phenomenon for many

because it “*regulates the disposition of wealth*” and can be perceived as a manifestation of power relations that disadvantage one gender or sex while empowering the opposite one.

Discursive gender research also found its representation in critical discourse analysis (CDA) because the aims of both directions at some stages are interrelated. Lazar (2005) and Sunderland (2004b) mention that feminist CDA allows studying discursive practices that not only represent the social world but also play a vital role in sustaining it (e.g. constitutive relations), thus enabling people to resist dominance. Freedman (2016) illustrates how these power relations found representation in the 2015 refugee crisis, during which a gender aspect was out of the agenda, resulting in significant manifestations of violence against women on the way to Europe and upon arrival. This increased violence also confirmed an idea articulated earlier by Hitchcox (1993) that instability and uncertainty create a threat to identity, leading to more serious abuse of women cases who usually have to remain salient because of prescribed gender roles. This brief literature overview exhibits that gender aspects are multi-complex and tend to persist over time. However, thanks to the critical branch, a way towards emancipation is possible by unearthing the seeds of the destruction of a dominant narrative.

There is a large volume of published studies describing different types of trafficking, gender roles in them, and finally, the role of discourse as a variable in this multisided process. To begin with the drug sector, Grundetjern (2015) mentions that women who enter the industry of drug selling, often through family connections or drug addictions, have to adopt “street masculinity” to inspire confidence and reflect long-lasting social arrangements in this field. Women, however, are rare in the selling sector not only because of masculine relations but also because of the supporting roles they usually perform. Anderson (2005) elaborates on this point and concludes that love affairs with a partner(s) in the industry lead to secondary roles (e.g. trimming or housing) that females start to perform to support their partners morally or financially. Although this is similar to the old prejudice that a woman has to take care of the home while her male counterpart is at work, this case of the drug economy can be considered empowerment for women because, without their assistance, men would not be able to maintain the same level of sales or production (ibid). OSCE (2023) also adds that women often tend to occupy leading roles within the hierarchy of transnational organised crime groups or pursue legal or accounting activities, as they are commonly insiders within the organisation through family ties and need expertise. This point exemplifies the ideas mentioned above that discourses and gender relations can play out in opposite directions depending on the way they are thought of.

Even though discourses can be interpreted twofold, unequal gender relations still can be felt. August (2013) claims that women start with supporting roles, but then they become entirely dependent on their boyfriends or husbands to produce and sell drugs. This activity not only enables

them to sustain themselves financially but also to get access to drugs for personal use. Maher & Hudson (2007) agree and add that many roles that women perform in the sector can be vital, but they are usually located at the lowest level of the hierarchy. WOLA (2020), in turn, opposes this approach and argues instead that women can gradually enhance their power within the drug market by accumulating more resources, experience, and reputation.

Economic or social conditions might still inspire new women to join the illegal drug market. Fleetwood (2014) states that this happened because of “gendered poverty,” meaning that many find themselves in vulnerable positions without the skills and knowledge to grow professionally. Being responsible for being a good female friend, mother, or child also imposes certain obligations, thereby increasing the benefits of becoming a mule. Since it is relatively easy to remain undetected, female mules will be in demand for years to come (ibid). Regarding the Balkan route, UNODC (2015) states that the main two drugs that are trafficked from Afghanistan to Europe are heroin and opium, providing mules with many opportunities to earn money. This problem is also acknowledged by Dettmer (2015), who states that the problem is international in scope and requires much cooperation among states and efforts to analyse how drugs are delivered and who is behind such criminal networks, which often tend to recruit people online.

The trafficking issue is that data is extremely scarce. This is especially important in the scope of the Syrian refugee crisis because it is almost impossible to evaluate human trafficking and check everybody. For instance, Brunovskis & Surtees (2017) agree that it is challenging to evaluate the actual scope of the problem and validly distinguish victims of trafficking from just migrants who lost their homes because of the war. Such statements must be approached with some level of caution because women tend to become victims during the process of trafficking regardless of voluntary or forced choice (Ebbe, 2008). This means that it is a violent and illegal activity in nature, which only incarnates security issues during the crises. Mandic (2017), on the other hand, contends that human trafficking was not a serious issue during the 2015 crisis, so it is more important to discuss smuggling rather than the forced movement of people.

When it comes to sending people across borders, Achilli (2018) notes that most people were satisfied with the services provided by smugglers because they assisted in crossing borders and supported refugees with everything that they promised to provide. EUROPOL (2016), in contrast to Achilli’s argument (2018), states that the picture is not that positive. The organisation highlights that a high number of migrants were “*potential victims susceptible to promises of work even if this entails exploitation*” (ibid). When a person from Syria wants to enter the EU illegally, he/she/they have to pay for smuggling services several thousands of euros. This might exceed one’s savings, leading to agreements to work upon arrival for a smuggler or his/her/their partners in order to repay the debt. This paves the way to being exploited or sold into slavery, especially

when it comes to lost children or single women without enough means of subsistence (UNICEF, 2016). Nonetheless, Achilli (2017) warns that the discourse on smuggling has very negative connotations, which contrasts his findings that they usually tend to be very obliging to overcome conditions of uncertainty and violence generated by the border control system. Smuggling activities are often orchestrated by families who travel safely, learn from their mistakes, and would like to earn money by helping others (ibid).

Migration studies have attracted much attention much earlier than the 2015 migrant crisis because there were numerous occasions in world history when people had to migrate for various reasons, thereby highly impacting different regions and states (Graff et al., 2013). Although many aspects have been incorporated into the study field, the focus on the gender aspect started only recently. Nawyn (2010) highlights three stages of evolution. It already started in the 1980s when a transition from indifference to two distinct categories – male and female – happened that already was considered a significant step forward. However, this was not enough because these two categories were wholly static and connected to the sexes, boiling down the analysis to men and women. By the 1990s, the field had evolved further and focused on the system of relations and how it influenced women and their abilities or desires to migrate compared with men. One of the first scholars to think in this way was Morokvašić (1984), who commented on the fact that it is universally accepted that women tend to migrate because of personal or family reasons, while men are due to economic or any other external reasons, thus automatically positioning women in the position of subordination. The latest stage of this evolution perceives gender as a cross-disciplinary phenomenon essential to each level and stage of the migration process. Donato et al. (2006) call this the “*feminization of migration*” because migration has become a gendered phenomenon which has to be analysed through gender lenses to fully grasp potential issues.

Although such developments contributed to the expansion of the migration field and made it more inclusive, discourse tends to be path-dependent, meaning it is tough to change it fast. Gender mainstreaming can also be problematic in receiving countries because women tend to play subordinate roles in the migration process and in power centres, such as legislative bodies where laws and amendments are designed (Cook, 1995). This structure finds its representation in more restrictive border control measures under the auspices of reducing human trafficking, resulting in many people in need being stuck on the way to Europe (Milivojević, 2018). Such migration framework malfunction encourages female migrants to offer adult entertainment to smugglers and others involved so as to be able to pay for transport services, thus further contributing to the objectification of women, as stated by Gerard & Pickering (2012). The same authors also conducted many interviews with refugees from Somalia next year and found out that even women with husbands can be raped and if their partners interfere, they can be even killed (Gerard &

Pickering, 2013). This connotes that such unequal power relations legitimately pose a threat to accompanying men who can be exposed to even higher levels of violence. Although their case study is Somalia, the findings can also be applied to the Balkan route because migrants come through the same unsafe scenarios.

People are motivated to flee their countries due to various “push” factors, including economic conditions and the inability of people to find a job. Subordinate power relations aggravate the circumstances, making it acceptable for women to become sex workers either in countries of departure or final destinations. Saunders (2015) notes that this widens the debates further and links them with sex workers' rights, human rights, the legality of prostitution and other spheres. Such debates lead to the securitization of the problem because it might be perceived that asylum seekers are not running from the war but are just money-motivated, thus making them an obstacle to the welfare of a country (Huysmans, 2000). Some expectations are also imposed on migrants because they are supposed to show gratitude for accepting them in Europe, but just a few refugees can destroy this positive narrative by violating the law (Holmes & Castaneda, 2016). Interestingly, media discourses in Croatia and Serbia described migrants with positive connotations but presented neighbouring states and their responses to this emergency in a negative way (Radanović & Šarić, 2019). This exemplifies that discourse can highlight or downplay certain migration issues, thus manipulating public opinion, shaping political decisions, and advancing “correct” patterns of behaviour.

This literature review displays that gender, trafficking, and migration are highly interrelated phenomena and can be studied together through discursive lenses. A critical approach, in turn, helps to look at the phenomena from different perspectives to uncover power relations that affect all and hamper emancipation from restrictive and inefficient policies, whether violent pushbacks or one-size-fits-all refugee camps policies. Although previous research has investigated general migration trends and issues connected to the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis, a comprehensive study that would also tackle issues of trafficking, smuggling, and gender across countries is still missing. Moreover, Milivojević (2018) points out that research on migration in Southeast Europe is still relatively scarce, meaning that this field has great potential for discoveries. This research intends to close this gap by critically evaluating discourses in countries that asylum seekers went through and their change over time. By analysing them, it would be possible to comprehend how migration, trafficking, and smuggling issues interacted with gender aspects and how this amalgamation influenced sexes and genders.

Theoretical Foundation

The previous part incorporated many scientific publications that focused on analysing the different effects of real-life phenomena, such as migration, and more abstract concepts, such as gender, from a discursive point of view. In the framework of this research, it is required to dedicate more attention to the explanation of why discourse is important and the roots of this approach to comprehending human conduct. The literature review demonstrated that the discursive field is not unified because of its hybridity, multidisciplinary focus, and aims of utilizing it in the research. Various discursive environments are highly intertwined with each other at various levels of analysis, whether global politics or gender representation at the local level, meaning that “normal” acts are formed by an innumerable number of forces and interactions. Since this work focuses on critical gender issues, it makes sense to consider the post-structuralist feminist research agenda, which wants to subvert the “normal” way of doing things with the aim of proven egalitarian emancipation. This relatively recent approach traces its origin to the foundation of traditional post-structuralism, which in turn is mainly based on writings and lectures of the French intellectual Michel Foucault, the most prominent and at the same time controversial scholar in the field.

Foucault proposed various interrelated concepts and ideas within a framework of relations of power that govern social relations and control the social reality as such because of his theory of power and knowledge, biopower, governmentality, panopticon, and other related notions, which obviously cannot be fully covered within the scope of this work. What is essential, however, is to pay attention to power in his writings because all types of relations involve it (Foucault, 1990). This does not mean that power is always about politics and can be accumulated in only a few persons; it is rather a dispersed phenomenon that implies that everybody has some level of power and can not only be subject to some common patterns of behaviour but also be able to challenge them and think differently by utilizing an independent agency. According to Lemke (2012), Foucauldian power is about “*structuring and shaping the field of possible action of subjects,*” meaning that it defines what makes sense in the current settings and can be achieved and what action would be complete nonsense. The idea of a hidden structure of power introduced by Foucault (1984) has a connection with Gramsci (1971), who introduced the idea of “cultural hegemony”, which is achieved through the justification of what a usual way of life is. It is achieved through soft power mechanisms, such as institutions, that use the idea of *carrot and stick* method, simply put. They encourage compliant behaviour through soft power mechanisms rather than hard or material power. The core difference between the two is that Foucault (1984) tends to believe that power is relational, meaning that nobody can acquire absolute power to control how certain things are positioned or perceived. Nevertheless, it can fluctuate, allowing certain entities and structures to accumulate enough power to control this or that discourse or narrative. Gramsci

(1971), in turn, thinks that power originates from binary oppositions that also create meaning and define what or who is superior. For instance, the ruler versus the ruled or men versus women.

Gramsci's idea is not only applicable to the binary between two sexes but also to a more global level because some regions or even non-state actors can be defined through opposition to something else. Said (1977) introduced the idea of Orientalism versus Occidentalism, where the former was created by the latter through a number of writings, speeches, beliefs, and other textual and visual materials that allowed to institutionalize "the Orient" as underdeveloped and barbaric and "the Occident" as modern and civilized. This depiction of the vast region as submissive to the West was possible through the discursive power: "...various Western techniques of representation that make the Orient visible, clear, "there" in discourse about it" (ibid). This allowed some beliefs and prejudices about people from those regions, including the Middle East, and when refugee seekers started coming to Europe, this resulted in fear of "otherness", scepticism, disdain, racism, and more from the local population. This is why discourse and power relations within it are relatively powerful to the extent that they can position migrants as dangerous and encourage citizens of receiving states to introduce extraordinary measures to avoid or get rid of them.

It is reasonable to ask why such power relations appeared at first and define the limits of possibilities for everybody. Foucault would state that this was a sort of historical evolution and such "limits" that people operate within set by a particular stage in history preceded by a long struggle of various ideas (Lynch, 2011). A relevant example would be racial discrimination in the USA and around the world during the 20th century, during which black people were not allowed to attend "white" schools or prohibited from taking forward seats in public buses. This was considered normal for most, but due to the joint efforts of many activists and human rights defenders, discrimination on skin colour and other categories now seems just inappropriate in many places.

What comes to mind when somebody conceives of power is the state as the most significant entity that accumulated much power to govern individuals within it and attempt to spread its power beyond its original jurisdiction. Foucault, however, questions the settled idea of the state and asks legitimate questions, such as Why does it exist? How did it come into existence? Why do people obey the state? to name just a few. Indeed, the state as such only exists in people's minds, it is an abstract concept which includes many tangible elements, encompassing governmental buildings, state officials or even official documents and procedures required to confirm something. Foucault (1997b) focuses on practices that gave the go-ahead to this omnipresent image of the state as a powerful abstract institution and arrives at the idea of "historical ontology." This collocation allows readers to make a myriad of inferences, but the link to power relations is worth noting here because the power is not accumulated in the state but dispersed throughout the population. It comes

from the relations of power used in such a way that it allows for governing significant layers of the population. Based on this idea, the state is just one of the historical forms of governing which came into being as a response to the demands of people and can evolve.

Although many human rights defenders or feminists might disagree with the statement that such power relations are dispersed throughout society and argue instead that they tend to be accumulated by people at the top of the hierarchy, this is not always true. Foucault (1997a) notes that power relations cannot be “good” or “bad” per se and cannot lead to a state of oppression and discrimination. Instead, it is political goals and aims that utilize power relations in the so-called ‘*practico-reflexive prism*’ or a ‘*principle of intelligibility*’ through which certain practices of authoritarian or liberal governing are normalized and utilized (Senellart et al., 2009). In other words, such formations reflect certain historical conditions that eventually gave birth to various norms, practices, traditions, and customs, which are accumulated together in the form of governmentality. This amalgamation is sustained by the constant repetition of these practices at all levels, leading to their legitimation and formation of the state entity. This argument also explains why Foucault prefers using the from-below-to-the-top approach, meaning that everybody participates in the formation and empowerment of the entity called the state.

The abovementioned approach is also reflected in his concept of bio-power because such significant clusters of populations must be somehow guided and directed. This means that with the formation of a state, the focus should be on extensive processes and indicators related to the whole population rather than on separate individuals. Foucault (1990) notes that it is “*what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life.*” This concept also lies at the centre of relations of power because various rules and norms are normalized and legitimized, making it possible to avoid explicit Hobbesian presence, which means being able “*to take life or let live*” (ibid). The individual level, however, remains active because people master specific patterns of behaviour through various social institutions and socialization processes that they provide. Bio-power deals with more macro-level processes and the population as a whole, including birthrates, death rates, crime, unemployment, health and other rates (ibid). Adopting specific rules of conduct through punishment and reward creates a system in which a person thinks of his action as if he/she/they are being watched. It is viable here to build a parallel with the panopticon, a prison model where a few guards monitor all prisoners who do not know whether they are watched or not, leading to conformist behaviour. This means that this system of control is well-built since it can supervise both micro- and macro-processes without high engagement of state resources.

The institutionalization of “historical ontology” in the form of a sovereign state and the system of control preclude people from crossing borders as there are various forms of punishment

that can follow, from legal arrests by border guards to violence from smugglers or traffickers. Moreover, these systems can also become patriarchal (see below) and promote exclusive and discriminatory policies, leading to even more severe migration conditions, especially for women or non-binary people, since they are in opposition to maleness. By crossing a border or migrating, they simply might violate some “normal” ways of living and become alienated from and judged by their families or other social groups that they were a part of. If this version of social practices is indeed the case, state policies are likely to be not only retranslated through the social system and institutions but also internationalized by humans, thus leading to a problem when any deviation from sustained norms would be considered as a violation of the current ‘*practico-reflexive prism*.’” A potential for punishment or condemnation will preclude many from long-term efforts to challenge established ideas and promote new knowledge that would modify existing techniques and practices, especially considering recently arrived migrants who might not speak the language of the country they arrived in. The urge to act along certain lines emanates from the *pouvoir/savoir* fusion because some actions might not make any sense beyond a social formation that people currently have. The example of the panopticon provides a good case because most prisoners in this type of prison might not even think about plotting an escape. In practice, however, such escapes might be possible with the proper preparation, as three inmates successfully escaped from Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary in 1962 in the USA. This illustrates that knowledge that people have defines common sense and makes some actions genuinely impossible. Herein lies the rationale for why it is so hard to change discriminatory deep-rooted practices and replace them with more inclusive and open-minded institutions.

Since the state is one of the representations of power relations, feminist research is highly concerned with its duality. Lemke (2012) elaborates upon the state formation and argues that it is an all-pervasive patriarchy that came into being in the long process where unequal and violent family relations served as a role model. The leading role of fathers has become so commonly accepted that it eventually found its representation at the state level. The state monopolized patriarchy, which started being reflected in various policies, including migration and refugee issues, because all sexes, except men, might be prevented from having an independent agency through cycles of discrimination, intolerance, and inequality. Xue (2008) adds that male superiority is constantly reproduced because of such unequal relations, thus making it socially accepted and established. Since such state actions are not stable and have been changing over time, the feminist research agenda tries to promote its own “truth regime” through different tactics, such as abandoning powerful masculine discourses of universal truth and substituting them instead with gender mainstreaming. This has to attract more attention to gender aspects of various social

developments, resulting in stronger gender sensitivity and inclusion of everybody, especially when it comes to the field of migration and issues of intersectionality.

An illustrative example of the normalization of such state-male-dominated practices would be the standard process of upbringing in childhood. Rekers & Varni (1977), in their research, focus on the fact that boys are taught to play with boys' toys (small cards or fake guns), while girls are with girls' toys (fake kitchens or dolls). This provides a bridge not only for the knowledge and meaning to be internalized but also for gender roles and tangible instruments of domination to be mastered by a rising generation. They continue their argument by highlighting that boys are barred from playing female roles and vice versa by various retaliatory measures. They include condemnations among classmates, discussions with parents, relatives, healthcare professionals, teachers, and other social institutions from the field to discourage the desire to play opposite roles (ibid). This is how Foucault's power relations influence the way of life and provide boundaries of what is allowed and possible. Feminist post-modernism suggests looking at this critically and rethinking strict gender roles and binary oppositions such as men and women. Sunderland & Litosseliti (2002) note that such relations usually tend to be dichotomous rather than strict binary oppositions. This provides not only more space for research but also promising chances of feminist resistance and opposition. This is especially relevant to migrants fleeing their countries because of discrimination based on their behaviour that is "normally" associated with another sex by others.

Importantly, state-male-dominated practices have the power to define the whole group of migrants, regardless of their sexes or genders, as feminine and without any independent agency because they are running from another country and asking for help. If masculine norms are institutionalized in a particular norm, then they might be ill-treated, or their voices will not be heard. There might be attempts to oust them from the public sector to hear their voices less by putting refugee camps outside of the cities or not allowing dwellers to leave them in the solid masculine traditions of treating women. This can be addressed by a feminist approach, which would challenge this state discourse by suggesting an alternative and more encompassing approach to dealing with migrants and their situations.

Moving further from duality to binary, gender and sex can also be opposed to each other. Another crucial feminist implication emanating from Foucault's thinking pattern is the connection of gender with sex. It is commonly accepted that there is a certain link between sex and gender because if a person is born a girl, then parents paint the walls in the nursery pink and teach how to play with dolls, while if it is a boy, then it is a blue colour of walls and toy cars. Such processes have lifelong ramifications on how people behave, and that is what Butler (1990) wants to draw attention to. Subjects perform certain roles, and their gender is defined not by what they think or their explicit intent but by performativity. She argues that gender is "*real only to the extent that it*

is performed”, meaning that it is all about certain repetitive acts that individuals perform (ibid). Moreover, according to Butler (1990), a person blindly follows certain norms and rules imposed by society, even if a subject does not recognize this, because it is all about behaviour that is already pre-defined. Butler (1990), however, still preserves room for the agency of a subject by stating that an individual can influence gender behaviour because a person is located at the intersection of various discursive formations and patterns, which provide some space for manoeuvre. However, it happens to a limited extent because people perceive this behaviour as usual, and thus not worth deviating from, and secondly because potential costs imposed by society might be relatively high. She continues this argumentation and applies it to the understanding of sex by stating that it is “*a process whereby regulatory norms materialize 'sex' and achieve this materialization through a forcible reiteration of those norms*” (ibid). This means that sex is also not a stable category and is subject to change all the time. This is essential when it applies to feminism as such and its ability to speak on behalf of all women, which is far away from being a unified category because it includes transgender women, lesbians, and bisexual women, among many other categories. That is why Butler (1990) emphasizes the fact that a body is not a defining benchmark and cannot be thought in defined cultural or social attitudes. Both body and gender should be free from any imposed expectations or limitations that would open the door for a judgement-free society and an absolute freedom to follow your desires towards others and the same genders and sexes (ibid). To achieve this emancipation, Butler (1990) suggests using feminist practices to disrupt patterns of repetition required by performativity and develop ways at a local level to use them to the subjects' advantage. Utilizing the power of the agency of subjects is the key to success and can help get tangible outcomes, but it can take many years to start thinking in not only a gender-neutral but also a body-neutral way. Now, it seems like a radical branch, but with time, it can help to fully assimilate into society people who have non-binary sex either because of a personal/structural choice or the so-called “birth defects”.

Although Butler (1990) provides a relatively exhaustive explanation of gender behaviour and ways to destroy patriarchal formations, it can be potentially perceived that she focused solely on the discourse as the driving force behind every gender pattern. One of the scholars who developed this line of criticism was Hooper (2001), who stated that Butler is completely blind when it comes to the institutional factor as an explanation for gender identities and labels associated with them. She also states that it is not only one masculinity and femininity but rather several masculinities and femininities that can also confront each other and create a hierarchy. Hooper (2001) is especially interested in the connection of gender with the international environment, which makes her study articles and ads in *The Economist* from the post-structuralist feminist perspective. The journal reproduces the Anglo-American hegemonic masculinity by

promoting specific values and an ideology, including realism and the internationally evolving imperialist bourgeoisie, that can go against the Asian model or left-wing perspectives (ibid). This journal is an institution that reinforces one masculine way of thinking and extremely feminizes other points of view. Hooper (2001) mentions an example of the US during the Cold War, where liberals were positioned as weak because they did not want to go against communist ideology only on the military foundation, making masculinity sexist as such. The fall of the USSR and various waves of globalization paved the way for feminist perspectives, first on the sideline as anecdotes but then as a powerful force behind the remasculinization of international affairs (ibid). This means that local and international gender identities and behaviours are highly interconnected and can modify each other if some conditions are present.

In contrast to many expectations, Foucault has never given concrete solutions to achieving emancipation. He developed a concept or theoretical lens through which it is viable to analyse acute gender and other modern issues and understand them from a critical perspective. As Foucault (1994) said, *“if there were no possibility of resistance - of violent resistance, of escape, of ruse, of strategies that reverse the situation - there would be no relations of power.”* This means the chance is always present for small, local resistances that can produce an extensive shift in the regime of truth. The way of emancipation is also not easy to discover because if women adopt masculine roles or are promoted by counterparts on the career ladder, this will only exacerbate the existing differences and this binary opposition between males and females (Lazar, 2005). This same idea applies to migrants who would be following alien patterns of behaviour in their destination countries or trying to follow some norms of this or that group. Repeating the example would not lead to emancipation, it would only make current behavioural trends even more profound and harder to change in the future.

This opposite effect necessitates developing other ways of silent uprising, which is possible only through consistent and well-developed efforts. Sunderland (2004a) contends that such attempts must happen on a case-by-case basis to accumulate more effort and cause pinpoint strikes. She discusses six forms of intervention in the discourse, from altogether abandoning a specific discourse to a strategy of “rediscursivization”, which resembles a thought experiment with a local focus, implying that an existing discourse is explicitly reinvented and adopted later on (ibid). This demonstrates that such discursive experiments can be helpful and, on a small scale, can produce meaningful results with positive long-term consequences. The spillover among countries or spheres might be based on the three principles – refusal, curiosity, and innovation – provided by Foucault (1988) in one of his interviews conducted in 1980. Such principles urge individuals to question the current realities of the world and analyse how they arrive at the “normal” patterns of behaviour.

It necessitates constant learning and adoption of best practices in the rest of the world to raise critical awareness and resilience. For instance, various gender courses appearing at universities worldwide exemplify how gender discourse can change over time. Migrants and their good relations with the residents can also contribute to modifying the global flow of events since a local aspect of resistance was emphasized by many authors. This type of cooperation can be reproduced by the media, NGOs, and IOs to change the discourse and demonstrate that pure forms of state-male-dominated practices are not the most efficient when it comes to dealing with migration. Universal adoption of a post-structuralist feminist agenda, on the contrary, will allow for cultivating a gender-dichotomous and discrimination-sensitive attitude toward refugee-seekers and provide required mechanisms for all-inclusive approaches to tackle issues that migrants face on the way to destination countries or already in them.

Research Questions

Before going any further, it is required to come back to a more profound discussion of the research questions mentioned in the introduction. The abovementioned parts covered various substantial theoretical and conceptual issues of migration, gender, trafficking, and other fields of study because of the various links that exist among them. Post-structuralist feminism can be a common theoretical ground that can combine all of the topics, including trafficking and migration, because of the “doing” gender aspect that is pervasive and can become very visible when it comes to critical situations. This visibility can be discovered through discourse, a constantly changing substance, as the literature review and theoretical foundation parts demonstrated. The fact that many scholars commented on the more violent, risky, and exploitative experience of female migrants illustrates that it might have been because of unequal relations of power embedded by the discourse with all other implications, starting from countries of departure to arrival states. The aggravating factor was that the Balkan crisis of such scales was the first in a long time, meaning that all power structures probably manifested themselves fully during it. In order to have more detailed answers to such manifestations, this research suggests asking the following questions:

Q1: What were the discursive strategies utilized by each of the sources to depict genders and sexes in each of the analyzed periods?

Q2: What changes have gender and sexes representations undergone between the first and second periods?

Q3: How did the narrative of transnational crime and its links with gender evolve over the two periods?

By answering these research questions, it will be viable to find the exact examples of how the discourse positioned gender migration issues in news articles. Although various media outlets might be biased and cover migration issues only from a certain angle, this research will make an effort to refer to non-affiliated newspapers for clarity in the analysis. Evidently, such comprehensive issues do not boil down to only media discourses of a few mass media companies which publish English articles in non-English speaking countries. Nonetheless, they can still capture what is happening in this or that country and provide the readers with a global overview of the gender-migration-trafficking problem.

In order to reveal power relations, it is necessary to examine the media discourse from the side, as if the person were out of the system. In practice, however, it is barely possible because

human beings are located within the discursive system, which is the central system of axes where this or that phenomenon starts to make sense. It can be argued that actual manifestations of gender hierarchies tend to have specific patterns, and even though the migration crisis was something new and outstanding with a sense of urgency, power structures have already laid the foundation of the migration experience for many. This means that some aspects within the discourse tend to be recurring, and if they are classified into different discursive strategies with specific textual elements, then it will be possible to discover them in texts and pay attention specifically to them. This is the exact issue that will be tackled by an attempt to answer the Q1 from the critical side.

The response to Q1 will be inseparably linked with Q2 because this paper aims to study persistent patterns and track their changes, if any, over time. A critical look at them will reveal layers of discrimination, the power of specific sexes and genders over others, the influence of expectations, prejudices, and assumptions and the influence on human conduct, among others. All of these unequal relations might lead to rapes of women or men, focus on the “normal” division of responsibilities between men and women, expectations from women that they do not have any illegal substances with them, more suspicious attitude towards men from law enforcement agencies, and others that can be found in the discourse.

Q3 brings one specific narrative, namely the link between gender and cases of transnational crime, to closer scrutiny to evaluate not only the gender behaviours and the level of violence and subordination associated with each of them but also to evaluate gender bias that can be highly vivid when it comes to interactions with criminal justice practitioners. Gender identities always bring some expectations from others, and this research question brings to light whether such anticipations have become more gender-neutral or not over the years. Moreover, it intends to uncover if there was any particular attention to women from police forces and other actors involved in migration in order to either prevent illegal cross-border activities or to make sure that women are protected from gender-based violence. This response to the Q3 will also address two periods, their evolution, and the different sources that were analyzed.

Methodology

The work intends to pursue a critical discourse analysis to reveal all power relations that hinder equality among different genders, while the main focus will be on the textual data because it provides a textual representation of discourses and makes it possible to analyse them. Since texts are going to be the primary sources of information on which the discourse analysis will be based, it is necessary to resort to the field of semiotics studies. One of the founding fathers of the discipline was Morris (1938), who suggested dividing the studies into three distinct levels: syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. The first level studies mainly the structure of language and its grammar rules, meaning that it is barely concerned with the meaning itself. A very illustrative example to fully grasp this level would be the following phrases - *“a cat tries to catch a mouse”* and *“a mouse tries to catch a cat.”* The second sentence becomes nonsense only when people attach a meaning to it, while at the base level, these sentences look correct. The second level of this hierarchy – semantics – is concerned with the meaning of the building blocks of any text, namely words, phrases, and sentences. They allow for the building of sequential linkage within one text, which requires a reader to understand separate words and phrases from the beginning to the end that eventually build the narrative line. The best way to illustrate this is to give an example of a homonym: “fair.” The word can be either an adjective or a noun, and it is impossible to know what is behind it without the context given by the rest of the text. Finally, pragmatics is the highest level, which, strictly speaking, puts a text in the broader framework of meaning. In other words, it provides a reader with access to the discourse, which permits a person to comprehend this or that piece of writing in a certain way based on a specific discursive environment.

The pragmatic level is vital here because it allows actors not only to communicate a message but also to comprehend messages that a person receives. This implies that this level has multiple connections with other texts and systems of meaning, providing context for a person to fully grasp various references, examples, and actors within an incoming message. It also allows social actors to communicate efficiently, anticipate what others already know, and thus adapt accordingly. Here, however, hides an element which, according to Van Dijk (1993), went unnoticed by many CDA scholars. This element is a cognitive structure, a mental model that allows every actor to interpret events that a person is experiencing or was going through at some point in life. This is a component that borderlines a social structure, where an act of communication takes place, from a mental structure which also influences how a person interprets events and can be based on some knowledge or ideology (ibid). Van Dijk (2013) defines ideologies as *“general systems of basic ideas shared by the members of a social group, ideas that will influence their interpretation of social events and situations and control their discourse and other social practices as group members”* that means that different groups of people tend to see the same event

differently. It is hard to find a better example to illustrate this idea than this: “*one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter*” (Reagan, 1986). It also leads to the idea that such a belief system can be captured by powerful actors in the system to spread this or that point of view. Van Dijk (2013) himself mentions an example of workers forming trade unions and promoting socialist ideas because people just gradually grasp an environment in which they find themselves and acquire a new source of knowledge, which in turn serves as a basis for a mental model. Van Dijk (1993) proposed his approach to conducting a critical discourse analysis with a focus on separating “us” from “them” and various means to negatively evaluate another group of people. However, this paper would like to focus more on a clearly defined set of discursive strategies that would provide an opportunity to discover them in a given text and then analyse them from a critical perspective.

These strategies utilized in the discourse tend to represent an object from a particular perspective to highlight or downgrade some characteristics of it. Reisigl & Wodak (2001) state that these strategies are “*more or less accurate and more or less intentional plan of practices (including discursive practices) adapted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic aim*”. This idea of such strategies is also in line with Van Dijk (1993, 2013) because the end goal of such strategies is to demonstrate an actor under a certain angle, and CDA can help to bring them to the surface. To be able to complete this task and answer research questions, this paper suggests utilizing van Leeuwen’s set (1996) of discursive representation strategies along with linguistic examples to be able to discover them. He conducted his research on the representation of migrants in Australia, which makes his methodological contribution essential for the current research. Table 1 below demonstrates all the strategies that have been suggested by van Leeuwen (1996) and will be looked for in analyzed texts:

Strategy	Description	Textual Representation
Exclusion strategies		
1. Radical exclusion	Neither a social actor nor its activities are mentioned in the text.	
2. Suppression	A social actor is not mentioned in the text.	Such particles as <i>by, of, from, though</i> , etc. are used.
3. Backgrounding	A social actor is non-mentioned, but it is not	“ <i>simple ellipses in non-finite clauses with -ing</i> ”

	associated with a specific activity.	<i>and -ed participles, in infinitival clauses with to, and in paratactic clauses” (van Leeuwen, 1996).</i>
Predication Strategies		
4. Activation	A social actor performs certain activities and takes a proactive role in changing the outcomes of them.	Active voice.
5. Passivation	A social actor is a passive consumer of certain activities.	Passive voice.
a. Subjectification	A social actor resembles an object.	
b. Beneficialisation	A social actor is a separate party which benefits from an activity remaining passive.	
6. Evaluation	A social actor is being evaluated in terms of its actions.	Poses a threat, conducts illegal activity, etc.
Referential Strategies		
7. Genericisation	A group or class of social actors.	
8. Specification	A specific and exact social actor.	
9. Indetermination	A social actor is an anonymous, not clearly specified.	Indefinite pronouns, including some people, no one, anybody, anyone, etc.
10. Determination	An identity of a social actor is clearly defined.	

	They create “ <i>the difference between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’, or between ‘us’ and ‘them’</i> ” (van Leeuwen, 1996).	
11. Nomination	A social actor is being nominated in terms of its unique features or actions.	“ <i>Nomination is typically realised by proper nouns, which can be formal ..., semi-formal ... or informal</i> ” (van Leeuwen, 1996).
12. Categorisation	A social actor is being categorized in terms of unique features or actions it shares with other social actors.	
a. Functionalisation	A social actor is being represented in terms of actions it performs.	“ <i>by a noun, ... , through suffixes such as -er, -ant, -ent, -ian, -ee; second, by a noun formed from another noun which denotes a place or tool closely associated with an activity ... through suffixes such as -ist, -eer ... ; third, by the compounding of nouns denoting places or tools closely associated with an activity and highly generalised categorisations such as ‘man’, ‘woman’,</i>

		<i>'person', 'people'...."</i> (van Leeuwen, 1996).
b. Identification	Constant role of a social actor.	
i. Classification	A social actor is being referred to in terms of a group affiliation aspects. It might sexual orientation, gender, age, etc.	
ii. Relational identification	A social actor is being referred to in terms of its personal relationships with other actors.	<i>"Typically they are possessivated, either by means of a possessive pronoun ('her friend'), or by means of a genitive ('the child's mother'), or postmodifying prepositional phrase with of ('a mother of five')"</i> (van Leeuwen, 1996).
iii. Physical identification	A social actor is being referred to in terms of its physical features.	<i>"...nouns denoting physical characteristics ('blonde', 'redhead', 'cripple', and so on) or by adjectives ('bearded', 'tall') or prepositional phrases with or without postmodifying highly generalised classifications such as 'man', 'woman'"</i> (van Leeuwen, 1996).

13. Personalisation	A social actor is being referred to in terms of personal attributes with a human face.	“... <i>personal or possessive pronouns, proper names or nouns...</i> ” (van Leeuwen, 1996).
14. Impersonalisation	A social actor is being referred to without any attributes that are usually associated with humans.	“... <i>abstract nouns, or by concrete nouns whose meaning does not include the semantic feature ‘human’</i> ” (van Leeuwen, 1996).
a. Abstraction	Special qualities are being assigned to a social actor.	Poor, black, dangerous, irresponsible, etc.
b. Objectivation	The main emphasis is on a place or an objects that a social actor is associated with.	
i. Spatialisation	A special place is used to refer to a social actor.	Balkan states, Turkey, refugee camp, etc.
ii. Utterance autonomisation	An utterance closely associated with a social actor is used to refer to it.	Police report, data portal, interview etc.
iii. Instrumentalisation	A focus is on instruments that a social actor employs.	Boats, life jackets, etc.
iv. Somatisation	A focus is on a part of the body of a social actor.	Shoulder, leg, arm, etc.
15. Overdetermination	A social actor is performing two activities simultaneously.	

Table 1. A list of discursive strategies.

Overall, it is possible to divide these discursive strategies into three blocks. Exclusion strategies tend to remove a social actor partially or entirely from the analyzed discourse. Sometimes, it might be done intentionally by authors or simply because it is evident from the context in which the reference is made. The second set of strategies is predication, which refers to a subject from either a positive or negative side using certain aspects, patterns or activities. Finally, the third set is referential which is used to refer to a social subject through a wide variety of strategies.

It is also important to note that a few strategies and sub-strategies suggested by van Leeuwen (1996) were omitted from the analysis. This includes, for instance, *individualisation* or *assimilation*, which fall well under *generalisation* and *specification* strategies, respectively. This does not mean that this differentiation is not necessary, but rather, it is not that essential in this context. Also, an extra *evaluation* strategy (6) was added to better catch how certain actors and activities are evaluated in the text and which connotations they carry.

Sources for Data Extraction

This paper will put various media outlets in English different Balkan countries under scrutiny. It will start with the source called *Balkan Insights* that covers news from the whole region as it has reporters in each of the Balkan country, allowing this research to extract a comprehensive overview of different topics. After that, this research will focus on four countries - Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia – as these are the only states that have reliable and accessible media companies that were publishing news for the defined periods. Here is a detailed description of the media sources:

1. *Hürriyet Daily News* (Turkey) - a daily newspaper, which was founded in 1961. Although it sticks to more independent and centre-left principles, after some changes in the governing structures back in 2018, the newspaper had to take a more pro-government position, leaving no room for other independent sources.
2. *GreekReporter* (Greece) - a news outlet, which was established in 2008. It targets Greeks who prefer residing abroad but are in touch with the Greek agenda. Due to the fact that it is supported by a few independent individuals, it resembles a portal that accumulates main events.
3. *Novinite* (Bulgaria) - a news agency, which was founded in 2001. It covers news in English at all levels and with any commitment to certain political forces.
4. *B92* (Serbia) – a radio station as well as broadcaster with headquarters in Belgrade. It was founded around 34 years ago as an independent sources of news, thus contributing to organizing various rallies and demonstrations during the transition period of the country during 1990s. It still remains an independent news channel and an active initiator of humanitarian movements in Serbia.

Articles were collected using a search bar on each of the webpages of the abovementioned news outlets using such keywords as “migrant” and “refugee” for both periods. Moreover, triangulation was also used as the search for the keywords “women,” “woman,” “violence,” and “discrimination” was implemented to make sure that all the relevant articles were found. Importantly, this paper does not make a significant difference between migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers except in a few cases when the context directly mentions different terms. This is required as newspapers barely make a difference by using these words interchangeably and to make the experience behind these labels the main focus point of this research.

If one or another article reported on any news in the Balkan region and simultaneously talked about migrants, then it was included in the analysis and studied separately to discover the discursive patterns. Many of them in different publishers spoke very briefly about the unfolding events, for example, when someone was killed or arrested. Most of such articles were skipped

since they were not of particular importance. Nonetheless, another part of them brought various patterns, for instance, they mentioned not only abstract migrants but also their number and sexes, and some of them went even more profound to quote survivors to share their thoughts. This is why it was vital to go through all of them manually to decide which information could be studied and which were in the format of news notes that did not bring enough data.

The table below demonstrates the number of articles retracted from the media for both periods. Although it is not precisely equal between the periods or among the sources, it is customary to expect this difference when international discursive research is organized. This disparity also emanates from the popularity of the topics, as migration was not as great of a presence during 2018-2019 as it was earlier. Importantly, this does not influence the findings of the research because the diversity of migration-related topics remained alike, just the quantity of the material reduced. Such coverage will grant the possibility to make valid inferences and, in some cases, even triangulate topics from country-level sources with *Balkan Insights* that covers the news for the whole region.

Collected Articles for the Analysis		
Name of the sources	Year	
	2015-2016	2018-2019
1. <i>Balkan Insights</i>	73 articles	30 articles
2. <i>Hürriyet Daily News</i>	208 articles	182 articles
3. <i>GreekReporter</i>	250 articles	157 articles
4. <i>Novinite</i>	463 articles	325 articles
5. <i>B92</i>	118 articles	70 articles

Table 2. Articles for analysis.

The discourse tends to change over time because some eye-catching issues appear, whereas others vanish into the air. This is a normal process because the discursive environment, together with media publications, is constantly changing, which is why this paper fixes two analyzed periods. The first period is directly linked with the whole span of the crisis from the beginning to the end. It has been chosen to demonstrate the initial reaction of states, how it was changing, and what and how specific issues have been raised and tackled, if at all. It is important because it will shed light on various gender patterns in place for many years. After all, the discourse tends to change very slowly. As an illustration, if female migrants faced a high level of violence because others believed that most of them do not report to the police or resist in any other way, this belief is not going to change overnight. Even if some outstanding cases are noted, they will be highlighted

in the following parts of this research. Another reason is that the first reaction and measures implemented were based on the natural way of thinking, which can be grounded in Van Dijk's "ideologies" (1993) and our entrenched ideas and understandings. The second period is between 2018 and 2019, and it was picked to see the progress made after the crises. It might be the case that various gender issues were discovered, and numerous programmes were launched to tackle them fully. To estimate the progress made, the year 2017 was added as a buffer to get a more precise and accurate understanding of the discourse on the topic.

Analysis

This part directly applies the mythology discussed above to all the sources. The focus will be on specific phrases and sentences quoted from each article to discover the patterns and trace them over both periods.

1. Balkan Insight

Balkan Insight is an independent hub of the news established in 2004 to report from different countries in the Balkans, provide unbiased opinions, and spread high standards and liberal values. According to their website (Balkan Insight, 2023), it reports from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and Turkey in 6 languages. Analysing the articles available will allow the paper to get a general overview of the topic in the region and extract vital inferences and general patterns. It is a handy platform because the publishing of news is based on regional offices, meaning that there is a high chance that local issues are going to be preserved and delivered without high deviation. Moreover, the availability of local reporters and their sole focus on the region ensures coverage of diverse topics from different angles and perspectives.

1.1 Period of 2015-2016

The analyzed news articles covered a truly diverse number of issues related to migration, including economic issues, corruption, cases of deadly migration, smuggling, trafficking, political battles, and others in different countries along the migration route. After scrutinizing all of them, it becomes evident that *suppression* and *backgrounding* strategies were utilized relatively often by authors to avoid covering the distinction between the genders of migrants and their social categories. One news article that requires attention, however, was about women who joined the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and posed a severe threat to the security of countries of their origin because they might travel back being brainwashed and inspire a terrorist attack:

“...around 10 to 15 per cent of all Islamic State recruits are women, more than 110 of whom are from the Balkans and have been in Syria and Iraq since the conflict started in 2011” (Ristic, 2016)

This piece, despite being based on an academic piece, gives a very strong agency to women and challenges the standard masculine paradigm that terrorism and violence are only men's issues. Although it has a warning impression regarding the gender of terrorists, it is still a move forward

towards more reflection and awareness. This, however, should not result in preventive violence against Muslim women or girls or other potential victims because violence provokes even more violence, especially in the region torn by a crisis. Remarkably, some opinions were saying that:

“Terrorists do not operate in punctured boats across the Mediterranean, but in planes in business class” (BIRN, 2015b)

Although it is a solid statement which tends to prevent the general public from thinking that all migrants have an evil intent, it still does not reflect the reality because the migration corridor can be a source of radicalisation, both for men and women, especially combined with a very cautious and disrespectful attitude of some groups that they might face. This allows arguing that all genders and sexes can be susceptible to being resentful or joining organisations to get a sense of belonging that might have been missing along the journey. However, neither this idea nor the quote above is gender-specific, meaning that it is impossible to make any gender-related inferences.

Regarding trafficking and smuggling, topics were well covered with references to academic articles or international organisations' reports and quotes of some prominent public figures. *Radical exclusion* was only applied to elderly migrants because they were not mentioned in the discourse at all. However, it might have been a case that they were not a part of this journey because of exhausting conditions on the way to Europe, so most of them decided not to undertake it at all or stay in the neighbouring states, such as Turkey or Lebanon.

The predication set of strategies played an important role in defining the main sentiments around the migration topic and the attitude of people toward it. The active voice (*activation*) was used to talk about migrants who want to reach the EU area but almost always with connotations in the text that it is illegal to do this:

“The refugees and migrants began their protest march...” (Pantovic, 2016)

“Large groups of migrants ... were again crossing...” (Marusic, 2015)

“... thousands of people from Kosovo are seeking a better life in the EU...” (Xharra, 2015)

At first glance, it might look like migrants do have an independent agency because they decide to go, march, protest, gather or perform some other activities, but this turns out to be false when other articles are considered. They focus more on states as the main decision-makers which treat migrants as objects (*passivation*) that need to be done with:

“...all three states are planning to return the migrants to Kosovo...” (Hajdari, 2015a)

“...880 people from Kosovo were arrested...” (Hajdari, 2015b)

“Police ... agreed to intensify work on preventing illegal migrants - and focus on arresting traffickers” (Dragojlo, 2015a)

This reflects the realist paradigm that states are the main actors in international settings and try to protect their territories from something outside, including migrants, by considering them a threat:

“...criticizing German Chancellor Angela Merkel for her liberal immigration policy towards Syrian refugees...” (Cheresheva, 2016a)

“...we are at war...” (ibid)

Such statements set people up for a hostile attitude towards all the migrants without any differentiation, thus leading to the rise of right-wing opinions and movements, such as riots, detention of migrants by civilians, and patrols of the borders by them instead of state officials. Thanks to the efforts of non-state actors, it was possible to raise awareness of the danger of such movements as well as challenge the perspective that migrants are objects and pose a threat:

“Serbian government's decision to ban a planned right-wing rally...” (Jovanovic, 2015)

“Amnesty International put up a large screen outside the Brussels summit...” (Cheresheva, 2016c)

The *activation/passivation* set of strategies provides a space for confrontation between migrants who want to cross the borders and stay away from their countries of origin and states who want to protect their cultural and economic prosperity from newcomers. Sometimes the former win, as was the case with Macedonia which allowed migrants to cross the country within the 3-day period, while the former tend to have the final word, for example, when Bulgaria permitted the army to patrol the borders to suppress illegal migration flows.

Going further to referential strategies, *genericisation* was frequently used to talk about all the migrants without dividing them properly into different social categories. There are numerous examples when they are mentioned as numbers or sexes:

“...arrested 162 migrants without documents, including men, women and children...”

(Cheresheva, 2016d)

“...a group of 23 migrants – 18 men, three women and two children...” (Chereseva, 2016a)

Although this approach might be acceptable to make news articles shorter, it does not take into account the different experiences of sexes and women, thus making it more complicated for readers to think of migrants in a different way from the point of view that stipulates that all of them are just one unified mass of people. Although there were some exceptions, they usually concerned men rather than specification of women:

“...pictures of young men with wounds and bruises...” (Cheresheva, 2016b)

Such a description of somebody who is maimed and leaves in devastating conditions leads to the difference between “us” and “them”, which is illustrated by the *determination* strategy. This polarization, although artificially created, highly likely implies a certain level of charity and disrespect, meaning that if a big share of the population treats migrants in this way, migrants will take the defensive side. The examples can be found not only in the quotes that have been mentioned above but also in all other articles, including the following extract which states that people would prefer to avoid having any type of interaction with refugees:

“...to stop refugees from entering the touristic region...” (Milekic, 2016)

Even the word “migrant” has become too nominal with negative connotations in the everyday context. This produces a negative attitude towards migrants and potential violence from law enforcement agencies:

“...report accused Serbian police officers of abusing, beating and extorting money from migrants and asylum-seekers...” (BIRN, 2015a)

Interestingly, there was no noticeable distinction made between women and men, but perhaps it might have been a case inside the group of migrants where masculine/feminine dichotomy acquired extreme levels, thereby resulting in segregation. Nonetheless, this idea was not present in the analyzed discourse and requires separate immersive field research. What is important to mention, though, is that the *determination* strategy was not highly exclusive because other voices that were saying that “migrants are normal people as “us” were also present:

“...migrants are human beings, just like us...” (Dasgupta, 2015)

This again means that the media field can represent different sides of the debates and be used to challenge the dominant viewpoint of migrants as “them”. Being “them” was also associated with performing certain actions that are different from “ours”, including paying smugglers to cross borders, staying at refugee camps, and asking for asylum among other similar actions. Smugglers are a separate group of actors that get money to assist migrants in crossing borders. They were usually emphasized in the context that they were either arrested by police or that they just existed and help migrants to cross the borders for money:

“...targeting of *“the criminal groups that deal with the trafficking of migrants...”* (Hajdari, 2015b)

“...detained 27 Romanian citizens for alleged human trafficking...” (Chiriac, 2015)

It is important to note that there was no distinction made based on gender or sex; all the time, there were just smugglers. Although it might have been only one homogeneous group consisting only of men, it might also have been that some were women, but this was not mentioned explicitly. Importantly, because of the ongoing police investigations, there was a chance that their true identity was hidden from public sources, making it impossible to identify the members. This finding is also reflected in the classification strategy because the leading group was migrants, excluding any *classification* based on gender, identity, sexual orientation, disabilities and others. This is reflected everywhere, except a few headings which talk about the integration of migrants into the community, including the following one:

“...introduce inclusive education for migrant children...” (Milekic, 2016)

Being relatively hard to find, these examples are still present in the discourse. A similar statement concerns migrants only at the later stages of their migration journey and cannot make a big impact on people who are still in the process of migration. Going lower from the group to a personal level, it is possible to discover the *personalisation* strategies that were used only a few times to showcase personal stories, such as in the following extract when a refugee woman confesses how her life goes:

“*I did not know the German language and was not a fit mother...*” (Jordanovska, 2016)

Such news was written in the interview format with various quotes from participants, making stories longer than usual and less attractive to media consumers. This might be considered a downside of this strategy because when deep and personal issues are delivered, it is more complicated to comprehend. Both aforementioned articles also demonstrate the use of the *relational identification* strategy for kids. Most of the time, they are attributed to women or just migrants without including men, leading to forced feminization and putting both of them in one category.

Going further within the *impersonalisation* strategy, *abstraction* was used relatively frequently to give the whole group of migrants general characteristics. This is in line with the *genericisation* strategy because a certain level of *impersonalisation* is required to achieve this superficial description. Such labels allow to boil down a description of migrants to just a few words and reinforce the “them” image by using words with negative connotations such as:

“...*the readmission of illegal migrants...*” (Chereseva, 2016b)

“...*they were persecuted and poor...*” (Milekic, 2015)

The *generalisation* strategy is only applicable to the whole category of migrants because other sub-categories which could have been generalized as well, including migrant women, were not considered. Remarkably, migrants were not considered violent people who could produce public unrest or riots, which can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, migrants seek protection and do not want to violate the general rule of law in receiving countries to avoid being deported to their countries of origin or back to other countries they already went through. On the other, they might not have any agency at all, including all sexes and genders, because it was external factors that persuaded them to leave their own countries and ask for asylum in others, meaning that they found themselves in another country and highly likely without means of livelihood, thereby becoming defenceless because of a lack of resources. The news articles mainly mentioned examples that migrants were victims of violence rather than the source of it due to the dissatisfaction of right-wing parties and people living close to the migration routes, which tend to be unsafe. Although it has never been stated explicitly, migrant women were not a source of violence either, not only because no such cases were reported but also because it is in line with the theoretical foundation of this research. This means that opportunists usually exploited migrants and bribed law enforcement guards, politicians, and other actors to provoke violence to their advantage rather than by migrants themselves who wanted to get into the haven. The following examples can be cited to support this statement:

“...report accused Serbian police officers of abusing, beating and extorting money from migrants...” (BIRN, 2015a)

“...migrants are routinely mistreated on their way through Serbia...” (Dragojlo, 2015b)

This might have been an accumulated effect which eventually made many migrants resentful and radicalized, leading to more violence from their side, such as the mass rape in Germany or terrorist attacks in France, implying that there is a multiple number of factors leading to such ramifications.

Worth noticing the *utterance autonomisation* strategy which has been thoroughly used by news articles to refer to all the cases involving migrants, including reports of international organisations, police statements, quotes of politicians, witnesses, and other vital sources to talk about this or that case. This provides a wide array of opinions and sources, making news more reliable and inclusive.

Last but not least, *instrumentalisation* was employed every time it went about how migrants were getting to Europe, especially the illegal ways to do this. The set of “instruments” included not only boats, or inflatable vests, but also taxi drivers and smugglers:

“...the group transported illegals...” (Andonovska, 2015)

“The cab drivers from Belgrade get all the real money...” (Zaba, 2015)

Most of the instruments that were cited were illegal because it was very complicated for migrants to ask for asylum outside a destination country. That is why the most straightforward way was to cross a border illegally and explore all possible opportunities to stay in the country. Although a few articles covered cases when migrants tried to apply for asylum abroad, their applications were rejected, and this persuaded them to save up money and try to cross borders one more time, notwithstanding the constantly increasing risk of being detected. Due to this high exposure to smugglers, such ramifications as rape, ransom, captivity, and sometimes even death were widely cited. The discussion proposes that women and children were more predisposed to such types of violence, even though the studied articles just focus on migrants in general.

To conclude this subsection, several strategies were used to discuss the migration crisis from its beginning through its peak to its ending. Due to the turmoil in the region, the main focus was on the general category of migrants rather than on sexes, genders, and other categories, except for a few minor exceptions. An amalgamation of determination and other strategies played a vital role in creating an image of migrants as “them” with negative connotations, but this was balanced by powerful voices of politicians who called for respect, dignity, and trust in asylum seekers.

Nevertheless, this did not save migrants from the fluctuating right-wing violence and hostile attitude of many individuals whom they faced. It was distinct that migrants, including all identities, backgrounds, and other distinctive features within the social category, did not have a powerful agency, implying that many of their actions have been caused by external factors leading to extra power granted to other involved actors with legal status. Despite not being fully covered, the room for manoeuvring for migrants was still available. It may be even more significant in the next period as the priority of topics can change or evolve.

1.2 Period of 2018-2019

This period does not differ drastically in terms of the diversity of topics from the acute phase of the crisis. Nonetheless, after carefully studying headlines and the content of news articles, it becomes evident that the focus shifted to more profound questions, such as Where to accommodate migrants? How do we integrate them into the local community? How do we keep families, especially children and their parents, together? Furthermore, an increased number of publications reflecting on the previous years of the crisis, including discrimination, fake news, violence, and criminal activities of drug traffickers, smugglers, and others, as well as on the current period, which also witnessed violent pushbacks and mistreatment of migrants in their destination countries. Having passed the critical period, the media source uncovered the problems in depth, which was impossible during the “hot” phase, when new incidents were happening almost every hour without being anticipated. The lower intensity of news allowed for a more nuanced description of migrant difficulties and alternative angles that became evident only later.

To begin with the set of exclusion strategies, *radical exclusion* was barely used, except for elderly people who might not have been a part of the route. This is also in line with the previous period, making it possible that most elderly migrants stayed in their home countries or only went to neighbouring countries to get shelter. Although it can be counterargued that there was no distinction made by the media outlet between old and young people, this does not correspond to reality. Firstly, children were mentioned several times as a separate group, meaning that age criteria were present for authors. Secondly, media articles also contained several pictures, and none of them had any elderly people, leading to an inference that most of them simply were not there.

The second period witnessed *suppression* because the genders of migrants were not mentioned as well. Although it might have been difficult to reveal them and find gender roles different from the standard extreme dichotomy, no attempts at least to propose this dichotomy were made. This also correlates with the first period because it did not cover this either, but the core difference is that the latter period indeed expanded the number of discriminating factors and groups who are susceptible to them. This included the queer community, more discrimination

factors, and actors involved, such as INTERPOL or individuals with fake documents. The third strategy, e.g. *backgrounding*, was utilized relatively often to talk about women as well as kids because their mention was connected with other events and activities. Curiously, men were also not mentioned as a separate social category, but it is implied from the discourse because others are highlighted separately from the migrant group. Such classification is also linked with generalization because, from a certain angle, it might look like all the migrants are men unless it is specified by the context which is not that often in comparison with the frequency of use of the word migrant. This is not far from radical exclusion which sometimes might be applied to avoid covering this or that gender, sex, skin colour, age, and so on that might lead to discrimination. The examples from the discourse include:

“...an Afghan woman sheltered from the rain in a tent...” (Vladislavljovic, 2018a)

“Sixteen of them, including women and children...” (Lakic, 2018a)

“One mother and daughter...” (ibid)

These examples are inseparably linked with the predication block of strategies because neither female migrants nor migrants, in general, did not have such an independent agency shown by activation as it was in the previous period. One of the explanations is that the current time interval did not include various mass movements or marches of migrants, meaning that their active independence was not that eye-catching. Nonetheless, there were still instances of some steps that migrants take such as:

“Most of them are taking the new so-called “Balkan route” to Western Europe...” (Lakic, 2019a)

“...refugees and migrants often travel with smugglers...” (Zivanovic et al., 2018)

“...when they tried to break through a police cordon...” (Lakic, 2018c)

The latter quote might attract some attention because although migrants pursue independent actions, they also highly rely on third parties, including smugglers or non-governmental organizations. This means that their full autonomy evaporates in the discourse, making them rely more on people around them and migration facilitators than on themselves. This, in turn, makes all groups of migrants more prone to being subject to violence and attempts to position them as passive human beings. Notably, a unique role deserves police because this period, as well as the previous one, saw several occasions when police resorted to inappropriate means of violence to avoid letting in migrants to the countries, including pushbacks, beating, blackmailing,

and so on. In general, news articles conceal the genders and sexes of arrested people, except in cases where they touch some stories when the police forces are trying to separate either a mother or a father from their children. The examples include:

“...*police using undue violence against migrants...*” (Vladisavljevic, 2018b)

“...*refugees frequently return with their mobile phones crushed...*” (Sini & Bassano, 2018)

“*Police arrested migrant smugglers, illegal migrants and refugees, drug traffickers, firearms traffickers and document fraudsters*” (Zivanovic, 2018)

Switching to the counterpart of activation – *passivation* - it is important to highlight that it was used almost at the same level as it was during the previous period. The main difference is that the topic has switched from prohibiting the entrance of migrants to countries to relocating them within the EU or dealing with the document problems. One of the outstanding cases happened in Bosnia during the fall 2019 period when the Vucjak refugee camp was built almost in the forest:

“*Bosnia has moved hundreds of migrants and refugees to an isolated forest camp...*”

(Vladisavljevic, 2019a)

It deserved much attention from the media outlets because migrants were put by the government in very inhuman conditions there. It did not have proper supplies or other essential infrastructure, such as toilets or showers, leading to unhygienic conditions. More than that, it was located in the forest without any convenient transportation to get to somewhere else, making life relatively complicated, especially for people with medical contraindications or children. Putting migrants in this place is not only to make them more passive but also to make the gap between “us” and “them” more real, using the *determination* strategy in real life. This can be considered one of the consequences of using the combination of both strategies in the discursive period before, leading to real-life effects in the current period.

Speaking of the *evaluation* strategy, there were many statements that migrants can indeed pose a threat, especially when police reports argue that drug couriers or human traffickers were arrested among migrants. In addition, when people hear that such levels of violence are used against refugees, many people might start thinking that they indeed can pose a threat. Such beliefs also correspond to statements made during 2015-2016 because people were scared in the face of unknown consequences that migrants can bring to their countries. However, the new discourse focuses more on long-term consequences and management of refugees, whether they are fully integrated, have valid documents, have been vaccinated, and so on. It seems that discourse digested

the unknown phase and risks it poses and focused more on the long-term management of migrants and associated risks with them:

“...which could cause risks in terms of security and healthcare...” (Lakic, 2018b)

Thanks to the efforts of non-state actors, such beliefs were more effectively challenged than in the previous period under scrutiny. Since the news articles started covering topics more in-depth, many people had a chance to speak up and promote their own opinions, leading to a more human approach. In addition, various concerns have been raised regarding fake news, and even state institutions attracted attention to this issue because it is vital when it comes to security of the society. Such joint efforts allowed to launch of an awareness-raising campaign to avoid being cheated easily, for example, by populists or extremist groups with an aim to double-check the news about sensitive topics. The following examples demonstrate this:

“...700 signatories accuses the Croatian media of fomenting fear and prejudice through false and one-sided reports on migrants and refugees...” (Vladisavljevic, 2018c)

“...false information that the EU country would open its borders had led to...” (BIRN, 2018)

“They did not smell because they wanted to; in fact, they washed themselves...” (Samardzic, 2018)

It is also important to note that there was no differentiation made regarding genders and sexes and no correlation with the level of violence. All the related cases were about migrants as a homogenous group rather than a particular gender. This might mean that this necessitates equal treatment of everybody, but it also might mean that this is a false generalization out of a few individuals and at the end of the day, migrants, including all categories, do not pose a threat at all, mainly when they are managed by governments equally.

Moving on to referential strategies, *genericisation* was as widely used as in the previous period mainly because there were various topics that concerned all migrants, especially asylum policies and long-term opportunities to stay in the EU region. This included not only the word “migrant”, but also specifications to a number of men, women, and children when it comes to news when they were either arrested or passed away:

“...the victims – 59 men, eight women and four children – died horrible deaths...” (Inotai, 2019)

This demonstrates that numbers come mainly from official sources, meaning that it is highly likely that news outlets did not have enough information or resources to specify who was involved in this or that case every time because the migration flow is highly unpredictable. It is costly to send reporters from one site to another every day if not every half-day. Nonetheless, there were some instances when the *specification* was used to refer to children in the context that they need extra attention and protection from the government:

“...more than 160 migrants and refugees currently in the Balkans are unaccompanied children or children separated from parents...” (Zivanovic et al., 2018)

They acknowledge that people with children or children alone need extra support because they cannot get it alone. This is a sign that this category has become more independent over time and more separate from a ‘mother and kid’ category, leading to separate measures that need to be undertaken for both kids and women. The latter, however, was not specified as a particular category; women as sex were a part of the migrants as a whole. This also applied to genders because they were not highlighted in this period or the previous one.

The use of *specification* was not widespread, meaning that the *determination* strategy has been dominant over the two periods and the artificial division between “us” and “them” prevailed over these years. Nonetheless, some consequences of this divide have been challenged on a case-by-case basis, including the example from Bosnia which demonstrates that migrants do not pose a threat to tourist regions because they can also reside there without scaring away tourists:

“...tourist numbers have actually risen...” (Lakic, 2019b)

This can be considered a step forward because more and more efforts are being executed to close this gap, chiefly due to the fight against fake news by various non-state actors. It is challenging to close this gap because it takes much effort to change people's perceptions, mainly because people tend to generalize a lot about every topic. This abyss led to the fact that various groups perceive migrants in a negative way, leading to violence, especially from the police side, which persisted during this time:

“...being starved and exhausted and illegally pushed back into Serbia by Hungarian police...”
(Zivanovic & Vladisavljevic, 2019)

“Croatian police have denied separating a Syrian father from his young daughter...”
(Vladisavljevic & BIRN, 2019)

These quotes show how the *functionalisation* strategy was performing over the years. Performing violence was relatively often associated with police which contradicts their main function to defend people and prosecute violence, including against migrants. This has also been a case with the previous period but this length of time also observed cases when police and other law enforcement actors brought smugglers and traffickers to justice, including the following cases:

“...sentenced four traffickers to life in prison...” (Inotai, 2019)

“...obligation to seek help from international agencies such as Interpol...” (Omerovic, 2019)

Migrants were represented in a less active voice from the side of its actions because there were no intense movements from their side as in 2015-2016. With regards to sexes, there was also no clear distinction between different functions and activities, except in a few examples when women and sometimes men took care of their children. This also pertains to traffickers and smugglers because only general categories were mentioned without genders or sexes.

What has been found is that a *classification* strategy has been utilized to discuss sexual orientation and political beliefs in one of the articles. This is an unexpected finding because it is the first time when on BalkanInsight that it goes about migrants and the link between the reason to migrate and their sexual orientation or political stance, except other factors. This includes the following:

“...passing through Serbia were usually gay, or Christian, or politically oppressed.” (Lakic, 2018d)

“Family is the biggest problem when it comes to LGBT.” (Dehghan, 2018)

This means that people who were oppressed were identified by the media, meaning that the group of migrants is not homogenous and can be subject to various categories of oppression, that is, intersectionality, especially when it comes to being gay and also a migrant. This increases the chances of experiencing even harsher moments of rage, and to avoid them, people will have to hide their true identity, leading to mental health issues later on. According to the Rainbow Europe Index (2023), such countries as Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania have a deficient awareness of and openness to LGBTQIA+ people, thus leading to a high chance of being exposed to discrimination along the route and also in destination countries which also include the above-mentioned states.

Speaking of *relational identification*, it is important to highlight that neither pimps or heads of cartels nor smugglers were mentioned in the discourse in both periods. This might mean that

people conducting such activities might have had family connections, meaning it is relatively complex to identify them and bring them to justice. Furthermore, since such cases involve at least two countries, any detailed reports from police or INTERPOL are highly unlikely to appear shortly as the investigations might be delayed. This also does not allow to identify if there is any separation of duties between genders. Nonetheless, it was an important strategy to refer to children of migrants as the mentioned above quotes or the one below demonstrate with regards to belonging them to somebody:

“...*their parents do not earn enough money...*” (Zivanovic, 2019)

It was anticipated that children would be linked with somebody from their parents or family because they are not fully independent subjects, according to the legal age in most of the countries. During this two-year period, there were a number of references to parents or women only, but the latter was not an outstanding case because usually somebody from the family was also mentioned. The usage of this strategy has been improved in comparison with the previous period due to the diversity of references, meaning that kids can also belong to families or fathers.

Physical identification was combined with the *personalisation* strategy that has been employed to talk about some outstanding stories, for instance, when reports were taking interviews from somebody of migrants. There is no great difference between the two periods with regard to the usage of this strategy. Additionally, it was not used to talk about the physical aspects of smugglers or traffickers because the information about such cases was relatively superficial.

Regarding the *impersonalisation* set of strategies, *abstraction* was barely seen in the discourse because authors made an effort to avoid general adjectives to refer to refugees. This demonstrates a considerable step forward in comparison with the previous periods that witnessed a few cases when migrants were described in a certain way. Moreover, this phase has no evidence of migrants being dangerous or violent. On the contrary, usually, they experience violence due to border patrol or being accommodated in places that are entirely not suitable for living. Anti-fake news efforts helped to spread the message that migrants do not stab or rape people, their presence has an opposite effect on such indicators (Vladisavljevic, 2018c). *Personalisation* strategy also worked out to demonstrate that the mass of migrants is not homogeneous and that there are many people in need after experiencing violence or harsh conditions on the way. This is linked with the *objectivation* strategy, but in this context, it would be anti-objectivation because migrants were usually associated with not having enough resources to live their lives:

“...*lack suitable clothing and footwear for winter...*” (Vladisavljevic, 2019b)

“...without access to electricity or running water...” (ibid)

This is one more strategy showing that their chances of being exploited increase exponentially without such essentials. This means that more people can agree to perform illegal activities and be exposed to “...*hunger, human traffickers and sexual abuse and exploitation...*” (Zivanovic et al., 2018). This was also emphasized in the previous period, but due to constant repetition, this fact has become so evident during this timeframe that it was impossible to overlook it. A dilemma comes to the fore when it comes to refugee camps because, during both periods, migrants were associated with them in the discourse. The issue is that on levels when it comes to possessing something, nothing belonged to them, meaning that this was an attempt to build a link with an object that was not theirs from the beginning. Migrants were trying to get help from state representatives and non-governmental actors, but this is the only connection that can be built with an object, e.g. refugee camps. This also indirectly contributes to the commodification of migrants because they rely upon help there, thus becoming associated with a temporary object that does not belong here.

The *utterance autonomisation* in the current frame bears a likeness to the previous one due to an abundance of various sources, including interviews, state officials, non-state actors, and others that were widely used before. Some of these entities were also offering solutions to the crisis as was the case with the World Bank which offered the idea of responsibility-shifting to better involve private sector solutions and put less pressure on the state in the frontline:

“*New partnerships ... are transforming remote refugee settlements and their surrounding communities...*” (Grandi, 2019)

This is a constructive solution which was not proposed during the first period which had many statements and actions related to sealing borders and expelling migrants. Nonetheless, it has not been argued that it is a gender-sensitive solution which would imply a clear gender aspect of migrants and different approaches to tackling it.

With respect to the *instrumentalisation* strategy, it was barely used in the second period because the focus was more on the actions within destination countries and problems that they had rather than a clear emphasis on crossing borders with the help of smugglers as it existed in the previous period. This means that the concentration on smugglers in this context was reduced because their services were not in high demand, but there was no evidence presented to evaluate trafficking as there were a number of investigations to discover such networks.

All in all, this time span reveals a plethora of techniques to talk about migrants and subsequent core issues related to them. The division between migrants and the local population was still there, despite efforts of non-public actors to challenge this point of view and action to accommodate migrants away from cities. Regarding sexes, this division was not the core topic as the main emphasis was still on the general group of migrants, but during this time, without any negative connotations produced by adjectives before the words “migrant” or “refugee”. The division was made, firstly, when children were mentioned and identified either with their families or mothers, which was more often, and secondly, when it went to personal stories shared through the interview format. Importantly, the focus on genders and sexual orientations was made to showcase the discrimination factors that might contribute to severe violence against people from this subgroup. This was not mentioned during the previous period and can be considered the elaboration upon the topic by the news outlet to include more information and factors. When it comes to smugglers and traffickers, there was no clear connection between the genders or sexes and the identities of those people, except in a few cases when male truck drivers were arrested for smuggling migrants.

2. Turkey

Turkey was the first country to accommodate hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing Syria. However, due to the difficulty of getting work permits, unstable political situation, and more lucrative perspectives in the EU, many refugees decided to violate their obligations to stay within one region where they requested asylum, if they did at all, and travel to the seaside of Turkey located closer to the EU territory to try to pass through borders by boats or even swimming. This led to the development of the shadow business of smugglers who offered their services to migrants since the demand for them was high. Due to the amalgamation of the political situation until the EU-Turkey deal, this business was thriving and creating opportunities for chaos, violence, and exploitation on the ground.

2.1 Period of 2015-2016

The careful analysis of the newspaper demonstrates that cases of violence against women were not covered as widely as in other newspapers studied in this research. However, a few articles that described the issues of sex-related violence also implicitly connected them with gender expectations and how they went in contrast to each other:

“...they stay inside, going crazy because there is nothing to do...” (Hürriyet Daily News, 2015b)

“...encourages women to have at least three children...” (Yinanç, 2016)

The first quote exemplifies a masculine belief that women should resist getting outside and focus on housework, while the second one shows a belief in Turkey which can pressure female refugees to have more kids. Pressure like this might persuade women to have more sexual connections just to meet the standards of society, thereby leading to exploitation and self-violence. The newspaper gave voice to people who experienced it through the strategy of *utterance autonomisation* to share their experience and raise awareness of this topic that might not be that conspicuous. Nonetheless, the direct discussion of gender topics was *radically excluded* from the discourse as well as the involvement of women in trafficking and smuggling activities as it is in other newspapers.

What is vital to highlight is that the *genericisation* strategy was used a lot to highlight a separate class of migrants – children – and the challenges that they encounter during their migration process. This includes:

“...*children caught in a scrum...*” (Hürriyet Daily News, 2015d)

“...*open 10 new education centers for Syrian migrant children...*” (Hürriyet Daily News, 2016b)

“...*30 Syrian refugee children...have been sexually assaulted...*” (Hürriyet Daily News, 2016a)

Such wide coverage of children can be explained by the case that in September 2015, the body of a kid was found on the beach in Bodrum, and pictures of it went viral around the world and attracted attention in various states located far away from the crisis, including Australia and the US. Furthermore, Turkish people are very attentive to children in general and treat them with a lot of care and protection, and it was a shock for everybody to see the dead bodies of these and other kids during the crisis. The fault for this can be put not only on smugglers but also on the parents of these kids who decided to put them at such high risk. This independently contributed to their evaluation as being illegal and trying to achieve their goals by any methods:

“...*trying to illegally cross to Greece via Turkey*” (Hürriyet Daily News, 2015a)

“...*illegal migration...*” (Kömürcüler, 2016)

There is no surprise to discover this because of the EU-Turkey relations and the inability to share the burden equally and legally. Since migrants presented a threat to its economy, the government was trying to not hinder their further migration towards the EU through Greece. Nonetheless, since the issue of smuggling was very widespread, the emphasis on this topic in published articles was at its peak and got the highest coverage among all the other sources included

in this research. Various strategies were used to refer to them including *activation* (regarding their active actions to deliver migrants to a destination), *passivation* (concerning their capture by law enforcement officers), *functionalisation* (in the context of concrete actions that they were performing), *relational identification* (concerning their clan/family relationships), *spatialization* (as it pertains to spaces where meet migrants, collect money, and board them), and finally *instrumentalisation* (concerning boats and ships that they buy or build and then use to transport migrants). A few examples demonstrate:

“...traffickers who earn thousands of dollars for every person they put to sea...” (Hürriyet Daily News, 2015d)

“...authorities have arrested four suspected traffickers...” (Hürriyet Daily News, 2015h)

“...traffickers who pack people onto vessels of dubious quality...” (Hürriyet Daily News, 2015c)

A moment worthy of attention is that smugglers used autopilots on ships and then immediately descended from them to avoid any risks of being caught by patrolling police boats. Any mention of illegal trafficking of goods and drugs was avoided, except for one article discussing the sale of golden Syrian coins in Turkey, which is prohibited under the law. Nonetheless, it barely can be called an organized crime group transporting illegal goods internationally as it was more like a currency exchange booth.

Before concluding this sub-chapter, the use of the *indetermination* strategy was frequently used to refer to migrants in general. If a Greek newspaper (see below) used the strategy of clearly differentiating between migrants and refugees, *Hürriyet Daily News* merged both categories together and very often used more abstract and indefinite pronouns to refer to migrants:

“...some 400 people...” (Hürriyet Daily News, 2015f)

“Several hundred people...” (Hürriyet Daily News, 2015g)

Such neutral focus might play a positive role when it comes to *determination* and forming of views on a group of migrants. However, it should be accessed together with the evaluation strategy, meaning that it imposed a limit which does not allow to see this group as detached and without any links with other cases.

The first period depicted a comprehensive coverage of the migration flows not only within Turkey but also in the EU. It also discussed in depth the smuggling issues and the Turkey-EU deal, which was supposed to seal an almost open door to the EU through Greece. Nonetheless, gender as a discriminating factor was not mentioned separately at all, only in

conjecture with the news related to sex and specific expectations from women. Moreover, a wide coverage attached topics of dead kids and their sufferings, while cases of violence against women were mentioned only from time to time, if compared to other studied newspapers.

2.2 Period of 2018-2019

A year after the crisis, the problem with migrants was not fully addressed since there were numerous attempts to cross the border between Turkey and Greece without any documents. This became an especially bothering phenomenon since the deal between the EU and Turkey was not working as planned, giving more power to the latter to blackmail the former. As it was earlier, gender-related issues were not mentioned, nor were factors that might lead to multiple discrimination, e.g., intersectionality. What can also be included in the list of excluded topics is refugee camps located in Turkey because they were not discussed extensively by authors of articles, except for the approximate number of migrants Turkey is hosting.

When it comes to women and children, *classification* was utilized to highlight them from other migrants in almost all the articles:

“...including one woman and two children...” (Hürriyet Daily News, 2018a)

“...women carrying babies and walking down the road...” (Atkaya, 2018)

“...children, often encouraged to leave home by their parents...” (Hürriyet Daily News, 2019)

Such sharpened attention to both groups might not be entirely positive because this can lead to the fact that senior people or men do not get enough resources or care to keep being a part of the migration flow. The third quote also demonstrates that many children might have been encouraged to undertake a journey alone to achieve a more prosperous life, and it is not surprising that they ended up being alone and lost either in the Balkans or Europe. Nonetheless, this fully aligns with the discourse based on the articles from the period of 2015-2016.

What is vital to note is that the use of *indetermination* gradually came to nought and was replaced by evaluation to refer to migrants and their illegal status on the territory of this or that state:

“...250 undocumented migrants...” (Hürriyet Daily News, 2018b)

“...329 irregular migrants...” (Hürriyet Daily News, 2018c)

The aforementioned quotes illustrate that border management still remains imperfect, and refugees use these paths to go from one country to another. Thanks to the active involvement of

law enforcement institutions from Greece and Turkey, the number of illegal border crossings dropped significantly, although the coverage of the problem was not as frequent as it was two years earlier. The most frequently utilized strategy to talk about smugglers was functionalisation to show that migrants had to contact them so as to either cross the sea or land border. Greek border guards have become more trained and used to the problem, making it much harder to cross and remain unseen. The articles also noticed that many people were detained, beaten, and pushed back to Turkey, meaning that all migrants, regardless of gender or other characteristics, were still susceptible to cross-border violence.

The current period mainly continued the previous narrative line with the main focus on illegal border crossing, cases of dying on the way, abandoned children, violence against women and kids, and smuggling services that migrants used. Discrimination as such has never been discussed as a separate topic, although the length of newspapers allowed to do this in depth. In addition to this, violence in refugee camps in Turkey was not present in the discourse, while interviews with migrants who were residing in them neither were conducted nor cited from other sources. The combination of gender awareness and migration was alien to the articles under scrutiny and can be considered as an omission not only from the editorial side of the newspaper but also from resolving social causes perspective.

3. Greece

Greece and its islands were vital for migrants to get to mainland Europe because it was one of the easiest ways to cross the border. This led to the rise of smuggling there because they only had to have boats and life jackets to deliver migrants to the nearest islands and let them travel further. Greece managed to accept many migrants at all stages of the crisis due to its front-line position as well as investments and pressure from the rest of the European Union to build refugee camps and entry centres where migrants could submit their fingerprints, fill in necessary documents, and apply for refugee status. This main attention was focused on local issues, relations with the EU institutions, NATO-Turkey-Greece relations to manage the Aegean Sea, and problems of trafficking and smuggling.

3.1 Period of 2015-2016

A diverse number of topics caused the usage of various strategies from all the blocks. The exclusion strategies were barely used in the discourse because all of the issues that this thesis covers were comprehensively mentioned. This statement, however, does not apply to the queer community, which was not mentioned as one of the reasons why migrants can feel more

discrimination. Topics of violence against women were not stated explicitly, but it was more than evident from the context:

“...several women and children clinging for life...” (Chrysopoulos, 2015b)

“Female refugees face sexual exploitation while children are vulnerable to kidnapping...”

(Chrysopoulos, 2015a)

These quotes demonstrate that women and children go to one combined category of vulnerable categories of people, leading to a chance of confusion that the same measures must be implemented to fix such problems. This, however, is not true because women could be engaged in “survival sex” to keep moving along the route and pay smugglers, while children are exploited by being involved in forced labour or kidnapped for ransom. The problem of children travelling alone or being lost was also actively raised in the newspaper because the number of them entering Greece was fairly big:

“...2,700 refugee children have ended up in Greece without their parents...” (Aravadinos, 2015)

This led to their maltreatment, sexual assaults or even death because nobody was there to protect them. As it has been mentioned earlier, this is inseparably linked with smugglers who used the Aegean Sea to send migrants from Turkey to the island of Lesbos located less than 20 kilometres from the shores of Turkey, leading to a flood of migrants and refugees there. The newspaper gave them a relatively active role (*activation* strategy) by using active voice and mentioning concrete actions performed by them:

“...traffickers can act as they like there...” (Makris, 2015)

“...migrant trafficking found the ground to boom its business...” (Choros, 2016)

“...nine out of ten refugees and migrants who entered the European Union in 2015 were transported illegally by criminal networks...” (Chrysopoulos, 2016; Europol & INTERPOL,

2016)

This demonstrates how acute the problem was in Greece and how complicated it was to fight human trafficking activities at the forefront, especially when Turkey was refusing to cooperate due to various issues, including the visa liberation regime, recognition by Germany of the Armenia genocide, EU accession talks, and other benefits that Erdoğan tried to bargain about. This also had consequences on NATO’s involvement when Turkey refused from time to time to

patrol its sovereign waters to deter migrants from travelling to Greek islands, thus exacerbating the crisis even more. Moreover, the newspaper also tries to differentiate between smuggling and trafficking. However, it seems that they are not doing it in the right way because they employ the term trafficking as more general and put the idea of smuggling inside it:

“...lead refugees to use people smugglers linked to the Albanian mafia...” (Makris, 2016)

This extract, in particular, was linked with the so-called “Adriatic Connection”, a route which was utilized by the Albanian mafia to illegally transport a wide range of goods (ibid). Nevertheless, with regard to this topic, no connection was made between genders or sexes involved, as has been the case with other newspapers studied above. The *evaluation* strategy was still there, which has been used to highlight that migrants cross borders illegally and keep doing this even after reaching Greece to keep moving in the direction of Germany:

“...illegal immigrants...” (Papathanasiou, 2015)

“...use any available means to reach Germany, illegally...” (Papapostolou, 2015)

Moving on to the *determination* strategy, the analysis is relatively specific because it can be divided into two parts. The first part is relatively straightforward because there was an idea at the EU level to transform Greece into a concentration camp for them:

“...converting Greece into a concentration camp for migrants and refugees...” (Polychroniou, 2016b)

This demonstrates that Greece was trying hard to avoid having this because it would jeopardize its social, economic, health, education, and other institutions. The second dimension that is more interesting is that this newspaper always focuses on differentiating (*determination* strategy) between refugees and migrants and always tries to highlight that both terms have different connotations that only contribute to the gap between “us” and “them”. By highlighting this aspect, the newspapers contributed to raising awareness about the topic and which terms need to be used by people to avoid discrimination, violence, and radicalization.

The subject that gathered a lot of attention was terrorism and how potential terrorists can sneak into EU territory through Greece. This was mainly described through the *functionalisation* strategy because the actions of terrorist organisations and lone wolves to penetrate the safe area were mentioned:

“...the greatest threat of all is the growth of the Islamic State...” (Chrysafis, 2015)

“...fake passports destined for the terror group Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS or ISIL) have been discovered at refugee camps in Greece...” (Kolasa-Sikiaridi, 2016; Scarcella, 2016)

“...one might be a terrorist pretending to be a doctor...” (Polychroniou, 2016a)

All of the quotes exemplify how Greek people were concerned about the problem of incoming terrorists who, under the coverage of a refugee seeker running from war, might have very dangerous intentions. It would be an omission to argue that no voices were saying that all migrants are different and must have different treatment, regardless of their community, religion, or ethnicity, thus leading to a clash of two different perspectives. Despite terrorist attacks in other European countries, a more inclusive perspective won, leading to a more detailed screening and more cooperation between countries through security institutions to detect and prosecute dangerous elements. In other words, a more liberal approach that encourages cooperation and shared outcomes became the agenda rather than a pure realist perspective that encourages hard power and only selfish outcomes. To deconstruct it even further, it is viable to argue that the traditional and masculine approach was replaced by more liberal and feminist-promoted ideas and elements. This allowed the creation of a more comprehensive approach and avoided extreme versions of the stigmatization of migrants. Nevertheless, room for improvement is still there because the gender aspect of the problem of terrorism is important as well, and a link with it has not been elaborated fully in those newspapers.

Greece had its own set of problems - including terrorism, dying children, waves of migrants, their accommodation and allocation to other states, cooperation with Turkey, and NATO operations, among others - when it discovered that it was at the forefront of the crises. Despite all of them, it managed to preserve a human approach, distinguish between migrants and refugees, fight discrimination and radicalization, and cooperate with other actors to manage the flow. When it comes to genders, they were not raised as discriminating factors. However, sexes played a vital role since it was demonstrated that women, as well as children, experienced more violence than men. Whether sexes are linked with genders in the period remains to be seen.

3.2 Period of 2018-2019

During this phase, the agenda shifted from immediate measures to long-term management of refugees and their reallocation either to other EU member states or back to Turkey. The presence

of all topics from the previous span was preserved, but with an addition on a few occasions of elderly people who were fully reliant on their family members:

“...*refugees have had to flee in the twilight of their lives...*” (Smith, 2018a)

Similarly, these cases demonstrate that senior people were ready to undertake even more risks to flee their home countries to find a safe space in the EU. Nonetheless, the topic of gender was out of attention, meaning it was *radically excluded* from this newspaper and its interviewees. Noticeably, other discriminating criteria were explicitly discussed, such as sex or belonging to a racial or ethnic group, thus making a *radical exclusion* strategy even more evident.

Activation and *passivation* strategies played a vital role in this period because there were a number of cases of direct violence from migrants usually happening in the migration camps on the islands, especially on the island of Lesbos. Although it might be unexpected to see this striking difference from the previous period, it might be the result of ineffective management of refugee camps, a lack of security there, and finally not enough space for everybody. This was also under a lot of scrutiny by a lot of media because these issues led to the following consequences:

“...*19 people were arrested after fighting...*” (Smith, 2018b)

“...*guilty verdicts for 32 people for injuring 11 police officers...*” (Smith, 2018c)

“...*forty refugees and migrants blocked the road outside of the camp...*” (Kampouris, 2019b)

The *passivation* strategy was utilized to demonstrate that migrants were arrested and punished for their actions. It might also have contributed to the determination of migrants as they had conflicts, leading to the eruption of violence. Despite the efforts of the police, refugee camps did not become a safe space for various groups of people, leading to more violence:

“*Refugees and migrants in Greek camps suffer widespread sexual violence and harassment...*”

(Chrysopoulos, 2018; UN, 2018)

Such levels of violence and unsafety preclude many people from living in normal conditions and developing regular social connections with others. This marginalization might also lead to people resorting to illegal activities to earn money and find a sense of belonging to this or that group. An involvement like this might cause exploitation or even death as people were desperate to get money not only from the government but also from performing other shadow activities. The death of one of the family members because of involvement in such activities might

involve various consequences for others because this person might have been the only breadwinner. It could be even worse if a person were the sole guardian of a child, meaning that a kid might become lonely. The problem of lonely children and other issues connected with them was very widespread during both phases of the crisis, and even the current period witnessed it along with violence against them. The representation of these issues was shown by *genericisation* and *classification*:

“...conditions in such camps are unsuitable for children, particularly unaccompanied minors...”

(Smith, 2018d)

“...detaining refugee children with mental and physical illnesses...” (Kolasa-Sikiaridi, 2018)

“...criminal groups which are currently exploiting these innocent souls...” (Kampouris, 2019a)

Greece was implementing various plans to accommodate all the children and collaborated with the European Union and neighbouring states to find their relatives. Moreover, during this period there was a lot of focus on integrating them into society through schools and extracurricular activities.

It is also important to show the use of the *functionalisation* strategy how it has been used in one of the articles to show the power of female migrants:

“It takes a great deal of dedication and stamina to run a newspaper ... if you are an Afghan woman living in Greece, after having to flee your country...” (Chrysopoulos, 2019)

This piece of news shows that female migrants can achieve a lot and do have an independent agency to achieve their aspirations. There were no such examples in the previous period and that is why it is a move ahead. Such information can inspire and empower others to keep dreaming of their dreams as there were also many non-state actors still operating in Greece in this period to find legal reasons to stay and find a job as well as hobbies.

In sum, the focus shifted from the immediate measure to allocating migrants to the mainland or other states, integrating them, and changing the image of the country from a pitstop for migrants to a sovereign and prosperous country that can help people in need. Although there was not a lot of focus on smuggling and trafficking, the chance of being involved in these activities for migrants was still high as the migration flow was still there. This flow was mostly of women and children, but the violence in migration camps was at a high level making it irresistibly hard to live there. Finally, the focus on gender was still not present in the discourse, although the newspapers were referring to a multitude of other sources in their articles.

4. Bulgaria

Bulgaria was another country at the forefront of the crisis with Greece. Having a 240-kilometre border fence with Turkey, Bulgaria was trying to defend Europe not only by increasing the number of border patrols but also by pursuing violent pushbacks and inhuman acts against migrants (Nancheva, 2016). She also discovers in her article that Bulgarian society was hostile towards incoming refugee seekers because they were perceived as competitors who tried to go to Western Europe for more opportunities (ibid). This resulted in a very high securitization of the problem, especially when the flow increased in reaction to the Greek and NATO patrol efforts to stop illegal flows from Turkey at sea, leading to more pressure on Bulgaria.

4.1 Period of 2015-2016

Novinite, as other newspapers analyzed in this work, covered a diverse number of topics. In contrast to Greece, topics of violence against women as well as an independent agency of women were *radically excluded* from all of the articles, except one that talked about the signing of the Istanbul Convention in 2016. Nonetheless, women and other vulnerable groups were usually highlighted as a separate category:

“*Children and pregnant women were among the migrants...*” (Novinite, 2015l)

“*...endanger the lives of these people, who are often children and women*” (Novinite, 2015h)

“*...38 were men, 33 women, and 58 children...*” (Novinite, 2015c)

It can be seen that feminist-related narratives were not present in the discourse as they were not appropriately discussed by the media outlet. Other analyzed sources showed that there were a number of cases when women were involved in sexual exploitation or other types of violence, meaning that those cases indeed existed but just were not mentioned by this source. It also shows that other strategies studied for this period will not have any gender stance or focus because it was not a part of the articles.

Moving on to the set of *predication strategies*, *activation* was used very often to demonstrate that Bulgaria is fighting the problem of traffickers and smugglers as they were taking advantage of the border to earn money. This strategy, in combination with *impersonalisation*, was also used to refer to international organisations as they are unified entities rather than specific humans to highlight the international role of Bulgaria in solving cross-border crimes. Overall, the discourse highlighted the role of smugglers in bringing people to Bulgaria and making their act of

being their illegal. That is why a lot of efforts were directed towards arresting them and cooperating with other parties, including Turkey to share information. The examples include:

“...direct the flow of illegal migrants to the official border crossings...” (Novinite, 2015b)

“Bulgaria will continue building the fence...” (Novinite, 2015d)

“Bulgaria is working on a comprehensive plan for the integration of migrants...” (Novinite, 2015a)

“This will be carried out in cooperation with Europol, Frontex, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and Eurojust...” (Novinite, 2015k)

Since *activation* was used to highlight that there are undertakings to prevent the flow of migrants, it was required to define this group and give it special characteristics. *Genericisation* from the *referential* block was used to form a unified group of incoming people, and then *evaluation* served a purpose to state, as it was in Turkey and Greece, that they were illegal:

“...illegal immigrants...” (Novinite, 2015d)

“...people who cross the border illegally...” (Novinite, 2015i)

“... illegal immigrants were being smuggled...” (Novinite, 2015g)

This line of thought is in line with the securitization theory because it was required to evaluate migrants as illegal or having some other attributes to be able to undertake special measures against them. Such positioning contributes to *determination*, as it was argued earlier because one group starts having a hostile attitude toward another one. To give a group of migrants more clearly defined properties, *nomination* was used to increase the power of the *evaluation strategy* and contend that migrants were without legal documents, leading sometimes to a problem of defining their legal age, especially if it is around 18 and the question is about their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), nationality, and family status:

“...none of the illegal immigrants was in the possession of identity...” (Novinite, 2015f)

“...without identity documents...” (Novinite, 2016a)

“None of the foreigners had identity documents...” (Novinite, 2016c)

It can also be inferred that without legal documents, it was not viable to define the sex of people properly because some of them might have been transgenders. Although the number of

such people would be very low due to the price of surgeries as well as modern technologies that are still not comprehensively present in the Middle East region, the probability that such people existed should not be excluded. Another problem is terrorists who were on the international wanted list (e.g. mainly INTERPOL) because some of them might have changed their appearance to avoid being detected. Despite being partly tackled by fingerprinting every incoming migrant, it was relatively hard to check everybody and add each person to the EU system as there were many opportunities to escape officials or pretend that they already have been registered by buying fake documents or IDs. Finally, because of the perception that women are less powerful than men (Nancheva (2016) emphasized that Bulgarian policemen were “allowed” to beat men, but not women or kids), some female terrorists could have attracted less attention than men from the national forces, thus having more chances to cross a border with malicious motives.

Going further, *specification* was used occasionally to make mention of the EU as a separate actor involved in the migration crises and taking its own steps towards its resolution. It was also positioned through the *activation* strategy to emphasize that it is actively participating and producing tangible results:

“...the EU agrees on the need to prevent people smugglers...” (Novinite, 2015j)

“The EU set out to tackle the root causes of the human emergency...” (Novinite, 2015e)

Those articles also emphasized the discrepancy between the values of the EU and their implementation in member states because there were multiple attempts to suspend freedom of movement within the EU, prevent the reallocation of migrants to other states, and cancel financial assistance to the states located on the periphery of the EU. Furthermore, multiple cases were reported that migrants were beaten by border police, making their routes even more dangerous and complicated. This mismatch of values demonstrates that even if all of the countries are committed to various conventions and treaties on the protection of migrants and their rights, in the moment of crisis, various parts of them might be compromised, including the gender part.

What, however, was an essential part of the strategy of dealing with migrants in all the countries was protecting children, despite the fact that many unaccompanied kids were able to get lost in the transit states. One of the articles drew attention to the fact that this problem is also present in Bulgaria and that lost children without parents or guardians are subject to being recruited into terrorist cells:

“...children being recruited by terrorists remains a considerable problem...” (Novinite, 2016b)

The use of *classification* not only demonstrates how acute the problem was but also shows that women and children are separate categories of usually considered vulnerable groups. They might go through different processes of radicalization and upbringing, meaning that approaches need to be different and adapted to the root causes of problems.

Although this period excluded the gender aspect along with gender-based violence from the discourse, it was still possible to extract important findings, such as the active role of Bulgaria (as a subject in the discourse) in solving the problem of illegal migrants who tend to come without any documents. This also can be positioned in the historical context by arguing that Bulgaria, as a relatively new member of the EU, was trying to prove itself by taking an active role in fighting migration and ensuring the transit of those who managed to enter the country, being one of the poorest member states.

4.2 Period of 2018-2019

By looking at the period of 2018-2019, it is possible to argue that the discourse co-produced by this newspaper has not drastically evolved in terms of its content and the topics discussed. One potential cause could be a reduced number of news articles related to the issues of migration on the Balkan route. This allows to suggest that there were not many preconditions for the discourse to change from the one that people have immersed themselves in. What is possible to notice is the fact that one of the articles clearly states that women can be subject to violence and exploitation, meaning that now the topic was not drastically *excluded* from the discourse as it was earlier. Nonetheless, the number of mentions by news articles of this topic is much lower than in other newspapers subjected to examination by this research. Here is one of the extracts:

“The organized crime group was involved in the trafficking of migrants and the exploitation of women” (Novinite, 2019b)

Although the topic of women got some attention, the clear emphasis on issues of gender has not been noticed during the analysis of this period. Rather, the focus shifted to tangible issues and long-term management of the migration problem just like it was in other newspapers. Due to a relatively high number of investigations opened during the years, Bulgarian police was conducting many raids to detain smugglers and traffickers across the whole country. This is showcased by one of the examples that is employed *activation*:

“They were arrested on Monday in a series of raids...” (Novinite, 2019a)

In spite of police efforts, endeavours to smuggle migrants through the border between Turkey and Bulgaria were present. The previous period also demonstrated that the challenge of illegal crossings was widespread, but Bulgaria often resorted to international actors for their help and involvement. The analyzed articles did not mention this international cooperation but emphasized that there were some border management issues, including high electricity bills, non-working cameras, and slow reactions to holes in a fence, among others. This might be why such issues were not resolved and stayed over the years, thus providing various opportunities for smugglers and traffickers.

Issues with controlling the border were not the only ones that remained unchanged over the years. Violent push backs and treatment of migrants persisted in the discourse, thus showing a certain level of subordination, or a tangible representation of relations of power, of migrants to police forces at the border. Extracts below exhibit that the police, also a representation of “us”, was shown through the *activation strategy*, while migrants through *determination* and also in some sense through *overdetermination* as they were performing two actions simultaneously, namely crossing a border, running from police, and using the services of smugglers:

“*They said a smuggler brought them to the border...*” (Novinite, 2018)

“*...the police caught them.*” (ibid)

“*They claimed police beat them and seized their possessions...*” (ibid)

It might be argued in line with the feminist approach in international relations that if there were more women in border patrols, then there would be fewer cases of violence because there would be more control from the other sex, leading to more equal gender relations. This thesis would also align with the idea that a gender aspect has always been on the roadside of international theories and approaches. Although this argument looks trustworthy, it is important to mention that there were no statistics regarding gender equality in the Bulgarian police reported by the news source making this statement to be proved.

The analysis of 2018-2019 demonstrates that the discourse has not changed the content remained almost the same, except in one case that focused on the exploitation of women. The focus on children became less acute, compared to Greece, either because the problem was not that acute or for the simplicity of delivering news, the category of migrants was *generalizable* to include everybody, including kids. The idea of “*illegal migrants without documents*” remained in this period with a focus on illegal crossings and efforts of policemen to prevent them, thus leading to occasional violence on the border. Traffickers and smugglers were also prosecuted by policemen through various raids and their active actions. Issues of gender relations were not emphasized or

excluded from the discourse, but power relations that could have been built on genders were present on the border to pursue pushbacks of refugee seekers, smugglers, and traffickers.

5. Serbia

The last country analyzed in this research is Serbia. It was a vital transit territory for migrants to go to Hungary, Croatia, and sometimes even Romania due to road deviations caused by border patrols and risks associated with border crossings. The Serbian population had witnessed a few migration waves earlier because of the Yugoslav Wars, so the new crisis was not new for the senior generation. This allowed the development of some level of tolerance, which helped to avoid intense polarization between “them” (migrants) and “us” (Serbians). The crisis also allowed Serbia to improve its relations with the EU through bargaining and cooperation, as it applied for EU membership in 2009. Although accession has not happened so far, Serbia has taken part in international efforts to control borders and arrest smugglers. The latter, though, was with partial success as incentives to stimulate migrants to leave the country were very compelling.

5.1 Period of 2015-2016

As has been the case in other media outlets, gender issues were not discussed (*radically excluded*) in the current period, while topics of sex were mentioned only in relation to children and their mothers:

“...renovated and air-conditioned separate room for mothers with children.” (B92, 2015e)

What distinguishes mothers and kids as a separate category here compared to other countries is the connection with the conditions that this social group gets. This includes not only better conditions but also enhanced security of them. Some might argue that this is where hidden gender relations are located, and they will not be wrong, but it is also vital to look at the context because it will show that the topic of security and the way of treatment of migrants were important as well:

“...it will build apartment blocks either where refugees would live for years...” (B92, 2015d)

“...provided accommodation, healthcare services and protection...” (B92, 2016c)

This shows that migrants could consider staying in Serbia a bit longer than expected if they cannot go further because of closed borders. Nonetheless, the reality did not reflect this because it was relatively hard to get shelter as well as refugee status along with the benefits that people could

get in the EU countries. This is especially important when it comes to a labour market and the ability to find a job with a salary that could pay for at least some of the expenses. This reality can also be illustrated and proved by the following quotes:

“Serbia will also not build migrant camps on its territory...” (B92, 2015g)

“Serbia will not be spending more money ... on accommodation capacities...” (B92, 2015h)

Coming back to the idea of gender relations, the first glance, can show that Serbia was trying to take care of migrants by welcoming them and ensuring that all of their needs were satisfied, regardless of their age or sex. This was shown through the strategies of *genericisation* and *categorisation* to demonstrate that the group of migrants was relatively cohesive and hard to manage because of its size, subsequently making the one-size-fits-all strategy more than well-suited. However, this does not work because the group of migrants consist of various social groups that require different and specially crafted approaches. By trying to manage the phenomena of migration, Serbia was pursuing the masculine (state) – feminine (migrant) gender binary and hierarchy. This means that there was a sort of contradiction between the representation of Serbia as an open to all the migrants country that is taking care of migrants and as a transit state that makes sure that migrants try to leave the country as soon as possible by creating various incentives for them, such as the absence of accommodation or prepaid tickets to go to the north of the country where the borders with the EU countries are. The quotes from above and below illustrate this discursive contraction:

“Serbia wishes to convey the message that everyone ... is always whole-heartedly welcome”
(B92, 2015i)

“Serbia has closed its borders to all migrants who are not refugees from war zones...” (B92, 2015f)

What is important to consider as well is the independence of migrants and their own actions that were demonstrated through the *activation* strategy. One of the reasons why discourse has this contradiction described above is the reluctance of migrants to receive help from the state as this would discourage them from moving forward. The quote below illustrates this point:

“...they do not wish to go to reception centers...this group of migrants want to stay together ... so they could organize and once again move toward the border” (B92, 2016b)

These and other actions, including the ability of migrants to cross borders, show that migrants were active actors who could also influence the outcome of events, which is in line with the less gender-hierarchical strategy applied to state-migrant relations. Where the state institutions were actively involved “from above” were the cases of arresting traffickers and smugglers. Importantly, *activation* was also used to show that those actors also perform many actions, and this, in a certain way, illustrates the struggles between the two:

“...*police officers have discovered about 100 archaeological objects...*” (B92, 2015j)

“...*have been arrested on suspicion they transported illegal migrants...*” (B92, 2015a)

From a certain angle, this can also show some contradiction because those illegal people were arrested, but since it was important for Serbia to remain a transit country, it did not want to reduce opportunities for migrants to keep going forward. This means that there were still many opportunities for people to resort to smugglers and use their services to go to Austria or Germany from Serbia, as it was reported by various articles. One of the deciding factors in catching some of the smugglers was international involvement, as Serbia cooperated a lot with neighbouring states to stem illegal migration and patrol borders together. This has been shown through the strategies of *functionalisation*, *physical identification*, *instrumentalisation*, and *overdetermination* to demonstrate several steps performed together with other actors:

“...*together with members of the Serbian and Hungarian border police...*” (B92, 2015c)

“...*Serbia, Hungary, Austria and Germany have agreed on greater cooperation...*” (B92, 2015b)

Nonetheless, despite great cooperation with police officers from other countries, it was relatively hard to deter migrants from crossing borders illegally. Even the cases of violence at the borders hardly scared migrants from moving towards their destination countries using the help of smugglers:

“...*the Balkan migrant route cannot be considered closed*” (B92, 2016a)

Overall, it can be seen that Serbia was trying to follow international rules of conduct and demonstrate a welcoming attitude towards migrants, which comes from the country's history. However, due to the eagerness of migrants to keep moving, they often refused Serbia's help. This was also exacerbated by Serbia's desire to motivate migrants to keep moving and leave the country,

thus leading to a contradiction reflected in the discourse. Remarkably, the gender aspect was not explicitly stated in articles, although it was viable to discover hidden gender relations in some of the articles. Nonetheless, the absence of an explicit discussion combined with no mention of discrimination factors led this paper to state that the Serbian approach to migrants in 2015-2016 was not comprehensive enough.

5.2 Period of 2018-2019

One year after the main events, new topics appeared, thus leading to the modification of the discourse on migration. Various discriminating factors, including gender, that influence the path of migrants, have been discussed. Although only around four articles raised these topics during this period, it is still relatively a lot considering the fact that there were no articles in the previous one and their share in total number. Since the migration approach did not account for those factors, the problem arose from the migration camp. The clash between migrants started because of a violent group in the refugee camp, leading to a fight between different nationalities:

“Afghanistan had been abusing other migrants on a daily basis...” (B92, 2018d)

In this case, *functionalisation* was used to demonstrate the acts of violence, caused by migrants, that transformed itself later into ethnic violence that can also take various forms and be combined with other discriminating factors except for nationality. Another article elaborates upon these discriminating factors and states that some groups of people might be subject to greater violence than others:

“...women, children and unaccompanied minors...” (B92, 2018c)

Despite the fact that the list of such groups is not limited to only them, it might be considered an improvement as the previous period did not have these categories mentioned at all. What is even more important in the current period is the mention of sexual orientation as a factor that might encourage people to abandon their places of birth. One of the articles talks about Iranians, using the *abstraction* strategy, who also had to cross the borders of the ex-Yugoslavia states as they hoped to reach the EU states to apply for refugee status because of discrimination rooted in a number of factors:

“...the sense of endangered human rights and freedoms, primarily in the domain of political, religious and sexual orientation” (B92, 2018b)

“...who identify as Christians, LGBTQ population or as opposition voters” (ibid)

The recognition of the fact that sexual orientation, which is also connected with gender by the Serbian newspaper, has wide-range consequences for the migration management system as it should account for various factors. All of these articles acknowledge that incentives to migrants might be different, and some of these incentives can be very vivid during the migration process itself, meaning that these factors should be respected not only by transit and destination states but also by fellow migrants. This is why it is vitally important to do the initial screening of migrants to be able to provide them with the best conditions possible to avoid any clashes or acts of violence. What is also vital to emphasise for this work is that *activation* was used to highlight the active role of identifying migrants and their conscious choice to behave in a certain way.

As in all of the countries studied above, the focus in 2018-2019 was also directed towards the assimilation of migrants who decided to stay long-term in Serbia. The articles state through the strategies of classification and *genericisation* that children start attending Serbian schools and learn the Serbian language which is vital for people who would like to stay there:

“...472 migrant children are attending our schools...” (B92, 2018f)

That means that despite the initial goals of migrants to reach the mainland of the EU, some decided to stay because of a multitude of reasons, including the difficulty or price of crossing borders, inability to move forward because some family members were injured, decision to stay for some time to wait for a better moment, and so on. In addition to this, disabilities played a vital role in the decision-making process for migrants, but they were *radically excluded* from this discourse too which again makes the approach to migrants not fully versatile.

Cases of smuggling and trafficking were also mentioned in this period as it still was a widespread and common problem. Nonetheless, the international efforts of police agencies stood the test of time and the cooperation between Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria were still ongoing. *Functionalisation* was used to show that concrete actions of single states and international arrangements were producing concrete results, while *activation* demonstrated the active role of actors and their contribution to the outcome of catching criminals:

“The police have prevented an attempt to smuggle migrants...” (B92, 2018a)

“...the police of the two countries... want to send a clear message...” (B92, 2018e)

The newspaper did not provide any information on the sex of those criminals, and that is why this work does not have evidence to either support or refute the statement that most criminals tend to be men, while women tend to avoid punishment because they are unconsciously considered innocent by security forces. This idea can also be developed to the point that would enable arguing that this unconscious bias works not only due to the sex of a person but also gender, meaning that the behaviour and outlook of a person can also be decisive for security forces to determine if a person can be suspicious or not. This is just one more manifestation of gender relations that have a direct influence on the flow of prohibited substances and other goods because of biases that can be utilized by criminals to take advantage of them. The explanation also exemplifies why it is hard to find support for it as, on the one hand, it might be true, and that is why almost all of the criminals are men, while on the other hand, it might be wrong, but men just tend to be more often engaged in criminal activities than women due to physical conditions or better integration into the criminal circles.

All in all, this period demonstrates progress made over the years towards treating migrants more humanely. This includes drawing more attention to discrimination factors and pursuing concrete actions, such as investigations and new approaches. It is obvious that it requires much time to change the well-established institutions, but such steps are already laying a profound foundation for similar emergencies. The discourse also kept highlighting the active role of Serbia in international efforts to fight migration and illegal crossings. However, some of such efforts might have contradicted Serbia's strategy of remaining a transit state only. Nonetheless, long-term efforts had their place in the narrative as many migrants decided to stay long-term, and that is why they required a special approach to assimilate them. Such actions were deployed to the discourse through *activation*, *genericisation*, *functionalisation*, and *abstraction* to emphasize the multiplicity of the processes.

Analysis Results

At first glance, the conducted research might seem unnecessary in-depth, considering the scope of the whole region and multiple issues related to the extensive migration field. Focus on details, however, can reveal hidden patterns and individual situations required to trace tendencies over time and define a “truth regime” for any given time and country. This would not be possible without the discursive strategies that allowed for the opportunity to look at and analyze various texts from a critical stance. Two clearly defined periods in the past made the research mode detached from the actual events, which is highly vital for discursive research of this type. It is impossible to argue if this or that strategy was the most frequent or the most powerful one as they strongly depend on context and are linked to the discursive environment. For instance, activation was used in Turkey during 2015-2016 to say that smugglers undertake proactive steps to facilitate the flow of illegal migrants, and the same strategy was utilized to state that Serbia is building protective measures against migrants. This means that it is relatively unrealistic to make any credible inferences based only on strategies, but it is more than within the capabilities to use the findings from the sections above to answer the research questions of this work.

To tackle Q1 and Q2, it is required to take a look at the strategies used in each of the sections to depict genders and sexes, although for the latter it might be relatively complicated to sum them all up as a wide array of them can demonstrate gender relations. For *Balkan Insights*, it can be argued that gender relations were barely demonstrated during both periods as the main strategies that were used were *suppression* and *backgrounding*. This means that gender topics were not mentioned explicitly, except for one article that talked about the LGBTQI+ community and other factors that force people to move through the *classification* strategy. What is also important to notice is that women and the female gender were very often made passive through the use of *passivation* (migrants as objects), *instrumentalisation* (to show that men do a lot of actions, while women stay aside, showcasing the interplay between sexes and genders), and finally through the use of *generalisation* when it comes to combining women and children into one separate category. Nonetheless, there were a few instances when women had a proactive role in taking the initiative to show women power. This excludes survival sex or slavery as it cannot be considered freedom for women to be able to feed their families or to keep traveling to or within the EU.

The second newspaper - *Hürriyet Daily News* – from Turkey shares common ground with the previous newspaper when it comes to covering gender and sex but with less focus on these topics. Gender themes were radically excluded from the discourse except in a few instances when they were connected with gender expectations but in an implicit way. This means that violence against women is not acceptable and condemned but when it comes to combining this topic with migration, it becomes challenging to cover both. Nevertheless, several articles gave an opportunity

for women to speak up through *utterance autonomisation*, but this was also not widespread in the media discourse. Finally, women and children were merged into one separate category through *classification* which is highly inaccurate when it comes to their experiences and measures needed to tackle issues of both. In general, gender relations were usually represented in this and other newspapers through sexes and people's knowledge and expectations from them, making it based on this link. This means that this thesis does not have any proven data to make inferences regarding traffickers and smugglers as their sexes were not revealed in the articles.

Moving forward, a newspaper from Greece – *GreekReporter* – *radically excluded* explicit topics of gender, but the context provided various examples where sex- and gender-based types of violence were present in the country. This, for instance, was demonstrated through the strategy of *activation* as migrants had to go through violence in refugee camps because the Greek Islands were not capable of accommodating everyone arriving from Turkey. What is also important to notice is that women and kids most of the time were separated into two categories as the problem of lonely and lost kids was highly widespread on the island. Such differentiation, however, did not give rise to a wider coverage of gender-based violence and the hierarchy of power relations.

A Bulgarian source – *Novinite* – hardly focused on the problem of gender, especially in the period of 2015-2016. The next period, though, shed more light on violence against women through a set of strategies that are in line with other newspapers. The discourse was also highly diluted with the problem of identifying migrants as they did not have any valid documents, meaning that the issues of sexes and genders became even more complicated to analyse.

The final source is a Serbian newspaper called *B92*. Gender dilemmas were not properly discussed in the first period because groups of migrants were considered highly cohesive through the *genericisation* and *categorisation* strategies, while the sexes of people were mentioned only in relation to children and their mothers. The second period referred to the *abstraction* strategy to talk about discriminating factors, including gender, sex, and other factors that can lead to violence and can cause migration. It is also vital to bring up the masculine (state) – feminine (migrant) gender binary that the Serbian government was using, especially in the first period, to let the migrants go through the country without staying there too long as accommodating them would have involved many costs.

As can be seen, the topics that involve discussing sexes and genders were not stated explicitly except for a few cases in the Serbian source and *Balkan Insights* in the second period. This demonstrates some progress made during the years regarding coverage of these topics but also showcases the road toward a more inclusive and comprehensive approach. Other newspapers, however, did not cover these problems in depth, as can be demonstrated by the analysis section above. Remarkably, when it comes to shadow topics, such as smuggling or sex trafficking, the

sexes of people involved were not mentioned at all, despite clear gender roles, meaning that it makes more sense to refer to reports and publications of international organizations in the security field and local police departments to shed more light on the number of women involved in these activities. Cultural differences can also explain the absence of gender-related topics, as it is not expected to talk about them in Muslim countries, especially when it comes to intersectionality. On top of this, migrants were a relatively unified category in the media discourse, meaning that it was relatively challenging for reporters to dive deeper into migration topics and discuss all of the overlapping topics.

Replying to the Q3, transnational crime is usually behind the scenes, and it is relatively complicated to detect it in the media discourse, especially concerning the sexes and genders involved. All of the articles did not mention the names of the criminals involved in illegal activities as they referred to police reports that also did not state them. Some might argue that it is possible to make a hypothesis that there is a high chance that people in the field were men, as many migrants being smuggled were also men. They might not have trusted women, but this might not have been necessarily true as there is no evidence to confirm this statement. Moreover, OSCE (2023) states that gender prejudices among security practitioners are still highly present, meaning that women would be better suited to smuggle people or drugs. Being at the centre of the contradicting statements, this research topic requires more investigation.

What also needs to be taken into account is the involvement of security forces in border protection, as many migrants were either pushed back, beaten or raped by police in the forests, mountains or even at sea. Such cases were witnessed in all of the analyzed sources and demonstrated the overuse of power granted by state institutions to “punish” migrants for crossing state borders. Although many reported that women were usually not touched, nothing precluded border patrols from being engaged in regular gender-based violence and also blackmailing of women and other migrants. This also represents relations power between state patrols (masculine) and migrants (feminine) and the consequences this can provoke, such as radicalization or involvement in illegal activities because women could have given all the funds and tangible goods to pay off being raped. Being left with nothing, women and men become highly susceptible to being recruited by criminal organisations to facilitate illegal flows between borders. These inferences demonstrate the direct impact of gender relations on the security field, which is manifested in the form of police and military officers who are supposed to protect refugee seekers and not make the situation even more dangerous due to the incorrect use and distribution of power.

Gender patterns still keep influencing recent patterns of migrations, especially in the wake of changing geopolitical axes, deteriorating economic conditions, and climate change consequences visible in various parts of the world. UNHCR (2024) estimates that more than 117

million people will be displaced by the end of 2023, hitting a new record of people who do not have a home anymore. The most recent crisis that affected Europe the most was the military conflict in Ukraine, persuading millions of citizens to flee the country to neighbouring states to ask for asylum. Such new migration waves, however, also caused multiple debates related to gender, such as whether male refugees should be granted protection or they should be sent back to their country of origin to support the military efforts of the government. If the latter opinion is the most correct one, then migration as a phenomenon can become very feminized and lead to the central assumption that all migrants are women, who can be assumed as innocent and thus in need of protection. However, this approach would not only entirely disregard pacificism and all its adherents but also people with mixed gender identities who might consider them as non-binary. Worth mentioning here is an example of Israel and the military confrontation with terrorist organizations that attracted many women in Israel and beyond to join the Israel Defense Forces to fight them. This means that women are as powerful as men and must be considered equally by border guards and asylum officers who consider multiple cases daily.

Although any fully working gender-bias-free concept is still to come, there are other multiple challenges related to migrants in general in Europe and beyond. The rise of far-right ideas, as reflected in the elections to the European Parliament in 2024, demonstrates that people would like to tighten up the migration policy of the EU and make the process of granting asylum more complicated. Although the European Parliament is not the deciding factor in the migration settings, elections still demonstrate how people perceive current development and the course they would like to stick to. There are various interconnected causes, such as generalizing about migrants or perceiving them as a threat to economic and social stability, even though there might be other causes of insecurity. This also perfectly aligns with the securitization theory and the urge to blame external actors for national security challenges, thus justifying giving more power to the defensive industry. The same dilemma is also visible in the United States, where migration is a susceptible topic, especially in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, as these states border Mexico, a country used by many to cross a border with the US.

It is an arduous challenge to estimate the effect of all these developments on the migration processes, but considering the growing number of displaced people, many countries will be making even more concerted efforts, through both hard and soft powers, to protect themselves from the negative consequences of migration. This means that discourse in the post-Balkan environment can be reversed by state actors to lay the blame on migrants for new and severe challenges and justify new protection measures. It will be even harder to “deconstruct” it, but thanks to the “seeds of destruction” found in the previous discourse and multiple non-state actors ready to challenge the state dominance, a promising chance remains to reach a middle ground.

Conclusion

This research endeavour provided a reader with a broad overview of migration-related issues in the Balkan region, focusing on local and international levels. The analysis of sources from Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia combined with the Balkan-wide newspaper enabled this study to discover various discursive strategies to illustrate the migration experience for millions of English people. Such discursive image showed a tangible representation of relations of power and institutions that support them, despite the fact that many important details, such as the sexes of smugglers or traffickers, were not disclosed in all newspapers. Nonetheless, gender relations described in the newspaper offered the chance to see that they did have some power over migrants as many times they disappeared from receiving a payment or used boats with autopilots to transport migrants to avoid any extra risks. The whole situation of migrants being dependent on smugglers or traffickers made the crisis highly unequal as a whole, especially if the state-person dichotomy is added, thus leading to the exacerbation of various risks related to crossing borders illegally.

It was relatively challenging to allow for an in-depth evaluation of the migrant-smuggler relationship as the smugglers were operating in the shadow, meaning that their actual sex, origin, and motivation often remained unknown. Thanks to various academic papers and stories told by migrants to the newspapers, the gap was not causing any problems. However, for research of a more extensive scope, it will be necessary to look into reports published by police and courts to account for the roles played by smugglers fully. Exploring the experiences of children who used to be a part of a smuggling route can also produce a very intriguing perspective as their migration journey was overshadowed by the stories of their parents, usually mothers. However, it might be complicated to implement this research idea not only because of challenges related to finding these kids but also due to legal reasons, as many of them still might not have a guardian.

Discourse is a highly fluid environment that can constantly evolve. This view implies that multiple research attempts can investigate the same phenomena from different perspectives and arrive at different conclusions, opening up much space for discursive scholars. This might be the reason why some readers consider the whole direction of critical discursive studies to be unreliable. This research, in turn, made an attempt to fix the period and analyzed sources in time to make sure that the findings and the materials used were the same, making this research replicable for other scholars. What can challenge this research is the focus on only English sources, which limited the research in terms of sources and authors. Additionally, by using English, the study provides only a Western-centric approach that mostly utilizes English instead of local languages, which can provide different perspectives and conclusions. Combining different languages in one study, though, can produce even more issues, such as translation, a combination

of different articles and newspapers together, and others, thereby making this research a middle ground between different perspectives.

An attentive reader would also have noticed that this research does not interview actual migrants from the Balkan route. Not giving a voice to people experiencing migration can be considered a weakness, but this goes a bit beyond the scope of this work as it solely focuses on the critical discourse analysis that is composed of a set of media outlets. Moreover, interviewing migrants, making sure to account for all the principles of diversity, and also including people who have participated in the trafficking and smuggling must involve several years of research endeavour, engaging multiple international stakeholders. Current research, in turn, incorporated multiple cases of migrants and discussed them in-depth from various perspectives, providing a solid foundation for making inferences. This time-consuming research process highlights the efforts put into considering multiple situations and recreating the discourse by manually studying much textual information.

Discursive studies also offer much space for further research as textual information can be approached and interpreted from different points of view. For instance, one endeavour can attempt to look at a local level to account for different languages, traditions, cultures, and people. This can be conducted by a team of scholars in different countries to be capable of producing cross-country comparative research and involving multiple security practitioners to raise awareness about gender lenses and develop a more inclusive security approach. Another approach might undertake a corpus analysis to study even more textual information and reveal language patterns that cannot be found by a human eye. With the development of generative artificial intelligence, this research can be even more thought-provoking as it will be possible to compare and contrast different patterns within one corpus that can be further elaborated on a case-by-case basis. Sentiment analysis can also be added to study the emotional tone of different portions of the textual data, thus providing more insights into the attitude towards migrants. Although ideally suited to analyzing significant parts of the text, this approach would be more complicated to combine with critical lenses as it will focus solely on the textual data rather than the meaning added at the pragmatic level. Beyond the methodological approach, different theoretical lenses can be applied to study migration, such as the Paris Security School. Emanating from the constructivist block of theories in international relations, it would showcase different securitization tendencies and practices by security practitioners to manage acute concerns. This approach would be helpful in looking at the actions of border guards and their extended authority during the crisis, thus focusing more on the narrative and alternative narrative rather than approaching them more in-depth to fully unpack, which was the primary purpose of this research.

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List of Appendices

Appendix no. 1: The Balkan route in 2014 (map)

Appendix no. 2: The Balkan route in 2017 (map)

Appendix no. 3: A list of discursive strategies (table)

Appendix no. 4: Articles for analysis (table)