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DISCOURSES OF EUROPEAN 'STABILITOCRACY' IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE ACCORDING TO CROATIAN AND SERBIAN PRESS AFTER 2007

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The paper focuses on the discursive construction of so-called 'stabilitocracy' in Croatian and Serbian press between 2007 and 2017. A large corpus of articles from four ideologically diverse daily newspapers from both countries is explored using the methods of corpus-driven discourse analysis. With the help of collocation and concordance analysis, the paper demonstrates how a concept of Southeastern Europe as an inherently unstable region in need of a firm rule is linguistically constructed, as well as how Western expertise is discursively transferred in the analysed media. Findings about this language use demonstrate similarities and differences in the reproduction of essentialist stereotypes about Southeastern Europe in the regional press of the two analysed countries.

Keywords: *Southeastern Europe; corpus-assisted discourse studies; discourse studies; stabilitocracy; European Union*

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1. Introduction

The European Union's policy towards Southeastern European countries since 2016 has been increasingly described as 'stabilitocracy'. This notion includes Western support for "weak democracies with autocratically minded leaders, who govern through informal, patronage networks" (Kmezić and Bieber 2017, 95) in exchange for stability and continuation of the Euro-Atlantic integration process. While this can be (and is) analysed as a phenomenon of political sciences, such an attitude is also reflected as a discursive representation of Southeastern Europe in media of the region itself.

Following the assumption that discourses are embedded in knowledge and power hierarchies (Foucault 1972), this representation may be perceived as a broader and already recognised phenomenon of so-called 'Balkanism'. As Maria Todorova proves, knowledge about Southeastern Europe produced by the European West since the 19th century is highly stereotyped, making use of essentializing clichés about national characters, and perceiving complex political situation in the region through prisms of such concepts as 'powder keg', 'wild Balkans', 'primordial hatred', or 'cauldron of history' (Todorova 1997; cf. also Jezernik 2004, Lazarević Radak 2013).

This stereotypic knowledge was then adopted by various social and political actors in Southeastern Europe and employed in a number of discourses, according to their pragmatic needs and agendas referring to Western Europe (cf. e.g. Luketić 2013). The most extreme cases of such essentialising (self-)exoticisation of Southeastern Europe were presented by political actors active in the 1990s, as studied e.g. by Lindstrom (2002, 2008; Razsa and Lindstrom 2004). It was also proved that after a political turnover in 2000, the new governments made use of the binary Europe-Balkans opposition in order to stress their European credentials, starting the process of EU integration in their respective countries (cf. e.g. Šarić 2004, 2005, 2010; Zambelli 2010; Luketić 2013).

It may be, therefore, assumed that the attraction of these Balkanist rhetorical tropes may have faded with time. However, since the 2008 financial crisis and later crises in the European Union, political scientists have observed a decrease in interest in the liberal Western democracy model among many countries of Southeastern Europe: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, or Serbia. Instead, local leaders increasingly tend to adopt strategies called 'hybrid regimes' or 'semi-authoritarian rule'. These governments are nonetheless tacitly supported by

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the European Union, and among the reasons for such policy scholars frequently speak about a 'threat of renewed ethnic conflict', a 'Russian threat', and a 'refugee crisis' (Kmezić and Bieber 2017, 91–103).

The goal of this paper is not to investigate whether these concerns are well-founded – after all, even if they belong to a non-discursive domain, their discursive framing displays a considerable degree of freedom. Instead, this analysis will aim to find out how a notion of unstable Southeastern Europe, in need of a firm rule, is linguistically constructed – and how it differs in Croatia and Serbia, depending on local public discourses and the country's relation towards the EU. The paper will examine the everyday presence of Balkanist stereotypes of Southeastern Europe in the language of the daily press of Croatia and Serbia in the new context of a so-called European 'stabilitocracy'. This aim will be accomplished with the use of the tools provided by a framework of corpus-driven discourse studies (Baker 2006; Baker et al. 2008), i.e. via examining a large corpus of newspaper articles, focusing on recurring keywords, their collocations, and a context of concordance lines.

2. Data

The primary data for the research consists of articles published in four Croatian and Serbian daily 'quality newspapers' between October 2007 and October 2017. Analysis of this so-called 'quality' press excluded tabloids and was restricted to media displaying more modest graphic design, a higher degree of language complexity and a tendency to present "its information as objective facts selected from an empiricist reality wherein lies a 'truth' that is accessible by good objective investigation." (Fiske 1992, 47) The 'quality' of such press can be demystified as authority (Bignell 2002, 88–92), which may be the very reason why its analysis may give a valuable insight into construction of power discourses – as was already noticed in previous studies (e.g. on Brexit: Müller 2018).

Another criterion was the representativeness of the analysed media outlets. On the one hand, it was assumed that diverse ideological profiles should be represented; on the other, that the most widely-read newspapers representing given worldviews should be selected. In the end, the Croatian conservative daily *Večernji list* and the left-liberal *Novi list* were included in the corpus. While the first one, depending on the year, used to be the most widely-read broadsheet daily, the latter is the fourth most popular daily print medium, limited mostly to the Istria and Rijeka region (Vozab 2014).

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However, it was its pronounced liberal stance and its reputation as an independent media outlet that determined its inclusion in the studied corpus. From Serbian newspapers, the centre-right *Politika* and the liberal *Danas* were taken into consideration. *Politika* is the oldest Serbian daily newspaper and its journalism has always been appreciated for its high quality. Since the 1990s, its ideological line was more or less close to the government, and it seems to have remained so. On the other hand, *Danas,* since its creation in 1997, has been an anti-nationalist medium, promoting "political culture with ethnic tolerance, peace, cooperation with the world, parliamentary democracy, pluralism, human rights, and civic society as supreme values" (Matić 2005). As of 2020, it is still often labelled as the only independent daily newspaper in Serbia.

Around 20,000 randomly selected articles were taken from national and international news sections in online issues of the newspapers, lemmatised, and stored in a corpus manager[1]. Lemmatisation is sometimes discouraged in corpus-driven discourse analysis, as inflected word forms may convey additional, non-transparent information (Brookes and McEnery 2019, 6). However, this criticism was voiced for English, where the number of word forms capable of being derived from a lexeme is much lower than in inflective South Slavic languages. In the latter case, non-lemmatised data often turns out to be too sparse to yield meaningful results. For this reason, a good compromise can be found in the parallel use of lemmatised[2] and non-lemmatised data, for instance, by generating a lemmatised collocation list for keywords and then inspecting original concordances for their interpretation. Such a possibility is offered by a corpus manager NoSketchEngine (Rychlý 2007), used for the analysis in this paper.

3. Research procedure

A number of studies (Todorova 1997; Lindstrom 2002; Razsa and Linstrom 2004; Šarić 2004; Šarić 2005; Lindstrom 2008; Zambelli 2010; Luketić 2013, etc.) demonstrated that the ideologies and stereotypical representa-

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[1] Procedure of downsampling assumed that only articles containing at least 2 occurrences of a character string *-europ-* or *-evrop-* were taken into account in further analysis. Random samples of 300 articles annually were included in the corpus for the years 2007–2011 and 700 articles *per annum* for the years 2012–2017.

[2] Using ReLDI Tagger, developed by CLARIN consortium (Ljubešić et al. 2016).

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tions connected with Southeastern Europe can be studied on the basis of texts employing various representational strategies towards this region, as well as those using its name(s) in predicative or argumentative strategies. This was the principle guiding the choice of keywords for analysis.

Table 1. *Collocations of the syntagm 'Southeastern Europe' (Croatian language:* Jugoistočna Europa, *Serbian language:* Jugoistočna Evropa) *in Croatian and Serbian press corpora. Dark grey – collocates constituting 'stabilitocratic' discourses, light grey – collocates participating in a knowledge transfer from the West. Collocations are ranked with respect to their log-likelihood measure. Only autosemantic lexemes were taken into consideration in the study; the table also leaves out personal names.*

Croatian press			Serbian press		
collocate		rank	collocate		rank
zemlja	'country'	3	*saradnja*	'cooperation'	5
regija	'region'	7	*stabilnost*	'stability'	7
suradnja	'cooperation'	9	*zemlja*	'country'	8
stabilnost	'stability'	11	*asocijacija*	'association'	10
država	'state'	12	*proces*	'process'	11
područje	'territory'	13	*zamenica*	'deputy'	12
srednji	'central'	14	region	'region'	13
europski	'European'	15	*direktor*	'director'	14
stanje	'situation'	18	*evropski*	'European'	17
Hrvatska	'Croatia'	19	*samit*	'summit'	18
cijel	'whole'	22	*delegacija*	'delegation'	19
SEECP	'SEECP'	23	*nemački*	'German'	20
proces	'process'	24	*pakt*	'pact'	21
perspektiva	'perspective'	25	*država*	'state'	22
prostor	'area'	30	*centralni*	'central'	23
istočni	'Eastern'	31	*parlament*	'parliament'	26
NATO	'NATO'	32	Srbija	'Serbia'	31
sigurnost	'security'	33	*šef*	'boss'	34
sigurnosni	'security'	34	*Minhen*	'Munich'	35
središnji	'central'	36	*londonski*	'London'	36

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The uses which situate Southeastern Europe in opposition with other parts of the world can be especially telling. Most of the occurring and analysed binary pairs confront the region with the West, sometimes also referred to as Europe, which reveals the already mentioned stirrings of Balkanist discourses.

For these reasons, the set of the analysed keywords consisted of the syntagm *Jugoistočna Europa* (Croat. 'Southeastern Europe') or *Jugoistočna Evropa* (Serb. 'id.'), the closely related term *Balkan* ('Balkans'), and the most common antonymous phrase – *Zapadna Europa* (Croat. 'Western Europe'), *Evropa* (Serb. 'id'). In order to restrict the scope of the study, syntagms denoting other parts of Europe or non-European regions were not taken into consideration. *Zapadni Balkan* (Croat., Serb. 'Western Balkan'), a syntagm used especially often in the negotiations with the European Union, was also excluded from the detailed analysis, although its distribution and use will be to some extent covered by considerations concerning the term *Balkan*.

Collocations of the analysed keywords were calculated using log-likelihood method (Kilgariff et al. 2004) in a 10-word window (5 to the left, 5 to the right). The further analysis was then restricted to the autosemantic vocabulary (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs)[3]. Such filtered collocation lists were then classified with regard to the specific domains of discourse the collocates were referring to. Given that no ready-made semantic domain classification could be used here without far-reaching modifications, contexts in which Southeastern Europe is frequently mentioned in social and political sciences, as well as in culture studies served here as a basis for categorisation.

As many collocates could not be classified unambiguously without consulting their textual surroundings, it was already at this stage when concordance analysis began. While ascribing one domain to a collocate may be too simplified a solution in a more heterogeneous text collection, in the case of the news corpus it proved sufficient, as, in most of the cases, the majority of the strong collocations of the analysed keywords shared the same semantic characteristics and quirks. For instance, almost all occur-

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[3] While accounting for synsemantic lexemes, e.g. prepositions, may be helpful, in this case the latter were just supporting interpretations resulting from a study of the autosemantic vocabulary.

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rences of a collocate *nemački* (Serb. 'German') with the syntagm *Jugoistočna Evropa* (Serb. 'Southeastern Europe') in the Serbian press referred to an NGO Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft and, thus, the collocate *nemački* could be classified more precisely than an ethnonym or politonym – namely, as referring to expert knowledge.

Already at the stage of quantitative classification of collocates, certain trends can be interpreted from the studied material. A subsequent concordance analysis contributes to the interpretation, revealing the communicative contexts where certain collocates tend to occur (communicative processes and their actors).

4. Findings

The position of stabilitocratic discourses in Croatian representations of Southeastern Europe is already revealed by the collocations of the corresponding syntagm *Jugoistočna Europa*. The collocates of this phrase referring to stabilitocracy constitute 13.70% of the 100 most common neighbouring lexemes (cf. Chart 1)[4].
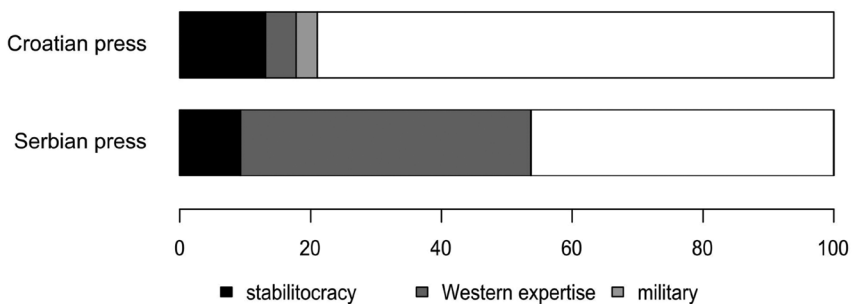

Chart 1. *Share of collocate classes constituting and mediating stabilitocratic discourses in the Croatian and Serbian press among the 100 most frequent collocations of the syntagm Jugoistočna Europa, Jugoistočna Evropa 'Southeastern Europe'*

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[4] I.e. they are the third most represented group of collocates, after the expected geographical collocates (referring to the parts of the region in question, its collections, or antonyms) and the collocates of regional diplomacy outside of the context of stabilitocracy.

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The stabilitocratic collocations refer, for instance, to stability, safety or security, stabilisation, and peace (Croat. *stabilnost, sigurnost, stabilizacija, mir* – cf. Table 1). In a paradoxical way, they re-actualise the Balkanist stereotype of the region as a powder keg, well deconstructed by Todorova (1997) or Jezernik (2004). This is possible due to semantic presuppositions triggered by these lexemes.

Words such as 'stability', 'security', or 'peace' seem to have an inherently negative potential – with their social use illustrated e.g. by lexicographic definitions – that can be activated by their presuppositional use[5]. A set of stabilitocratic collocations of the phrase 'Southeastern Europe' was complemented with such lexemes as *stanje* and *situacija* (both Croat. 'situation'[6]). In these cases corpus data reveal that lexemes are prevailingly used in negative contexts – for instance, in the analysed collection of Croatian and Serbian press articles, the most frequent adjective co-occurring with the word *situacija*, 'situation' was *težak*, 'hard'.

In fact, this semantic aspect is also conveyed by the processes where the stabilitocratic collocates occur. Among the verbs most frequently co-occurring with the noun *stabilnost*, 'stability', one can find such lexemes as *doprineti* 'contribute', *učvrstiti, jačati* 'strengthen', *osigurati* 'secure'. They are all transformative processes, implying that the stability in the region is imperfect and should be yet enhanced[7] (cf. Table 2).

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[5] The notion of semantic presupposition is used here in accordance to the classical definition by Katz and Langendoen (1976) – a reference to an object in a sentence presupposes its existence. For instance, Hrvatski jezični portal (n.d.) mentions in the definition of the adjective *stabilan* 'stable': "[...] koji se ne ruši, koji ne pada" 'which does not fall', in the definition of *siguran* 'secure': "koji nije izložen opasnosti" 'which is not exposed to danger', in the definition of *mir* 'peace': "stanje [...] bez rata" 'state without war'. The negative component in the semantics of these lexemes – as demonstrated by lexicographic evidence – generates a weak presupposition of a type 'non-*x* is possible', e.g. '*peace* presupposes non-*peace* is possible'.

[6] In the first case, also, more rarely, 'state'.

[7] On material – creative and transformative – processes, cf. Halliday and Mathiessen 2004, 180–197.

Table 2. *Examples of concordances featuring the syntagm* Jugoistočna Europa / Evropa *'Southeastern Europe' co-occurring with stabilitocratic collocations*

Croatian press	
*Razgovarat će se i o energetskoj sigurnosti, neovisnosti i diversifikaciji, **stanju** u jugoistočnoj Europi, te o NATO-u u svjetlu nadolazećeg summita u Varšavi ove godine.*	'Energetic security, independence, and diversification, **situation** in Southeastern Europe, as well as NATO in the context of the upcoming summit in Warsaw this year will be also discussed.' [*Novi list*, 2016/01/26]
Serbian press	
*Klintonova je Nikoliću poručila da je za SAD „izuzetno bitno da se održe **mir i stabilnost** u jugoistočnoj Evropi", kao i da Srbija nastavi razvijanje odnosa sa zemljama regiona.*	'Clinton said to Nikolić that for the USA it is "exceptionally significant to maintain **peace and stability** in Southeastern Europe", as well as that Serbia continues developing relations with the countries of the region.' [*Danas,* 2012/06/22]

The conclusions presented here would be to a large extent speculative, if not supported by an analysis of textual contexts in which the syntagm 'Western Europe' (Croat. *Zapadna Europa*) occurs – an example of another European subregion with completely different discursively constructed connotations (cf. Table 3). While a close analysis of all of the connotations ascribed to the notion of Western Europe is definitely out of the scope of this paper, the collocates of this phrase can be roughly subdivided into four main groups: geographic collocates, collocates referring to migration, mobility, and asylum seeking, economic collocates, as well as collocates referring to terrorism. In none of the cases is vocabulary referring to stability and security as prominent as it turns out to be in the discourses on Southeastern Europe. Even if the analysed news discourses exhibit a notion of Western Europe in crisis, they employ different means to convey this concept.

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Table 3. Collocations of the lexeme Balkan *'Balkans' in the Serbian press corpus and of the syntagm* Zapadna Europa *'Western Europe' in the Croatia press corpus. The collocations are ranked with respect to their log-likelihood measure. Only autosemantic lexemes were taken into consideration in the study*

subcorpus	Serbian press		subcorpus	Croatian press	
node	***Balkan* 'Balkans'**		**node**	***Zapadna Europa* 'Western Europe'**	
collocation		rank	collocation		rank
zapadni	'Western'	1	*zemlja*	'country'	2
zemlja	'country'	7	*put*	'way'	8
EU	'EU'	11	*blizak*	'near'	12
region	'region'	12	migrant	'migrant'	18
evropski	'European'	13	*ruta*	'route'	19
stabilnost	'stability'	15	*istok*	'East'	20
država	'state'	16	*željeti*	'desire'	22
integracija	'integration'	18	*cijel*	'whole'	23
Srbija	'Serbia'	19	*izbjeglica*	'refugee'	24
perspektiva	'perspective'	20	*pokušavati*	'try'	25

As has been proven, connotations constructed in the discourses on Southeastern Europe and stability are not shared with other European regions. Even more details about this discursive mechanism are revealed in a concordance line analysis. Namely, the stabilitocratic collocations have a tendency to occur as matters discussed in the reported utterances of political actors, belonging both to the international and the national political scenes (Table 2). This demonstrates that the analysed corpora offer evidence that it is mediating socio-political actors who introduce the notion of necessary stabilisation into the discourse.

Apart from the direct exponents of stabilitocratic discourses discussed earlier, one can encounter other discursive phenomena that contribute to the notion of Southeastern Europe as something that is primarily defined by its instability. The connotations of each lexeme co-occurring with the syntagm 'Southeastern Europe' cannot be analysed here in detail. However, a representative example from the Croatian subcorpus can be found in the collocate *NATO*. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is mentioned 16 times in collocation with *Jugoistočna Europa*

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'Southeastern Europe', 5 times out of them in relation to its stabilisation. This already reveals some semantic aspects to the lexeme *NATO* in the analysed discourse. A typical example of such representation is cited in Table 2. Interestingly, in terms of discourse, the military pact rarely occurs as an actor. Instead, it is more often featured as a matter of a verbal process or it is metaphorically portrayed as a destination of some movement, respectively – already as a location one is situated in. The connection between military actors and stability is established by discourse actors in their frequent mentioning of the two as circumstantial matters of their utterances[8].

This stabilitocratic sense of the notion of Southeastern Europe is by no means exclusive to the Croatian press. Similar trends have been observed in an analysis of the Serbian subcorpus. True, their share is somehow lower than in Croatia, as such collocations constitute 9,78% of the most common ones co-occurring with the syntagm *Jugoistočna Evropa* (Serb. 'Southeastern Europe'). However, it is still a significant proportion, sufficient to be among the most frequent groups of collocates of this phrase. It is worth noting here that in the Serbian press, one category modelling the mental geography of Europe occurs noticeably more often, also appearing as a collocation of 'Southeastern Europe' – and it is the lexeme *Balkan* (Croat., Serb. 'Balkans'). In this case similar connotations referring to (in)stability also emerge, although they are somehow less frequent (cf. Table 3). Surprising as this may seem, it can be explained in three ways. Firstly, the lexeme *Balkan* is generally less frequently used in journalistic genres due to its connotative load – to a large extent, it was superseded by the euphemistic phrase 'Southeastern Europe'. Where it is not avoided, this is often due to the use of an EU-coined syntagm 'Western Balkans', referring to the candidate countries in the region[9].

The last explanation would take us back to the phrase *Jugoistočna Evropa* and its collocations. One of the most striking characteristics of Serbian discourses on the region is reflected in the share of the largest group of collocates to the syntagm 'Southeastern Europe'. What they all have in

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[8] The notions of Circumstance and Matter are understood as within the framework of systemic functional grammar (Halliday and Mathiessen 2004, 276).

[9] Discursive phenomena surrounding emergence of the syntagm 'Western Balkans' (Croat./Serb. *Zapadni Balkan*) and other strategies of avoiding the lexeme 'Balkans' (*Balkan*) – bearing much resemblance to the fall into disuse of the phrase *Eastern Europe* after 1989 – are discussed e.g. by Katarina Luketić (2013: 186–191).

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common is that they refer to various agencies producing knowledge and discourse about the Balkans, among them Western non-governmental organisations, EU advisory bodies, academic institutions, as well as their members, represented in media as discourse actors.

Table 4. *Verbal and mental processes in concordances containing collocations transferring Western episteme in the Serbian and Croatian media corpora*

Serbian press	
Član Evropskog parlamenta i bivši šef delegacije za odnose sa jugoistočnom Evropom Eduard Kukan **smatra** *da izbore u BiH treba smatrati prekretnicom i da se* **nada** *skorom formiranju vlade u toj državi, prenosi Tanjug.*	'A member of the European Parliament and a former chief of the delegation for relations with Southeast Europe, Eduard Kukan **thinks** that the elections in Bosnia & Herzegovina should be perceived as the turning point and **hopes** that a government in this country will be formed soon, reports Tanjug.' [*Politika* 2014/10/13]
Croatian press	
– U usporedbi s drugim regijama svijeta jugoistočna Europa uživa relativnu političku stabilnost, a za to je zaslužna i europska perspektiva – **rekao** *je Rehn, ali je upozorio i kako "nepovratna stabilnost još nije postignuta".*	'"Compared to other world regions, Southeastern Europe enjoys relative political stability, which is also a merit of European perspective,' **said** Rehn, but he also warned that 'irreversible stability is not achieved yet.'" [*Večernji list,* 2009/05/07]

In the Serbian subcorpus, the group of collocates referring to the Western episteme about Southeastern Europe is abundant, it covers 44.43% of the 100 most common lexemes co-occurring with the analysed syntagm. Among them, one can find institution names in full – association, SEECP, delegation, school, office, initiative etc. (Serb. *asocijacija, PSJIE, delegacija, škola, sekretarijat, inicijativa*) – as well as words referring to their representatives – director, boss, researcher, coordinator, leader, commission (Serb. *direktor, šef, istraživač, koordinator, lider, odbor*). The latter could be recognised as instrumental in knowledge transfer and

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categorised as such after their meanings were determined via a concordance analysis.

These collocates evidence epistemological transfer not only by virtue of their semantic content, i.e. that they denote institutions responsible for creating and promoting policies towards Southeastern Europe. Namely, linguistic means are congruent with these findings. For instance, the already-mentioned collocates of stabilitocracy are very often nested in reported speech. While it cannot be determined if direct or indirect speech is preferred, implications about regional stability and security are very often made in the scope of lexemes reporting verbal processes, such as *izjaviti* 'announce', *istaći* 'stress', or *reći* 'say'[10]. Therefore, the notion of inherently unstable Southeastern Europe is mediated as a part of worldview authorised by actors cited by the media. Verbal processes also occur frequently in the concordances containing collocates referring to Western expertise. Namely, actors such as institutions or their representatives are often subjects to such verbs as *smatrati* 'think', *naglašavati* 'stress', *tvrditi* 'claim', *objašnjavati* 'explain' (cf. Table 4).

The finding concerning the actors mediating the Western episteme about the Balkans in the Serbian press hints at how newspapers play an active role in transmitting the idea of stabilitocratic regimes in Southeastern Europe. Namely, when discussing regional relations, the media tend to give a very significant share of publicity to non-local discourse actors. On the other hand, the latter tend to be quoted to a limited extent, putting a vague emphasis on the importance of stability.

Finally, it is important to notice that this is an overall picture of the discourse, which is revealed by quantitative analysis. This does not mean that notable exceptions to this rule do not exist, but rather that they remain relatively invisible in the general tendency. For instance, expert opinions shared by researchers from institutions such as Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft or London School of Economics are often heterodox and definitely not supportive of 'stabilitocratic' legitimisation of the local flawed democracies. Nonetheless, due to quantitative properties of the discourse and media framing of the issues tackled, they also contribute to the semantic prosody of the analysed keywords.

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[10]   For explanation on the concept underlying verbal processes cf. Halliday and Matthiessen 2004, 441–482.

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5. Conclusions

Generally speaking, a notion of Southeastern Europe as a place that is inherently unstable and constantly endangered by war is no longer reserved to expert discourses circulating exclusively in the West. On the contrary, topoi of crisis and stability[11] are widely present in the regional media, constituting one of the main meanings given to this region in media discourses both of Croatia and Serbia. This is directly proven by a significant share of collocations conveying such notions as *stability, peace,* or *security* – implying a possibility of *instability, war,* and *danger.*

In both countries, these convictions are often discursively mediated by giving media publicity to discourse actors coming from outside of Southeastern Europe, most frequently representing international and European institutions and, for this reason, making use of a modified topos of authority. Statistical facts determined in the collocation analysis performed in the analysed press corpus prove that direct transfer of the Western episteme by local media is more pronounced in Serbia, given the fact how often names of Western institutions and their representatives collocate with the phrase 'Southeastern Europe'.

On the other hand, a stabilitocratic perspective on Southeastern Europe seems to be slightly more prominent in Croatian discourses. While membership of Euroatlantic structures must increase the prominence of this topic, this phenomenon can be also partly attributed to the strategy of improving one's own European credentials.

Last but not least, the empirical investigation demonstrated that knowledge about Southeastern Europe is still shaped by Western discourses, which tend to reproduce Balkanist stereotypes of 'primordial hate' or 'powder keg'. In this respect, the diagnosis of Edward W. Saïd (1979) still holds, at least to the extent that Orientalism – and other, similar forms of imperialisms – have very strong epistemological consequences. At present, Balkanist stereotypes seem to live on in a subtle form of European stabilitocratic discourses, which may, paradoxically or not, be instrumental in supporting what are sometimes called 'hybrid democracies' or 'semi-authoritarian regimes'.

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[11] Topoi are understood as a "procedures of looking for premises" (Kopperschmidt 1973, 141), which are formal (i.e. content-independent), but may be problem-specific (Kopperschmidt 1973, 140–142).

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SAŽETAK

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DISKURSI EUROPSKE 'STABILITOKRACIJE' U JUGOISTOČNOJ EUROPI U HRVATSKOM I SRPSKOM TISKU POSLIJE 2007.

Ovaj rad je usredotočen na diskurzivnu konstrukciju tzv. „stabilitokracije" u hrvatskom i srpskom tisku između 2007. i 2017. godine. Veliki korpus članaka iz četiri dnevna lista različitih ideoloških profila iz obiju zemalja istražuje se koristeći metode korpusno utemeljene analize diskursa. S pomoću analize kolokacija i konkordancija rad dokazuje kako se jezično konstruira koncept Jugoistočne Europe kao inherentno nestabilne regije u potrebi vladavine čvrste ruke, kao i kako se zapadne spoznaje prenose u analizirane medije. Zaključci o takvoj uporabi jezika prikazuju sličnosti i razlike u reprodukciji esencijalističkih stereotipa o Jugoistočnoj Europi u tisku obiju analiziranih zemalja.

Ključne riječi: *Jugoistočna Europa; korpusna analiza diskursa; diskursni studiji; stabilitokracija; Europska unija*