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Chinese FDI and Europeanization in the Western Balkans: A longitudinal study of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia

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Master of Science in Public Administration
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Chinese FDI and Europeanization in the Western Balkans

A longitudinal study of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia.



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Master Thesis

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Abstract

As part of China's quest of regaining its superpower status in world politics, the country has launched a comprehensive transportation system called the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This BRI is accompanied with large-scale investment programmes in primarily the infrastructural and energy sector. One of the destinations of these investments, called FDI, is the Western Balkan region. This region consists of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. These countries are at different stages of their accession process to the European Union (EU). Uncertainty exists amongst scholars whether the Chinese FDI that these countries receive obstruct their accession process towards the EU, i.e. their Europeanization process. By means of a longitudinal small-N MSSD-I research, it is investigated whether Chinese FDI negatively affects the Europeanization in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia. This research concludes that the Europeanization in the Western Balkans is indeed negatively affected by Chinese FDI, although this effect is of a less than proportional nature. This research also indicates which specific chapters of the *acquis communautaire* and which Copenhagen criteria of the Europeanization are negatively impacted, and whether this effect is limited or strong. Furthermore, it inquires how the Europeanization in the Western Balkans can be explained: is the logic of appropriateness or the logic of consequentiality better suited for clarifying this process? In other words, do the Western Balkan states feel an intrinsic connection to the European identity, or do they want to become EU member states because of the material benefits accompanied with accession? This research finds that the logic of consequentiality prevails over the logic of appropriateness in explaining the Europeanization in the Western Balkans. Nevertheless, both logics of action are still relevant for acquiring a full understanding of the *acquis* adoption in candidate member states.

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List of abbreviations

AL	Albania
BA	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CEEC 16+1	China and Eastern European Countries 16+1
CESEE	Central Eastern and South Eastern Europe
CI	Confucius Institute
CIIE	China International Import Expo
COSCO	China Ocean Shipping Company
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ME	Montenegro
MK	North Macedonia
MSSD-I	Most Similar Systems Design I
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
ND	No Data
OBOR	One Belt One Road
RS	Republic of Serbia

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1. Introduction

1.1 Problem of this thesis

1.1.1 On the BRI

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI; also referred to as One Belt One Road (OBOR) or New Silk Road) was launched as part of the People's Republic of China's (hereafter: China) foreign policy in 2013, and consists of the overland Silk Road Economic Belt and Maritime Silk Road (Chatzky & McBride, 2020). Figure 1 demonstrates their general locations. These are routes connecting East Asia to Europe and Africa aiming to increase trade, distribute Chinese overcapacities of heavy industry and to consequently enhance economic growth and regional integration (EBRD, n.d.; Makocki, 2017). The BRI encompasses a broad transportation system, which consists of highways, railways, sea- and air-ways, pipelines for gas and oil, communication networks and electromagnetic transmission lines (Yiwei, 2015). This comprehensive transportation system is accompanied with an extensive investment programme in primarily the infrastructural and power generation sectors (EBRD, n.d.). The reason is that one of China's aims of the BRI is to ensure that the transportation of people and goods occurs in the most time- and cost-efficient way. Because many states across the BRI suffer from large deficiencies in infrastructural investments, the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows from China into these nations have considerably increased in the past decade (Chen, 2018).

For a period of over 2000 years, China's original Silk Road extended from East Asia to Europe, and enabled trade as well as intellectual exchanges (UNESCO, n.d.). China regards this period as one in which they fulfilled a central role in world politics. However, after the collapse of the Chinese Imperial Dynasties in the early 20th century, their role in global governance declined significantly. During this era, Chinese rulers maintained their aspiration of regaining a dominant place within the international arena. In the early 1990s, China started to actually incorporate multilateralism and to integrate within international institutions. The subsequent period resulted in increased economic and military power in China, which Chinese leaders perceive as regaining their stance at the global stage. China's rise should therefore not be perceived as a country simply aspiring new power, but as a country that is determined on repairing the their perceived catastrophe in the early 20th century. It will therefore continue its rise until China regains its superpower status in world politics (Xuetong, 2001; Huang & Kurlantzick, 2020).

Figure 1

Location of Silk Road Economic Belt and Maritime Silk Road

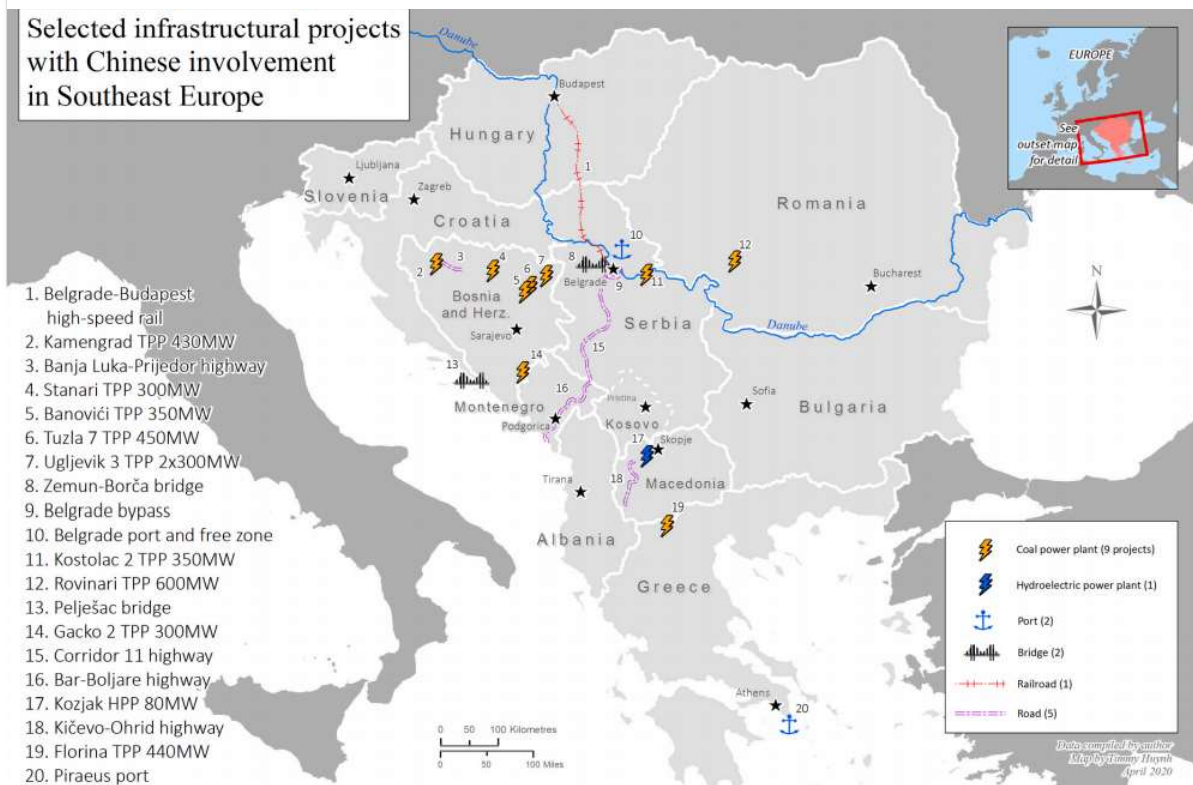


Note: Copied from: “Analysis of Logistics Service Supply Chain for the One Belt and One Road Initiative of China”, by Liu, X., Zhang, K., Chen, B., Zhou, J. & Miao, L., 2018, *Transportation Research Part E Logistics and Transportation Review*, 19, p. 2.

1.1.2 The BRI in the Western Balkans

One of the ways in which China attempts to regain its dominant power position in the international arena is by means of the BRI’s investment programme. This FDI is amongst others destined for the Western Balkans. This collection of states is located at a strategically important area for China (Georgiopoulos, Koutantou & Maltezou, 2019). The Piraeus harbour in Greece is for 50% in possession of the Chinese state-owned Cosco company (Van der Putten, 2014). By means of its FDI provision, China is financing the construction of corridors between the Piraeus harbour and various European destinations (Catzky & McBride, 2020). A selection of such investments within the Western Balkan region can be found within Figure 2. The establishment of corridors between Piraeus and the rest of Europe are intended to increase the connectivity and consequently the trade of export products between China and the European Union (Georgiopoulos, Koutantou & Maltezou, 2019; Fraioli, 2020). Because the Western Balkan region also suffers from severe investment gaps in the transport and energy sector, they were highly inclined to accepting these investments (European Investment Bank, 2018).

Figure 2
Selection of Chinese Investments in the Western Balkans



Note: Copied from: “Concrete and Coal: China’s Infrastructural Assemblages in the Balkans”, by Rogelja, I., 2020, *Political Geography*, 81, p. 3.

1.1.3 The EU and the Western Balkans

Apart from the strategic relevance of the Western Balkan region for China, the European Union also has an interest within the area. Due to their geographic location, social and economic instability, drug trafficking, criminality and illegal migration may spill over to the EU (Skara, 2014). In addition, the relations between the EU and the Western Balkans are highly profound. The Western Balkans receive large amounts of technical and financial support from the EU, can participate in various EU programmes and agencies and (except for Kosovo) enjoy visa liberalization (Maas, Santos Silva & Logar, 2021). To top it all off, the Western Balkan states are in the process of accessing the European Union (De Munter, 2021). The EU is enforcing the conditionality principle within this region, which means that it demands that certain reforms are adopted in return for the (prospect of) accession to the European Union. These reforms are colossal and concern the full adoption of the EU’s *acquis communautaire*, as well as additional political and economic criteria. The EU does not wish the Western Balkans to be deeply influenced by alternative external powers, such as China, because that may pose challenges to its tool of conditionality (Zweers, Shopov, Van der Putten, Petkova & Lemstra, 2020).

1.1.4 Concerns on Chinese FDI

It is thus important for the EU that the Western Balkans are not influenced heavily by other powers. Whether these states are influenced by China remains up to debate. Some scholars warn for increasing degrees of debt dependency as a result of the Chinese loans, others alert for the deficiencies in China's transparency in business negotiations (Bennett, 2017). Moreover, Makocki (2017) states that the Chinese FDI subverts reforms in the Western Balkans as stimulated by the EU's accession requirements. However, there are also various scholars that argue Chinese FDI is not negatively influencing the Western Balkans. For instance, Xuotong (2001) states that China has no ulterior motive such as territorial expansion or military invasions, and disregards such concerns as strategic conspiracy and political hostility.

All in all, China is determined on regaining its central position on the international stage, but whether their quest negatively impacts other states is unclear. The Chinese FDI programme that is accompanied with its Belt and Road Initiative offers various opportunities for recipient states to upgrade their infrastructural and energy sectors. But some scholars are also concerned with adverse side effects or ulterior motives that they link to these investment programmes. In specifically the Western Balkan region, there are concerns whether this FDI provision obstructs their accession to the European Union, although this view is opposed by other authors. Hence, unclarity exists concerning whether China influences the Western Balkans, and if they do, how exactly this influence manifests in their Europeanization process. Therefore, the following research question will attempt to clarify this uncertainty:

How does Chinese FDI affect the Europeanization in the Western Balkans?

1.2 Scientific relevance

This research contributes to the body of knowledge by filling in an information gap. Estrin and Uvalic (2016) note that "little direct attention has been paid to FDI in the Western Balkans, an area in which the transition process has been slower and less successful" (p. 3). This view is supported by Jacimovic et al. (2018). Whereas the research of Estrin and Uvalic (2016) mainly regards the economic development in the Western Balkans, Jacimovic et al. (2018) primarily focus on the effects of Chinese FDI on the exports of this region rather than their Europeanization. Therefore, a gap still exists concerning the effects of Chinese FDI on Europeanization in the Western Balkan countries.

Although the research conducted on FDI in general is extensive, the amount of research on Chinese FDI within the Western Balkans is rather limited. This can partly be explained by the novelty of the phenomenon. Chinese investments in the region have been sparse for a long period of time and have only substantially increased in recent times. Therefore, the available research is not satisfactory due to its limited timeframe. In addition, the research conducted primarily focusses on EU member states and to a lesser extent on (potential) candidate members. Furthermore, much research has been conducted on Chinese investments in Africa (Jauch, 2011; Kragelund, 2009; Van de Looy & De Haan, 2006), but substantially less research evolved around the Balkans. The conditions in African countries are quite different to those of the Western Balkans, which makes generalizability of these studies to the Balkans problematic.

In addition, there is a debate amongst scholars on whether or not the Chinese FDI has an influence on the Europeanization in the Western Balkan countries. One group of scholars believes that Chinese FDI has negative effects on the Western Balkan region. They warn for debt dependencies on China, a lack of transparency in business deals, subversion of EU reforms, the increase of political influences, exploitation of the fragmentation of the EU's FDI inflow database, diminished gains of technological capabilities, the reinforcement of China's international stance and the shaping of national legislation towards China's benefit (Bennett, 2017; Makocki, 2017; Rogelja, 2020; Zweers, et al., 2020; Meunier, 2014; Meunier, 2019; Le Corre, 2018). In contrast, the other group of scholars argues that Chinese FDI has no negative effects on the recipient country's domestic setting. They state that China has no ulterior motive for its FDI provision, that Chinese investors are discreet in choosing the destination and manners of their investments, that China aims for peaceful economic cooperation with other nations, and that the concerns against China are based on strategic conspiracy and political hostility (Xuetong, 2001; Clegg & Voss, 2014; Shaohua, 2019; Kang, 2005; Grgic, 2017). A more detailed explanation on the contents of this debate can be found within Chapter 2.

1.3 Social relevance

The social relevance of this research is threefold. Firstly, it is important to monitor developments within the Western Balkans in order to secure its stabilization. The Western Balkan region is a vulnerable area, because of its turbulent recent history and its current challenges on high levels of corruption, organized crime and fragmentation (Estrin & Uvalic, 2016). Furthermore, the region experiences deficiencies in terms of FDI inflows in relation to

comparable European and global areas (Haneman, Huotari & Kratz, 2019). The Western Balkans' vulnerability in terms of institutional framework, investment deficiencies and internal turbulence may cause a variety of problems. These problems could destabilize the region and, in turn, may spill over to the EU. According to Holzner and Grieson (2018), the ultimate goal of the European Union is to include the Western Balkans within the EU. But even in the meantime, when the Western Balkans still hold the candidate status, it is relevant for the Union to be aware of possible threats to its (prospective) member states' prosperity. Therefore, the EU has to be knowledgeable on whether Chinese FDI negatively influences the Western Balkan region, and if so, how exactly these effects materialize. The reason is that the European Union, as well as the Western Balkan states themselves, can enforce measures countering such deteriorations, and thus secure the region's stability.

Secondly, a better understanding on the effects of China's FDI provision may assuage the various concerns on the subject. This may instead result in the embracement of possible opportunities that FDI brings. The rise of China has sparked a multiplicity of discussions and worries in Western media and society because of its novelty and subsequent uncertainties about the future (Grübler et al., 2018; Grieson, Grübler & Holzner, 2018). The increasing presence of China within the Western Balkans is no exception to this debate. By obtaining clarity regarding these uncertainties, the focus could move from overall scepticism to specific opportunities that may arise as a result of Chinese cooperation. Although some Chinese projects may overlap or oppose certain local EU programmes, these investments could also be complementary to the EU's investments (Grübler et al., 2018). However, further research is required to determine when such investments are complementary to the European programmes and in which circumstances they are not. This would allow for an optimal utilization of FDI flows.

Thirdly, Chinese FDI is becoming increasingly important within the Western Balkan region. Estrin and Uvalic (2016) found that this region receives relatively few FDI in comparison to other transitioning states. The access of the Western Balkans to the grants of the EU is rather limited (Grübler et al., 2018). In combination with the region's general infrastructural investment deficit, insufficient domestic savings and the lack of conditionality attached to the Chinese FDI, the Western Balkans are increasingly collaborating with China in terms of trade and investment (Jacimovic, D., Dragutinović Mitrović, R., Bjelić, P., Tianping, K., & Rajkovic, M., 2018; Estrin & Uvalic, 2016). China intends to further reinforce this cooperation, because

of the geographical significance of the Western Balkans as gateways for Chinese export to the EU. In addition, because the Western Balkans are no member states of the European Union yet, Chinese enterprises can avert strict EU regulations such as anti-dumping laws (Jacimovic et al, 2018). A better understanding on FDI originating from China thus contributes to a better understanding of the current situation and the possible consequences within the Western Balkans.

1.4 Contents of this thesis

This research is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 ‘Introduction’ has presented the research problem, the research question and the social and scientific relevance of this thesis. Chapter 2 ‘Literature Review’ provides an examination of the current literature on the subjects of this research, which includes some points of critique, gaps in literature, as well as current debates amongst scholars. Chapter 3 ‘Theoretical Framework’ contains the conceptualizations and the reasoning of the core theories, and subsequently derives the hypotheses of this thesis. Chapter 4 ‘Research Design’ contains an explanation of the design of the research, the case selection and timeframe, the data collected for this research, an explanation of the methodologies used and finally discusses the validity and the reliability of this research. Chapter 5 ‘Empirical Findings’ contains the findings that have resulted from this research. It includes data on the influence of Chinese FDI on Europeanization, as well as the logics of action in present in the acquis adoption of the Western Balkans. Chapter 6 ‘Discussion’ constitutes the discussion of these findings. It discusses whether the hypotheses are rejected or accepted, combines the findings of the separate hypotheses, connects the findings of this research to the body of knowledge and presents the contribution of this research to the existing literature. Subsequently, the limitations of this research will be discussed, followed by recommendations for future research and for policy avenues. Finally, Chapter 7 ‘Conclusion’ provides a summarized answer to the research question of this thesis, as well as a summary of its contributions to the literature.

2. Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of the published work on this research area. It first discusses the logic of consequentiality and the logic of appropriateness. Subsequently, it will provide information on the two variables in this research: (Chinese) FDI and Europeanization.

2.1 The logic of consequentiality

2.1.1 Its rationale

The logic of consequentiality (or: logic of (expected) consequences) emerges from the rational choice framework. The core reasoning of rationalist theories suggests that units will choose the alternative which they expect to have the most outstanding overall consequences, within their range of preferences (Jupille, Caporaso & Checkel, 2003; Dewulf, Klenk, Wyborn & Lemos, 2020). Scientific insights provide an extensive set of options, as well as the assessment of the values of these options, which subsequently enable cost-benefit analyses to be performed (Dewulf, Klenk, Wyborn & Lemos, 2020).

Two assumption are central to the logic of consequentiality: the individuality assumption and the optimality assumption. The individuality assumption entails that the logic of action and its results can be explained based on characteristics of the unit-level. These characteristics include fixed, exogenous preferences over worldly conditions as well as perceived causal connections among choices and consequences (Jupille, Caporaso & Checkel, 2003). The optimality assumption entails that alternatives are scrutinized based on means-ends estimates to select the utility maximizing approach (Jupille, Caporaso & Checkel, 2003).

Decision-making occurs via anticipation of the outcomes of the available alternatives, but is constrained by bounded rationality. This theory argues that maximizing outcomes is not always possible due to limited resources, unfixed preferences, and uncertainty on the possible alternatives and their outcomes. Consequently, instead of maximizing outcomes, the most satisfying result is chosen (March, 1994; Jones, 1999; Schwartz, Ben-Haim & Dasco, 2011). The recognition of bounded rationality constraints within the logic of consequentiality resulted in modifications to this logic's rationale. Instead of making purely rational choices, governmental entities now depend on the institutional environment. This affects what is perceived as a suitable alternative and outcome, and the interests of various stakeholders must

be considered (March & Olsen, 1996). Instead of choosing the alternative with the highest revenue, the alternative with the highest revenue to one's knowledge is chosen.

2.1.2 The logic's application to political institutions

Following the logic of consequentiality, governmental actors' behaviour is not necessarily aimed at attaining main objectives, but may target secondary objectives with higher revenues (Regan, 2002). Modifications to policies are implemented when political actors conclude that the advantages of such changes shall be higher than the expenses of its alternatives (Jones, 1999). However, this strategy requires four preconditions: (1) the actor must be conscious of its competences and resources, (2) must be able to detect various alternatives, (3) must prior to the decision-making clarify the costs and benefits of all alternatives and (4) must choose the alternative which optimizes its own profits (Nalbanov, 2009).

March and Olsen (1996; 1998) perceive politics from a consequentialist point of view as a collection of individual preferences and interests about which they constantly bargain. The outcomes of these negotiations are used to decide on the allurements of anticipated outcomes of policy options. Only in situations in which actors perceive positive consequences for individual objectives of cooperation, such negotiations shall be initiated, for instance when actors have greater resources or stronger bargaining positions (March & Olsen, 1996; 1998). The assumption is that firstly the interests of individual politicians is served, and that following from that the interests of the state or institution is determined. The prosperity of a political institutions thus depends on the flourishing of its main actors. Therefore, the EU is assumed to flourish as long as the position of member states is reinforced (March & Olsen, 1998).

2.1.3 The external incentive model

Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004) developed two explanatory models in order to analyse the institutionalization practices of the EU based on principles of conditionality within the domestic sphere of the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) during the EU enlargements of 2004. The first is called the external incentive model, and it reflects the logic of consequentiality. It is a rationalist bargaining model, in which actors are considered to be calculated utility-optimizers that estimate cost-benefit analyses in order to augment their power and interests. During negotiations, actors exchange not only information, but also pledges and threats. The outcomes of these negotiations are determined by the actors' relative bargaining powers (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2004; 2005).

Four factors for effective EU conditionality have been identified, that determine whether non-members will implement the EU *acquis communautaire* into their domestic legislation (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2004). The first factor concerns the determinacy of conditions, which means that the rules and rewards of the EU should be determinate and unambiguous. A higher determinacy is obtained by evident behavioural implications of EU rules and by the degree of formality of the rules. A country will not adopt the rules if the EU does not establish them as prerequisites for rewards. The second factor concerns the size and speed of rewards. This means that if the temporal length between the demand of rule adoption and the provision of rewards is longer, the incentives for candidate members to adopt the rules decreases. Vice versa, if candidate countries are approaching the decision-making on EU enlargement, their incentives to adopt rules increases. The third factor is the credibility of punishment and benefits. This means that the threats and rewards of (non-)compliance to EU rules must be believable and consistent. To attain credibility of punishments and benefits, the external actor's bargaining power must be superior and the recipient actor must have assurances on the conditional support. The accession process consists of large-scale investments of the EU into the recipient countries. The further the accession process has progressed, the more these investment would be in vain. As a result, the plausibility of rewards intensifies over time as the plausibility of punishments deteriorates. The final factor is the level of adoption costs. These must be low and must contain as little actors with veto rights as possible. The reason is that the amount of these costs and their allocation amongst domestic actors determines the acceptance or rejection of the conditions set by the EU. Although adoption costs are expected to be high in all cases, these costs must be balanced against the advantages that EU membership brings (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2004).

There are however some points of critique to the models of Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004). These are elaborated on in Chapter 2.2.3.

2.2 The Logic of Appropriateness

2.2.1 Its rationale

The logic of appropriateness offers a different perspective on the behaviour of individuals and organizations. It prescribes who must carry out certain actions or decisions in a given situation, as it underlines actors' norms and values in relation with their social position (March & Olsen, 1998; Goldmann, 2005; Dewulf, Klenk, Wyborn & Lemos, 2020). The logic follows a constructivist rationale, which describes that ideas are shaped and reshaped by a variety actors

within an international system, including the conceptualization of identity, interests and norms (Barnett, 2005). The approach regards behaviour as directed by guidelines of exemplary conduct, produced by social collectivities. These social collectivities establish rules, which individuals within the collective perceive as logical, valid and expected (March & Olsen, 2013). Actors strive to accomplish the obligations that follow from their identities and roles in a specific context. They thus adhere to internalized rules of the socially constructed notion of normal, right and true, without or despite estimations of anticipated utility of other options (March & Olsen, 2013). Harmonizing identities, circumstances and rules on expected behaviour arises via two routes. It might either be based on past experiences, intuition or specialist expertise, or it might be derived from role expectations on appropriate attitude (March & Olsen, 1998).

Adapting individual behaviour to the expected action of a role requires reflective reasoning. But in contrast to the logic of consequences, this reasoning is directed at identifying similarities and compatibilities of identities and rules, rather than the anticipated probabilities and values of subsequent outcomes (March & Olsen, 1996; 2013). Furthermore, the logic of action is based on identities rather than interests, and on the selection of rules rather than individual rational expectations (March & Olsen, 1996).

Two main assumptions can be identified within the logic of appropriateness: the socialization assumption and the instrumental assumption. The former refers to socialization-based attempts of adapting behaviour by means of adapting the viewpoints of the other actor, the latter refers to a calculated usage of norms in order to nudge behavioural change by making an actor worry about its reputation (Börzel & Risse, 2003; Kelley, 2004).

However, the prescriptions of appropriateness are sometimes ambiguous, for instance in case of friction between different conceptions or classifications of a person's identity. After all, the consistency of identities, the acquaintance with circumstances and the clarity of corresponding principles are variables (March & Olsen, 2013). This makes the identification and pursue of the appropriate rules more complicated. Furthermore, what is considered as appropriate within a certain group does not ensure beneficial outcomes. Although appropriate rules are often derived from critical reflections of past actions, they cannot assure technical efficiency or ethical tolerability (March & Olsen, 2013)

2.2.2 The logic's application to political institutions

Following the logic of appropriateness, governmental behaviour is driven by what it deems suitable in a specific context. To determine what is considered as (in)appropriate, the policy-making within this approach employs an institutional viewpoint. The reason for this is that the formal and informal rules that guide action – including decision-making – are arranged within institutions (Searing, 1991; Gardner & Ostrom, 1991; March & Olsen, 2013). Institutions can be perceived as relatively stable administrative organizations that connect identities, circumstances, rules, routines and resources. Moreover, they construct the relationships between actors, direct their behaviour and expectations, and define what is considered as true and just (March & Olsen, 2013). Institutions are thus socially constructed organizers of rules and practices about political behaviour, and as such, it orders democratic political action. Therefore, democratic governance can be perceived as an means for the implementation of priorly established rights and preferences (March & Olsen, 1996; Habermas, 1998). Within the logic of appropriateness, institutions matter (March & Olsen, 1996). Institutions specify the framework for the required practices and beliefs of political discourse (March & Olsen, 2013)

Nevertheless, within a (group of) countries, various institutions exist alongside each other. These institutions may be composed of varying principles (March & Olsen, 2013). Although each institution possesses a certain level of autonomy and prevails in a certain policy area, clashes between the frameworks provided by different institutions may exist. In such cases, behaviour is guided by the institution that supplies the most achievable, unambiguous regulations and possesses sufficient resources (March & Olsen, 2013).

Policy-makers make decisions based on a combination of standard operating procedures, specialist guidelines, and (in)formal rules within the institution to determine what they are obliged to decide (Dewulf, Klenk, Wyborn & Lemos, 2019). In order to change policies, it is necessary to alter these regulations and practices and/or the mechanisms that translate them into actual behaviour (March & Olsen, 2013). Core indicators for political adjustments are therefore the expansion (i.e. enlargement) and deterioration of institutions and their subsequent prescription of identities and roles (March & Olsen, 2013)

It must be noted, however, that the contribution of March and Olsen (2013) remains purely theoretical. They provide an analytic statement based on assumptions and rules of logic (Toshkov, 2016). This is not necessarily a problem, because there are other authors that

empirically test the logic of appropriateness (e.g. Weber, Kopelman & Messick, 2004; Molenmaker, Lelieveld, De Kwaadsteniet & Van Dijk, 2021; Newark & Becker, 2016). Nevertheless, Newark and Becker (2016) note that the logic of consequences and the logic of appropriateness have not directly been compared to one another. This offers opportunities for this thesis to put both logics in comparison to one another.

2.2.3 The social learning model

Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004) propose a second model to analyse the institutionalization practices of the EU within the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs). This model is called the social learning model and it contains constructivist reasoning to explain whether candidate countries will adopt the EU *acquis communautaire* (Checkel, 2001). The model assumes the logic of appropriateness, because possible prospective members determine their choice of policy alternative based on the which is the most appropriately in line with their own norms, values and identities (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2004). The mechanisms of *acquis* adoption are characterised by discussions on the legitimacy and appropriateness of regulations and practices, persuasion and ‘complex’ learning (in contrast to bargaining about prerequisites and compensations, coercion or behavioural adaptation within the external incentives model) (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2004). Three aspects are especially important for the EU’s persuasive capabilities. The first is legitimacy, which concerns the quality of the EU’s regulations, its legislative procedure and the mechanisms of rule transfers. The probability of *acquis* adoption increases as the legitimacy of the EU regulations is enhanced, which occurs when rules are formalized, if EU members have implemented them too, if rule transfer procedures have been adequately deliberated on, and if the EU regulations are incorporated into the legislative frameworks of other international organizations as well (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2004). The second factor is identity, which means that compliance with the EU *acquis communautaire* will result from corresponding identification between the communities within the EU and the candidate countries. If these communities share similar values, norms and identities, the likelihood of *acquis* adoption will increase (Risse-Kappen, 1995; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2004). The final factor is resonance, which means that if the EU *acquis* echoes the domestic legislation, *acquis* adoption will be more probable (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2004).

The social learning model perceives the European Union as a formalized organization that represents the European international society, who share a particular identity as well as a

collection of values and norms. Whether candidate countries adopt the EU *acquis communautaire* depends on the extent to which they perceive these regulations as appropriately in line with their own identities, norms and values (Schimmelfennig, 2003). Therefore, the main assumption of this model is that countries will adopt EU regulations when they are persuaded by the appropriateness of the rules (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2004). Rule adoption occurs either by means of intergovernmental interaction or transnational procedures between societal actors in the domestic sphere of the candidate country (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005). Social learning processes are further stimulated by socialization processes via their engagement within the EU's institutional framework (Sedelmeier, 2011).

The external incentive model and the social learning model are useful frameworks to analyse the adoption of the *acquis communautaire* by third countries. Nevertheless, there are a couple points of critique that must be elaborated on. Firstly, Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004) state that their models are based on the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC), but they do not specify which countries this includes. The problem is that different organizations provide varying collections of states to indicate the CEEC (e.g. CBS, 2021; OECD, n.d.; ILO, n.d.). Within the contribution of Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004), they explicitly mention the Czech Republic, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia. Yet it is unclear whether their study includes more countries and, if so, which countries that would be. Secondly, the social learning model is more concerned with rule transfer than with norm diffusion. As will be explained in Chapter 2.5 Europeanization this norm diffusion is important for the perception of shared identity between two parties (Manners, 2002; Brommesson, 2010). Therefore, the social learning model shall be complemented with explicit regard for norm diffusion instruments. Thirdly, their contribution originates from the period of the 2004 EU enlargements. From that period on, quite some things have changed, such as a financial crisis and a migration crisis (ECPR, 2021). In addition, the Chinese FDI inflows into various regions within Europe have only recently increased (Andromidas, 2013; Casaburi & Broggi, 2015). Such developments have thus not been included within the models of Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004). To investigate whether this Chinese FDI creates potential differences within these models offers an interesting contribution to the existing literature.

2.3 Comparing the two logics of action

The logic of consequentiality and the logic of appropriateness expect varying outcomes of decision-making. Whereas the logic of consequentiality assumes an instrumentalist perspective with rational calculations to derive at decisions, the logic of appropriateness assumes an institutionalist perspective with normative considerations to determine outcomes (Searing, 1991; Dewulf, Klenk, Wyborn & Lemos, 2020). Whereas realist reasoning regards the European Union as a collection of distinct units that all function independently within an international system, constructivists regard actors as integral components of an overarching entity (Barnett, 2005). Furthermore, although the logic of consequentiality stresses strategic behaviour and consequentialist choices based on means-ends estimates, the logic of appropriateness underlines bargaining and suitable behaviour guided by learning dynamics and socialization processes (Risse, 2000). Their understanding of policy-making is based on varying research questions (Dewulf, Klenk, Wyborn & Lemos, 2020). March and Olsen (2013) hypothesize that logic of appropriateness is more probable to prevail in circumstances where knowledge on a particular issue was able to develop over a longer duration. In such situations, regulations and standard operating procedures improved over time due to critical reflections of experiences, data and interactions within an institution. In contrast, the logic of consequentiality is more likely to prevail in cases where such rules would not satisfy objectives or ambitions, or when acting appropriately would result in disastrous outcomes. Moreover, consequentialist reasoning is more suitable for cases that are simple or have shorter time frames (March & Olsen, 2013).

However, the boundaries between the logic of consequences and the logic of appropriateness are not as rigid as they may seem at first glance: in abstract terms, rationalism and constructivism may be harmonious in terms of what entities want. This enables the two approaches to be sufficiently commensurable for having dialogues (Jupille, Caporaso & Checkel, 2003). After all, democratic governance requires a balance of the two logics and governmental actors are demanded to behave both appropriately and functionally in terms of outcomes: they are subject to both logics, as they must behave according to the (in)formal rules within their institution as well as anticipate on outcomes of policy options (March & Olsen, 1998; 2013). The logic of consequentiality and the logic of appropriateness should not be perceived as mutually exclusive, because neither can fully explain political behaviour (March & Olsen, 1998; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2004). The best way to demarcate the two logics is by looking at the prescriptive clarity of behavioural guidance provided by the situation.

After all, while some regulations or prescriptions are precise and binding, others are not. Similarly, while some alternatives and their consequences are obvious, others are not (March & Olsen, 2013). Therefore, in some situations the logic of appropriateness is more applicable, whereas in other situations the logic of consequentiality is more suitable. Yet, at the same time, the two logics are sufficiently distinctive to utilize them as diverging explanatory models. They provide distinct reasons for behaviour and distinct grounds of institutional transformations (March & Olsen, 1998). The main issue is therefore which logic is prevalent in clarifying efficient acquis adoption in the Western Balkans.

2.4 Foreign Direct Investments

Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) are investments into a country by an external actor aimed at constituting a long-term, stable commitment within the receiving county as well as obtaining considerable influence in its economy (OECD, n.d.). Investors provide FDI's to countries with the highest expected rate of return (Hansen, 2014), and can as such be classified as rational choices. Dunning (1993) identifies three types of FDI. The first concerns market-seeking FDI, which is aimed to use the receiving country as consuming market. The second concerns resource-seeking FDI, which is aimed at obtaining resources at a low price. The third concerns efficiency-seeking FDI, in which a foreign investor benefits from shared governance of territorially diffused activities along with economies of scale. The level of FDI that a state receives is amongst others determined by the institutional setting within the country: low levels of corruption, protected property rights and the fair application of legislation increases the potential FDI (Hadjit & Moxon-Browne, 2005; Pournarakis & Varsakelis, 2004).

Clegg and Voss (2014) investigated Chinese investments from an economist point of view, which means that the investments are analysed and compared using economic methodologies. Their findings propose a positive perspective on the FDI from China. Firstly, they argue that although the quantity of Chinese FDI into the EU is increasing, this number is nonetheless rather small. Secondly, they deny that the motivations behind these investments are vicious and instead explain that investors are particularly discreet in choosing their destination and manners of investment (Clegg & Voss, 2014). Furthermore, whereas some authors assert that the fragmentation of the EU into many different member states is beneficial for China (e.g. Meunier, 2014), Clegg and Voss (2014) counter this argument. They state that this absence of cohesion requires China to be informed of the individual bureaucratic structures of all EU member states. Therefore, they argue that China prefers a centralized arrangement for FDI

acquisition with the EU rather than 27 bilateral agreements (Clegg & Voss, 2014). Whether this is a valid assertion remains open for debate. When the European Parliament initiated a centralised database to monitor FDI inflows, the Chinese Foreign Ministry criticized this instrument for hindering investment facilitation and urged the EU that its protectionist policies should respect WTO standards including non-discriminatory measures (Le Corre, 2018; Xinhua, 2017).

However, not all scholars agree with Clegg and Voss (2014) that this relationship is merely positive. Makocki (2017) acknowledges the economic improvements on the short-term, but argues certain investments may also undermine EU accession. He explains how China's infrastructural investment projects in the Balkans subvert reforms stimulated by the EU. He argues that these large-scale investments are accompanied with political influences, such as a preference for state-led decisions over market-based arrangements (Rogelja, 2020; Makocki, 2017). Such decisions are not in line with the *acquis communautaire*, which instead includes principles against state aid (Zweers, Shopov, Van der Putten, Petkova & Lemstra, 2020). Another negative aspect as formulated by Makocki (2017) are the debts as result of Chinese FDI. European grants to finance certain infrastructural projects are accompanied with many bureaucratic rules and demands for reform. In contrast, the Chinese investments are in the form of loans but are much easier and faster to arrange. However, they ultimately result in massive debts in the recipient countries, which may have various negative consequences within that country (Makocki, 2017).

In addition, Meunier (2014) underlines the negative consequences of Chinese investments. Contrary to the arguments of Clegg and Voss (2014), she believes that China uses the lack of a centralized database on FDI inflows to its advantage by setting up various bilateral agreements. She even goes as far as stating that China exploits this fragmentation with the ambition of dividing Central and Eastern Europe due to increasing disintegration. It must be noted however that these statements are supported by little empirical evidence. In a subsequent research of Meunier (2019), she offers two explanations for the political discord associated with Chinese FDI. The first reason is its novelty, which results in (media) reports and thus in political attention. However, this argument is dubious, as reports are written on many issues, but far from all items covered end in (political) discord. The second reason, according to Meunier (2019) and endorsed by Christiansen and Maher (2017), is that Chinese FDI is different in nature than other FDI. Whereas usually the recipient state gains technological capabilities, in

the case of Chinese FDI it is the investing country aiming to place Chinese businesses in immediate competition with European ones (Meunier, 2019; Christiansen & Maher, 2017). This development has resulted in various objections from European firms that want to invest in China in a similar way, but are not allowed to invest in certain policy domains to protect Chinese domestic enterprises (European Commission, 2016). Yet another disadvantage of Chinese FDI is proposed by Le Corre (2018). He argues that various recipient states have been deliberately transformed by China into its soft supporters in order to reinforce its international stance. Although similar claims have been made by other authors (e.g. Tonchev, 2017; Grgic, 2017; Makocki, 2017), his argumentation is based on merely two examples, which does not contribute to its reliability.

Although the research conducted on FDI in general is extensive, the amount of research on Chinese FDI within the Western Balkans is rather limited. This can partly be explained by the novelty of the phenomenon. The entire EU's inward FDI originating from China increased from 700 million euros in 2008 to 30 billion euros in 2017 (Szunomár, 2018). The Western Balkans experienced an increase of Chinese FDI from 12 billion USD in 2009 to 23 billion USD in 2015 (Jacimovic, Dragutivobić Mitrović, Bjelić, Tianping & Rajkovic, 2018). The expectations are that FDI from China to the Western Balkans will only increase in upcoming years, mainly because of the 16+1 cooperation between China and Central and Eastern Europe, and the inclusion of the region into the New Silk Road (Jacimovic et al., 2018; Hake & Radzyner, 2019). However, Chinese investments in the region have been sparse for a long period of time and have only increased relatively recently. Therefore, the available research is not satisfactory due to its limited timeframe. In addition, the research conducted has primarily focussed on EU member states and to a lesser extent on (potential) candidate members. Furthermore, much research has been conducted on Chinese investments in Africa (Jauch, 2011; Kragelund, 2009; Van de Looy & De Haan, 2006), but substantially less research evolved around the Balkans. The conditions in African countries are quite different to those of the Western Balkans, which makes generalizability of these studies to the Balkans problematic.

The extent of Chinese influence on the Western Balkans remains unclear due to diverging scholarly conclusions. Whereas some argue that China does not have an alternative political outlook for the region other than peaceful economic cooperation via the BRI route (e.g. Shaohua, 2019; Kang, 2005; Grgic, 2017), others emphasize the interwovenness of money and influence and argue that China shapes national legislation in the Balkans towards their benefit

(e.g. Rogelja, 2020; Poulin, 2011; Doehler, 2019). Motivations of FDI provision are often uncovered using the OLI paradigm (Dunning, 1979). This theory entails that FDI offers three advantages: ownership, location and internalization. However, Berning and Holtbrügge (2012) found that this paradigm is inadequate for deciphering the motivations behind Chinese FDI. Investments from China contain the additional benefit of governmental support because Chinese firms are urged by their national government to invest abroad. This also means that they are constrained by this Chinese government. All in all, a gap within the literature exists concerning the motivations behind FDI originating from China and its consequences for the Western Balkans.

2.5 Europeanization

Europeanization can be defined as the process in which the politics, dialogues, characteristics and institutional structures from the domestic sphere are shaped towards the European Union's economic and political dynamics in order to attain a continuous organizational logic between the national and supranational level (Anastasakis, 2005; Wach, 2015). The EU has obtained considerable power in the redesign of the national institutions and policies of candidate countries as a result of that country's aspirations towards EU membership and the width and depth of its accession conditions (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2004). The Union's main strategy for Europeanization is the procedure of accession. This means that, in order for states to become members of the Union, they must meet the EU's *acquis communautaire*: they must Europeanize before they may participate (Anastasakis, 2005). A second strategy for Europeanization is via cooperation of EU agencies with third countries. EU agencies especially cooperate with non-members in policy areas with high levels of interdependence. This cooperation results in positive feedback loops of political organization in third countries (Lavenex, Križić & Veuthey, 2021). In general, the EU shapes the norms, identities and behaviour of prospective members towards their own norms in various ways.

More specifically, the EU wants to change the institutional setting of candidate members in terms of political criteria, economic criteria as established in the Copenhagen eligibility criteria, as well as by the obligatory implementation of the chapters of its *acquis communautaire* (OECD, 2007; European Commission, n.d.). Because the EU accession criteria require a substantive amount of governance reforms, Europeanization can be regarded as a generator of democratization of non-EU states (Isufi, 2020).

Three factors that influence the effectiveness of Europeanization in candidate countries can be identified. Firstly, the resonance of national legislation with the Union's *acquis* matters due to practical considerations (Sedelmeier, 2006; Dimitrova, 2010). Secondly, the duration from the beginning of the transition period to the actual accession matters. The effectiveness of the conditionality instrument is not a constant throughout the process, but is dependent on the availability of an accession date. The probabilities of *acquis* adoption decline after the announcement of an accession date, so to achieve effective Europeanization, the EU should postpone this announcement as long as possible (Steunenbergh & Dimitrova, 2007). Finally, the candidate country's domestic identity is important. When this identity is not compatible with the EU's *acquis communautaire*, there will be no consistent compliance to its regulations (Freyburg & Richter, 2010).

Christiansen, Jorgensen and Wiener (1999) apply the logic of appropriateness and its constructivist rationale to the study of Europeanization. They argue that the EU integration process transforms the European institutional environment as well as its member states. During this process, not solely the political and legal settings change by means of adoption of the *acquis communautaire*, but also the identities, interests and behaviour of the actors involved. Because the EU also comprehends generally acknowledged principles, decision-making procedures and collective norms, European integration as a process of transitional governance is well suited for constructivist approaches (Christiansen, Jorgensen & Wiener, 1999). This is underlined by Brommesson (2010), who perceives Europeanization as conforming the rationale of the logic of appropriateness. (Potential) members strengthen their engagements with the European Union and as a result, their norms and values are transformed. Brommesson (2010) argues that this process is especially effective in cases where pro-EU norms and values are promoted by means of multiple mechanisms. Within his article, he synthesizes the concept of Normative Power Europe (NPE) and Europeanization, in order to better comprehend the normative impacts of Europeanization on (candidate) members. Manners (2002), who originally introduced the concept of NPE, has identified six determinants of EU norm diffusion towards (candidate) members. These should be perceived as more specific explanation of the more general socialization assumption and instrumental assumption (Börzel & Risse, 2003; Kelley, 2004) as mentioned in Chapter 2.2.1 Its rationale. Firstly, he mentions contagion as mechanism for norm diffusion, which means that norms of the Union are unintendedly spread towards other entities. The second concerns informational diffusion, which entails that norm diffusion is the consequence of communicating strategically. The third is procedural diffusion, which is the

institutionalization between the Union and another entity. The fourth facilitator concerns transference, which happens during the exchange of goods and (technical) assistance between the EU and other actors. The fifth method is overt diffusion, which emerges as a consequence of the actual presence of the Union within (candidate) members and/or within international organizations. Finally, norm diffusion occurs via cultural filter, which is a means in which the influence of norms is affected within the other entity, and results in (social) learning, adapting or rejecting the norms (Manners, 2002).

Although Manners' concept of NPE and the content of the norms is not without criticism (e.g. Hellquist, 2007; Diez, 2005), its empirical argument that the EU may normatively affect (candidate) members and their identities received little contestation. By combining Europeanization with NPE, Brommesson (2010) finds that norm diffusion between the EU and candidate countries is especially powerful due to the increased cooperation between the entities and the power asymmetries during the accession process. In contrast to some studies on Europeanization which merely focus on adaptations within formal governance structures, the inclusion of NPE within the Europeanization concept enables a more comprehensive understanding of the accession process of candidate members. The reason is that it includes evolving identities within candidate members as a result of internalizing EU norms. As the evolved identities affect the perceived legitimacy and appropriateness of the norms of the EU, it increases the chances of *acquis* adoption (Brommesson, 2010; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2004).

3. Theoretical Framework

This research aims to discover the impact of Chinese Foreign Direct Investments on four Western Balkan states. The introduction has formulated the following research question: “How does Chinese FDI affect the Europeanization in the Western Balkans?”. This chapter provides the conceptual approach that will be used to address this research question. It contains the conceptualization and the reasoning that result in the formulation of two hypotheses. This theoretical framework builds on the previous chapter.

3.1 Europeanization

Europeanization can be defined as the process in which the politics, dialogues, characteristics and institutional structures from the domestic sphere are shaped towards the European Union’s economic and political dynamics in order to attain a continuous organizational logic between the national and supranational level (Anastasakis, 2005; Wach, 2015). The EU initiates this Europeanization strategy when a potential candidate country wishes to join the European Union. These accessing countries are required to transpose the EU’s full *acquis communautaire* and the Copenhagen political and economic criteria before they are eligible as member states (Schimmelfennig, 2010). In other words, they must reorganize their legislative and institutional framework according to the EU’s arrangements. The requirements of adopting the *acquis* and the Copenhagen criteria compose the European Union’s tool of conditionality aimed at stimulating candidate members to achieve the benchmarks of the EU’s standards (European Commission, 2020; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2004). However, Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004; 2011) note that a causal relationship between the conditionality instrument and effective *acquis* adoption cannot be identified within all policy areas and/or all countries. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the factors that influence the effectiveness of Europeanization in candidate countries concern the resonance of the national legislation with the *acquis*, the duration of the accession process and the domestic identity of the candidate country (Sedelmeier, 2006; Dimitrova, 2010; Steunenbergh & Dimitrova, 2007; Freyburg & Richter, 2010).

3.2 Foreign Direct Investments from China

Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) are investments into a country by an external actor aimed at constituting a long-term, stable commitment within the receiving county as well as obtaining considerable influence in its economy (OECD, n.d.). A debate amongst academics exists on

whether Chinese FDI negatively affects the Europeanization in the Western Balkans. One group of scholars argue that Chinese FDI is no different than FDI originating from other countries and has no negative effect on the Europeanization of the Western Balkan states (e.g. Shaohua, 2019; Kang, 2005; Grgic, 2017). These scholars underline the existence of a causal relationship between Europeanization and FDI (Penev & Rojec, 2014; Hadjit & Moxon-Browne, 2005; Wood, 2009). The EU requires that prospective member states integrate the *acquis communautaire* within their institutional system, which assures sustained stability and consequently allures foreign investors (Hadjit & Moxon-Browne, 2005). The greater the scope and speed of the transition process towards the Union, the more appealing a state becomes for investors (Penev & Rojec, 2014). In addition, increased inward FDI may boost the candidate's transition towards the EU, because of the subsequently increasing productivity, accelerating privatization of state-owned firms, and transfers of knowledge (Wood, 2009). Vice versa, a decline in inward FDI results in less resources to finance reorganizations within the domestic sphere, and may thus discourage Europeanization. This might subsequently reinforce the decline of foreign investment (Wood, 2009; Penev & Rojec, 2014).

However, another group of scholars argue that Chinese FDI negatively affects the Europeanization in the Western Balkans, because it is different in nature than other types of FDI (e.g. Rogelja, 2020; Poulin, 2011; Doehler, 2019). Some authors argue that recipient countries are indirectly constrained by the Chinese government, because it urges Chinese firms to invest abroad (Berning & Holtbrügge, 2012). Others point to the motivations behind Chinese FDI as soliciting soft support and political influence, which is argued to undermine the recipient country's chances of EU accession (Le Corre, 2018; Tonchev, 2017; Makocki, 2017).

3.3 Two logics of action

The logic of consequentiality and the logic of appropriateness are two logics of actions that provide different expectations on the outcomes of decision-making. Whereas the logic of consequentiality assumes an instrumentalist perspective with rational calculations to derive at decisions, the logic of appropriateness assumes an institutionalist perspective with normative considerations to determine outcomes (Searing, 1991; Dewulf, Klenk, Wyborn & Lemos, 2020). However, these logics have not directly been compared to one another (Newark & Becker, 2016). This research compares these two logics of actions and determine which of them is prevalent in clarifying efficient *acquis* adoption in the Western Balkans.

In the logic of consequentiality, actors will choose the alternative which they expect to have the most outstanding overall consequences, within their range of preferences (Jupille, Caporaso & Checkel, 2003; Dewulf, Klenk, Wyborn & Lemos, 2020). National governments make cost-benefit calculations of complying with EU rules as well as the available alternatives, in order to determine which option results in maximized profits (Nalbanov, 2009). In the logic of appropriateness, actors strive to accomplish the obligations that follow from their identities and roles in a specific context, and adhere to internalized rules of their notion of normal, right and true, without or despite estimations of anticipated utility of other options (March & Olsen, 2013). In the context of the EU, this means that when an actor regards EU legislation as appropriately conforming their identity, values and norms, it will obey to these rules and thus adjust its policy towards the EU's *acquis communautaire* (March & Olsen, 1996). Only if these normative perceptions affirm the EU's obligations of appropriate behaviour, its regulations will be adhered to (Nalbanov, 2009).

3.4 The formulation of hypotheses

If Chinese FDI negatively influences the Europeanization in the Western Balkans, it is expected that the Europeanization progress of these states indicates diminished progress in the period after they received the FDI in comparison to the period prior to receiving it. Following the logic of consequentiality, a Western Balkan state will choose the policy alternative which will result in the most beneficial consequences based on their cost-benefit analyses. One part of this cost-benefit analysis concerns the benefits that will result from EU membership, but also the adoption costs of *acquis* adoption. The other part of this cost-benefit analysis concerns the benefits resulting from receiving Chinese FDI, but also the potential risks for diminished progress in their Europeanization process. The Western Balkan states are willing to take the potential risks accompanied with the Chinese FDI, as long as the overall benefits of this FDI overrule the concerns in their calculations. Therefore, it is expected that when the amounts of Chinese FDI exceed the material benefits that the Western Balkans receive from the EU, they will risk potential impairments of their Europeanization. This leads to the formulation of the first hypothesis as:

H1: When a Western Balkan state receives more FDI from China than from the EU, the Europeanization in the Western Balkans will be negatively impacted.

The hypothesis is formulated in a way that expects deterioration in Europeanization. The research is designed in such a way that it measures whether or not such an impairment has taken place. This hypothesis does therefore not only measure whether the logic of consequentiality is adopted once the amounts of Chinese FDI exceed those from the European Union, it also provides an answer to the academic debate on whether or not Chinese FDI negatively affects Europeanization in the Western Balkans.

Following the logic of appropriateness, the Western Balkan states will implement the European regulations and structures into their domestic legislative framework only if they are persuaded by the appropriateness of these rules. Whether they consider these relations as appropriate is determined by the values and norms of their own identities. If the identity of the European Union can be converged with their own, they will adopt the regulations prescribed by the Europeanization requirements. How high or low the amount of Chinese FDI is, is not part of their decision to Europeanize. This leads to the formulation of the second hypothesis as:

H2: No matter the height of Chinese FDI, it does not impact the Europeanization process when the Western Balkan state perceives identity convergence with the EU.

This second hypothesis thus determines whether the logic of appropriateness is prevalent in explaining the Europeanization in the Western Balkans. Two analytical approaches on the Europeanization practices of the EU by Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004) will be used in order to verify this second hypothesis. The first approach is the external incentive model, the second approach is the social learning model. These two models have been elaborated on in the previous chapter.

4. Research Design

To investigate the extent to which Chinese investments within the Western Balkan affect their prospects of EU accession, a small-N comparative research following a deductive logic will be conducted. More specifically, the design will entail a Most Similar Systems Design I. This will be elaborated on within the first paragraph of this chapter. In the subsequent section, the case selection, timeframe and focus will be clarified. The consecutive paragraph specifies the data collection. Consequently, the operationalization will specify how the variables within this research will be measured, and thereafter, the limitations of this particular research design will be addressed. Finally, the validity and the reliability of this inquiry will be assessed.

4.1 Most Similar Systems Design I

4.1.1 Introduction

The general logic of the Most Similar Systems Design I (MSSD-I) entails that cases should be selected that are as identical as possible on all potentially relevant confounding variables, except for the main explanatory variable (Anckar, 2008). In this research, that means that the selected cases must be similar except for the amount of Chinese FDI they receive. Prior to the actual conduction of research, it is unclear what the outcomes of the research question will be (Toshkov, 2016).

4.1.2 Control variables

In order to identify control variables, inquiries from other scholars are consulted (Toshkov, 2016). In the research of Popović and Erić (2018), GDP per capita, GDP growth, labour costs and institutional quality have been identified as control variables. Table 1 provides an overview of the values of these factors. In order to assess the institutional quality within the Balkan region, The World Bank (n.d. b) Worldwide Governance Indicators are consulted. These provide insights on the quality of the Balkan institutions in six domains. The first concerns Voice and Accountability, which refers to the perceptions of citizens on the degree to which they may engage in appointing their government, on the independence of the media, and on their own freedom of association and expression. The second concerns Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism, which entails perceptions on probabilities of political instability and violence resulting from political ambitions. The third concerns Government Effectiveness, which relates to the perceived degree and autonomy of public and civil services, the effectiveness of the policy cycle and the trustworthiness of the government's assurances.

The fourth concerns Regulatory Quality, which entails a government's capacity to promote and protect the private sphere within policies. The fifth concerns Rule of Law, which means the scope of public servants that consent to guidelines within society. Finally, the sixth concerns Control of Corruption, which demonstrates the level of public influence used for private earnings and state capture by powerful entities within society (World Bank, n.d. c). The values indicated by these variables range from -2.5 to 2.5, in which lower scores correspond to poorer outcomes and vice versa.

Table 1
The Values of the Control Variables of the Western Balkan Countries in 2012

	Albania	Serbia	North Macedonia	Montenegro	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Kosovo
GDP (in billions of US\$)	12.320	43.309	9.745	4.088	17.227	6.500
GDP growth (in %)	1.418	-0.682	-0.456	-2.724	-0.822	2.810
GDP per capita (in US\$)	4.247	6.015	4.698	6.586	4.778	3.596
Labour costs (in € per month)	446,39	536,79	687,28	790,00	762,32	ND
Voice and accountability	0.01	0.17	0.00	0.23	-0.14	-0.20
Political stability	-0.16	-0.22	-0.44	0.56	-0.45	-1.00
Government effectiveness	-0.28	-0.11	-0.07	0.13	-0.47	-0.40
Regulatory quality	0.17	-0.08	0.35	0.01	-0.06	0.00
Rule of law	-0.57	-0.39	-0.24	-0.01	-0.23	-0.50
Control of corruption	-0.72	-0.31	-0.02	-0.10	-0.30	-0.70

Note: The year 2012 is chosen, because it was the year before the Chinese FDI into the Western Balkan region started to substantially increase (Grübler, Bykova, Ghodsi, Hanzl-Weiss, Holzner, Hunya & Stehrer, 2018).

Note: ND means no data available.

Note: The data from the variables GDP, GDP growth and GDP per capita are retrieved from The World Bank (n.d. a); Labour costs from Trading Economics (n.d.); Voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption from The World Bank (n.d. b) Worldwide Governance Indicators.

The values of Table 1 present an indicative overview of the state of affairs within the Western Balkans. The table shows that the values are not completely similar. Nevertheless, when comparing the Worldwide Governance Indicators scores of the Western Balkans with EU member states, the Balkans lag behind in comparable ranges in relation to the Union (Sanfey & Milatovic, 2018). Furthermore, although the GDP per capita is not precisely the same for each Balkan state, they are within a similar scope. This is especially the case in comparison to EU member states with similar population numbers. For instance, Serbia and Austria both have around 6.9 million inhabitants, but the GDP per capita in Austria entailed \$48,657 in 2012. In addition, Kosovo and Latvia both have 1.9 million inhabitants, but Latvia's GDP per capita in 2012 signified \$13.926.

Furthermore, as Anckar (2008) argues, selecting states that are adjacent to each other in terms of geography and culture relieve the rigidity of the similarity-requirement. The reason is that in such cases control variables are automatically kept constant. As a result, they do not interfere within the relationship between X and Y. As the cases within this research consist of states in the Western Balkans, other potentially relevant factors are most probably kept constant. Not only are these countries located next to each other within the same geographic region, but they also share a similar background.

More specifically, these countries are culturally adjacent as a result of their shared past. Historically, they have been subject to external influence in their domestic sphere: from authority through Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian empires, to fascist and Nazi occupation, to domination by the Soviets (Anastasakis, 2005). In addition, the region suffered from a series of wars between 1991 and 1999, and in the subsequent post-conflict period, the area became surrounded by two sizable international organizations: the EU and NATO (Minić, 2018). After the EU enlargements in 2004, 2007 and 2013, various Eastern European countries gained access to the Union, such as Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania (De Munter, 2020). Of the six republics that constituted The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, only Slovenia and Croatia became member states of the EU. The other nations, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Serbia, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, are not members of the European Union, although they are at various stages of the accession process (De Munter, 2020). Currently, these countries face similar problems in terms of cultural pluralism and suffer from high levels of corruption (Djurdjevic, 2012; EPTT, 2015).

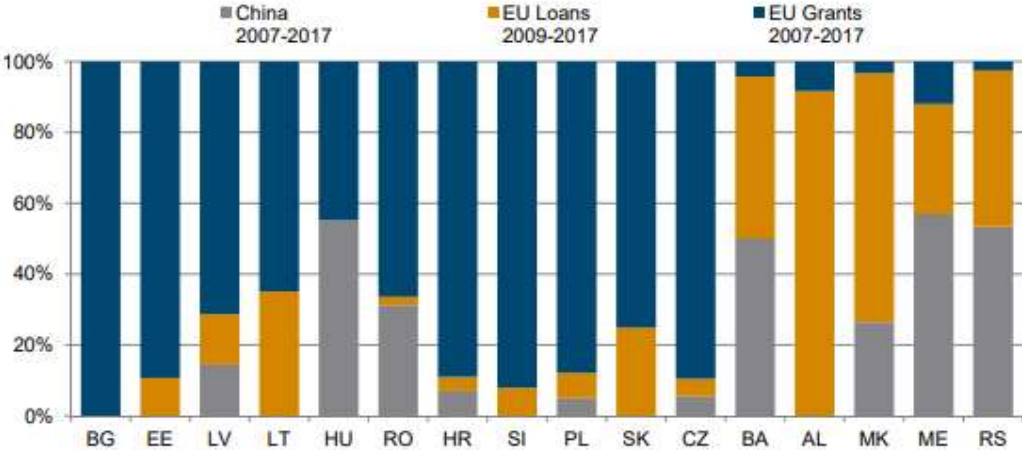
Therefore, because the control variables within the Western Balkans are in similar ranges in relation to the scores of EU member states, and because these states share a geographical and cultural resemblance, they can be presumed to be as similar as possible

4.2 Case selection and timeframe

4.2.1 Case selection

The MSSD-I research design requires variation in merely the main explanatory variable (Toshkov, 2016). Within this research, that means that variation in the amounts of inward Chinese FDI should be the criterion for the selection of cases. Figure 3 and Table 2 identify the amounts of Chinese FDI into the Western Balkan countries. Although this table and figure do not provide precise amounts of FDI, this graph is considered to provide the most clarifying information on the proportions of investments that the Western Balkans receive from China and the EU. The reason is that different authors give different estimations of total FDI originating from China. This is because the investment contracts between China and the Western Balkans are often not transparently communicated (Zweers et al., 2020). However, due to the formulation of the first hypothesis, this research needs information on which country receives more Chinese FDI in proportion to the EU’s FDI. Therefore, Figure 3 and Table 2 do not provide exact numbers but proportions and percentages

Figure 3
Share of Funding by EU and Chinese Sources



Note: BA = Bosnia and Herzegovina; AL = Albania; MK = North Macedonia; ME = Montenegro; RS = Serbia (ND for Kosovo).

Note: Copied from: “Western Balkans EU Accession: Is the 2025 Target Date Realistic?”, by Grieveson, R., Grübler, J. & Holzner, M., 2018, *The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies*, 22, p.17, <https://wiiw.ac.at/western-balkans-eu-accession-is-the-2025-target-date-realistic--dlp-4526.pdf>.

Table 2*The Share of Chinese FDI into the Western Balkans from 2010 – 2017 in %*

Country	% of total FDI from China
Serbia	48.9
Bosnia and Herzegovina	34.5
Montenegro	12.3
North Macedonia	4.4
Albania	0.0
Kosovo	ND

Note: Source: European Investment Bank (2018).

In order to investigate whether Chinese FDI influences the Europeanization in the Western Balkans, a comparison shall be made between two countries that receive a larger amount of Chinese FDI and two countries that receive a smaller amount of Chinese FDI. Based on the information within Figure 3 and Table 2, the following countries are selected: Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina as countries with higher levels of inward Chinese FDI, and North Macedonia and Albania as countries with lower levels of inward Chinese FDI. Figure 3 indicates that Serbia receives slightly more FDI from China than from the EU, and Table 2 shows that this number concerns almost half of the total FDI originating from China into the Western Balkans. Figure 3 shows that Bosnia and Herzegovina receives the same amount of FDI from the EU and from China, which constitutes 34.5% of the total FDI inflows from China into the Western Balkan region. North Macedonia does receive Chinese FDI, albeit to a lesser extent than the aforementioned states. It constitutes 4.4% of the total Chinese FDI inflows in the region, as shown in Table 2. Figure 3 and Table 2 indicate that Albania does not receive any Chinese FDI over the period analysed in this research.

Kosovo is not considered as a suitable case, because it is not recognized by various countries, including China. As a result, various scholars and research institutes have not included Kosovo into their studies. For instance, Ping and Zoukui (2018) did intend to incorporate Kosovo within their study of Chinese investments within the CEEC, but as a result of a lack of data within the databases of the World Bank and the IMF, this was not possible. Thus, the lack of data on Kosovo is self-reinforcing. Montenegro is not necessarily considered as an unsuitable case. However, due to availability constraints on documents discussing the perceptions of Montenegrin citizens on the country's relations with the EU, this country is not included in the

case selection. Furthermore, according to Table 2, it ranks in the middle concerning the percentages of total FDI from China into the Western Balkan region. To identify whether receiving FDI makes a difference in Europeanization efforts, it is more useful to compare cases that differ to a greater extent. The more the cases within the comparison differ in their values of X, the more likely a possible effect on Y is visible. Table 3 summarizes the selected cases, as well as the values of the independent variable and control variables.

Table 3
Summarizing Table of Case Selection with Values of Independent Variable and Control Variables

	Albania	Bosnia and Herzegovina	North Macedonia	Serbia
Chinese FDI (in % of regional total)	0.0	34.5	4.4	48.9
GDP (in billions of US\$)	12.320	17.227	9.745	43.309
GDP growth (in %)	1.418	-0.822	-0.456	-0.682
GDP per capita (in US\$)	4.247	4.778	4.698	6.015
Labour costs (in € per month)	446,39	762,32	687,28	536,79
Voice and accountability	0.01	-0.14	0.00	0.17
Political stability	-0.16	-0.45	-0.44	-0.22
Government effectiveness	-0.28	-0.47	-0.07	-0.11
Regulatory quality	0.17	-0.06	0.35	-0.08
Rule of law	-0.57	-0.23	-0.24	-0.39
Control of corruption	-0.72	-0.30	-0.02	-0.31

Note: The data from the variables GDP, GDP growth and GDP per capita are retrieved from The World Bank (n.d. a); Labour costs from Trading Economics (n.d.); Voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption from The World Bank (n.d. b) Worldwide Governance Indicators.

Note: The values indicated by these variables range from -2.5 to 2.5, in which lower scores correspond to poorer outcomes and vice versa.

4.2.2 Timeframe

For the demarcation of the timeframe of this research, one year is of particular importance. From 2013 on, the investments from China have rapidly starting to rise. The total Chinese FDI into the region has increased from virtually zero in 2013 to 2.6% in 2016 (Grübler, Bykova, Ghodsi, Hanzl-Weiss, Holzner, Hunya & Stehrer, 2018). This is year is not random, as 2013 is also the year in which China announced its ambitions for the new Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). As this initiative aims to connect China with Europe and Africa by means of various infrastructural connectivity routes, the increase of Chinese FDI into the Western Balkans after 2013 can be elucidated (EBRD, n.d.).

As such, to investigate the potential negative effects of the Chinese investments on the Europeanization in the Western Balkans, a longitudinal timeframe shall be analysed that includes years before and after the substantial rise in FDI from China. This timeframe is from 2010 up to and including 2016. The years 2010 up to and including 2012 are selected because of their absence of Chinese investments and therefore pose insights on the situation in which no intervention of the treatment has taken place (Toshkov, 2016). This offers the possibility to compare the situation without intervention of Chinese FDI with the situation in which Chinese FDI has been invested within the region. Originally, the research intended to include more years in the period after receiving Chinese FDI in order to gain more information on the trends after receiving the treatment. However, due to availability constraints on the European Commission's Progress Reports after 2016, this was not possible.

For the second part of this research, the timeframe for the analysis on the relations between the Western Balkans and China is slightly diverging. The reason is that the relations between the Western Balkans and China have had less time to develop than their relations with the EU. The EU and the Western Balkans have established relations since the 1990s (De Munter, 2021). Relations with China have been present since 2012, with the establishment of the 16+1 platform, and 2013, when the Chinese FDI inflows started to increase (Gjorgjioska & Vangeli, 2017). For identity convergence to take place and the logic of appropriateness to develop, interaction of a longer period of time is required between the two entities (March & Olsen, 2013). Therefore, the timeframe to analyse the prevalent logic of action in the relations between China and the Western Balkans is from 2017 up to and including 2020. The inquiry on the relations between the EU and the Western Balkan is from 2014 up to and including 2016

4.3 Data collection

4.3.1 First part of research

In order to conduct the research within this thesis, qualitative documents shall be consulted in order to investigate the relationship between Chinese FDI and Europeanization within the Western Balkans. For the first part of the research, the examined documents concern the Progress Reports of the European Commission per candidate country per year. These documents contain detailed descriptions on how each (potential) candidate country scores concerning each chapter of accession. These chapters contain detailed assessments on how (potential) candidates score on particular accession requirements. The chapters within the Progress Reports are equal to the chapters of the *acquis communautaire*, since a (potential) candidate country must adhere to the overarching legislations of the EU prior to accessing the Union. These chapters can be opened or closed, depending on whether the (potential) candidate country fulfils the requirements (European Commission, n.d.). An overview of these chapters is provided in Appendix 1. In addition to the chapters, various fundamentals are included on which the (potential) candidate country is assessed. These include political criteria and economic criteria as regulated in the Copenhagen Criteria (European Commission, n.d.).

4.3.2 Second part of research

For the second part of this research, reports on the perceptions of Western Balkan citizens towards the EU and China shall be analysed. To potentially detect identity convergence between a Western Balkan state and the EU, various reports shall be examined that contain public opinion polls on the European Union. These reports are from varying research institutes. This is due to availability constraints of an overarching institute, but this is not considered as a problem, because the use of various sources allows for data triangulation. In addition, to determine whether identity convergence occurred between the Western Balkan states and China, various reports of the China-CEE Institute shall be analysed. This institute is a Hungary-based non-profit organization operating under the CASS Institute of European Studies. It aims for collaboration between various kinds of research institutes within Central and Eastern European states (China-CEE Institute, n.d.). These reports also contain public opinion surveys of Western Balkan citizens towards either specific or general perceptions on China. The perceptions of Western Balkan citizens are selected as unit of analysis, because a country's civilians are considered as most important for national identity identification, and not for instance a country's parliament (Delanti, 1996; Cloots, 2016). For each Western Balkan state, two reports on their relationship with the EU are consulted and four reports on their relations

with China. The reason is that the reports of the EU are considerably longer than those on China. Therefore, the total amount of data on the EU and China are approximately similar, even though the number of reports is not. Table 4 and Table 5 provide an overview of the documents used for this research.

Table 4*Documents Used for First Part of Research*

Albania	-	European Commission (2010a).	<i>Analytical Report.</i>	Retrieved from:	https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/pdf/key_documents/2010/package/al_rapport_2010_en.pdf .
	-	European Commission (2011a).	<i>Albania 2011 Progress Report.</i>	Retrieved from:	https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/pdf/key_documents/2011/package/al_rapport_2011_en.pdf .
	-	European Commission (2012a).	<i>Albania 2012 Progress Report.</i>	Retrieved from:	https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/pdf/key_documents/2012/package/al_rapport_2012_en.pdf .
	-	European Commission (2013a).	<i>Albania 2013 Progress Report.</i>	Retrieved from:	https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/pdf/key_documents/2013/package/al_rapport_2013.pdf .
	-	European Commission (2014a).	<i>Albania Progress Report.</i>	Retrieved from:	https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/pdf/key_documents/2014/20141008-albania-progress-report_en.pdf .
	-	European Commission (2015a).	<i>Albania 2015 Report.</i>	Retrieved from:	https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/pdf/key_documents/2015/20151110_report_albania.pdf .
	-	European Commission (2016a).	<i>Albania 2016 Report.</i>	Retrieved from:	https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_albania.pdf .
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-	European Commission (2010b).	<i>Bosnia and Herzegovina 2010 Progress Report.</i>	Retrieved from:	https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/pdf/key_documents/2010/package/ba_rapport_2010_en.pdf .
	-	European Commission (2011b).	<i>Bosnia and Herzegovina 2011 Progress Report.</i>	Retrieved from:	https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/pdf/key_documents/2011/package/ba_rapport_2011_en.pdf .

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North
Macedonia

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Serbia

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Table 5
Documents Used for the Second Part of Research

Albania	On EU
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Herzegovina

On EU

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On EU

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4.4 Methodology and operationalization

4.4.1 Variables

The independent variable within this research is the FDI from China into each Western Balkan state. Figure 3 and Table 2 provided indications on the height of these investments in each state in the region. This figure and table indicate that Serbia receives the most Chinese FDI, followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia respectively. Albania does not receive FDI from China. The dependent variable in this research is the Europeanization within the four selected cases. This variable will be measured in this research.

4.4.2 Organization research

In order to determine how Chinese FDI affects the Europeanization in the Western Balkans, firstly it shall be inquired whether this phenomenon happens at all, and if so, in which particular chapters and criteria of the Europeanization process these influences occur. Subsequently, it will be investigated whether the logic of appropriateness or the logic of consequentiality is better suited to explain how the effects of Chinese FDI on the Europeanization in the Western Balkans materialize.

4.4.2.1 Determining influence of Chinese FDI on Europeanization

For the first part of the research, the progress reports of the European Commission are analysed to identify trends in the Europeanization of the Western Balkan states. If a declining trend can be identified after 2013, it can be concluded based on the MSSD-I research design that this trend is caused by the Chinese FDI. The reason is that this design controls for possible confounding variables via a conditioning strategy. Because all confounding variables are kept as constant as possible, this means that the relationship between X and Y is isolated and thus explains possible outcomes (Toshkov, 2016). In each progress report, the European Commission assesses the progress made in relation to the previous year per Western Balkan state per chapter or criterium. These assessments can be categorized as good progress, moderate progress, some progress, limited progress, no progress and backsliding. In order to calculate the trends of this progress, each category is assigned a number. Table 6 provides an overview of the categories and their assigned numbers.

Table 6
Assigned Numbers to Categories of Progress

Category	Assigned number
Good progress	4
Moderate progress	3
Some progress	2
Limited progress	1
No progress	0
Backsliding	-1

Figure 4, Figure 5, Figure 6 and Figure 7 provide hypothetical examples of trends in Europeanization in a particular chapter and country. The blue trendline shows the trend of the period from 2010 until 2016. The red trendline shows the trend of the period from 2013 until 2016. The inclusion of both trendlines into the graph allows for a comparison of the trends. If the slope of the red trendline on the progress is positive or 0, it is concluded that there has been no negative influence by Chinese FDI on the Europeanization of that particular state in that particular chapter or criterium. If the slope of the red trendline is from (but not including) 0 until and including -0.5, it is concluded that there has been a limited negative influence of the Chinese FDI on the Europeanization. If the slope of the red trendline is less than -0.5, it is concluded that the negative influence of Chinese FDI on the Europeanization has been strong. Table 7 summarizes these potential outcomes and their meaning.

Table 7
Meaning of Slope Trendline

Slope of trendline	Meaning
$(\infty, 0]$	No negative influence of Chinese FDI on Europeanization
$(0, -0.5]$	Limited negative influence of Chinese FDI on Europeanization
$(-0.5, \infty)$	Strong negative influence of Chinese FDI on Europeanization

The hypothetical examples of Figure 4, Figure 5, Figure 6 and Figure 7 on the progress of the Europeanization are provided in order to further clarify the methodology. If a Western Balkan country does not indicate that it has been negatively influenced by Chinese FDI, it is assumed that the progress is continuous. Figure 4 and Figure 5 show two trends in which such a lack of negative influence can be detected. In Figure 4, the slope of the trendline equals 0. This means

that there has been a continuous progress in Europeanization after 2013. If the slope is zero, y does not change, thus no negative influence can be identified. Therefore, Chinese FDI has not affected this country's approximation to the acquis in this particular chapter or criterium. In Figure 5, the slope of the trendline is positive. This means that the Europeanization progress within this country has increased after 2013. Hence, Chinese FDI has not had a negative effect on that country's Europeanization.

Figure 4
Slope of Trendline Equals Zero

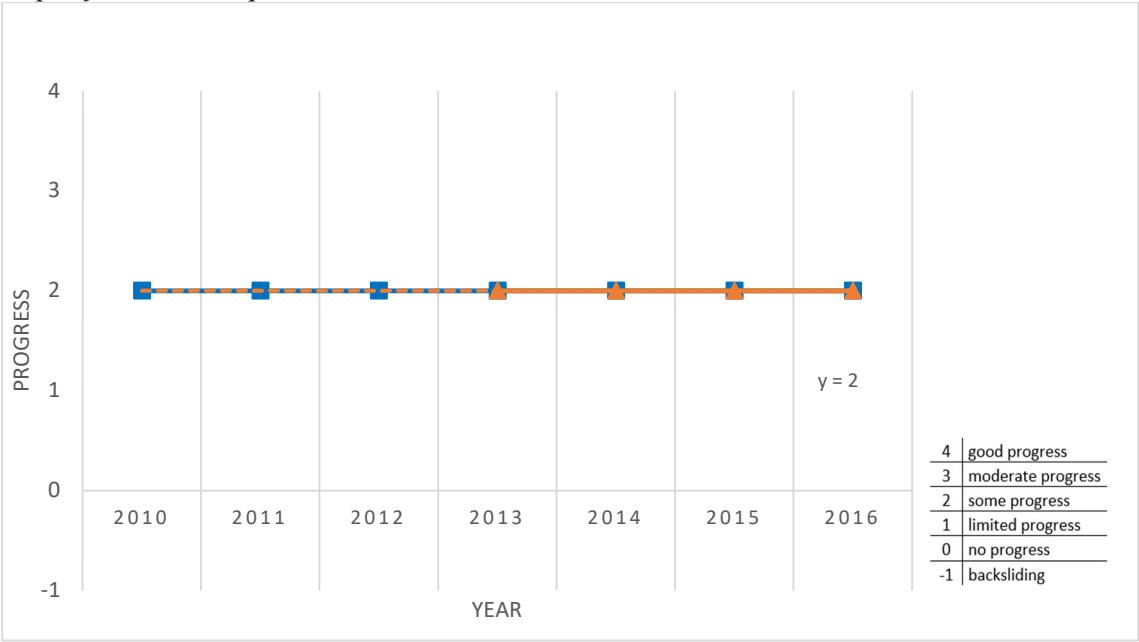


Figure 5
Slope of Trendline is Positive

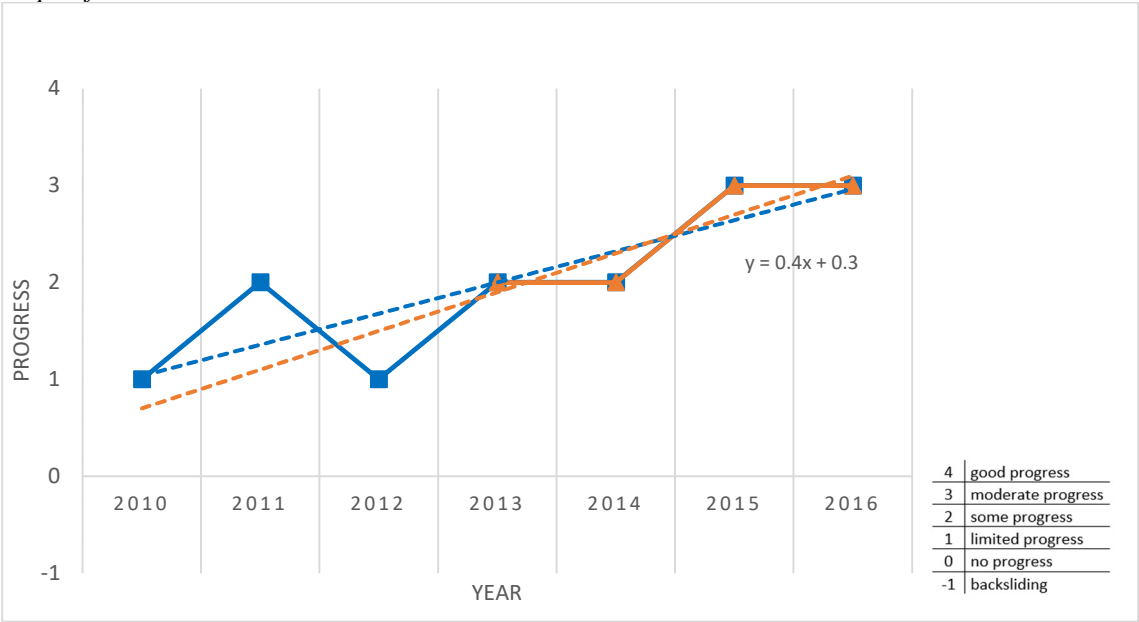


Figure 6 and Figure 7 provide two hypothetical examples of trends that show a negative influence of Chinese FDI on Europeanization. In Figure 6, the slope of the trendline is -0.4. The Europeanization progress has slowed down in comparison to the time period when there were no Chinese FDI inflows in the country. Therefore, this negative influence can be considered as limited. In Figure 7, the slope of the trendline is -0.8. The Europeanization progress in this graph has slowed down as well, but to a more considerable extent. This means that the negative effect of Chinese FDI can be categorized as strong.

Figure 6
Slope of Trendline is Negative - Limited

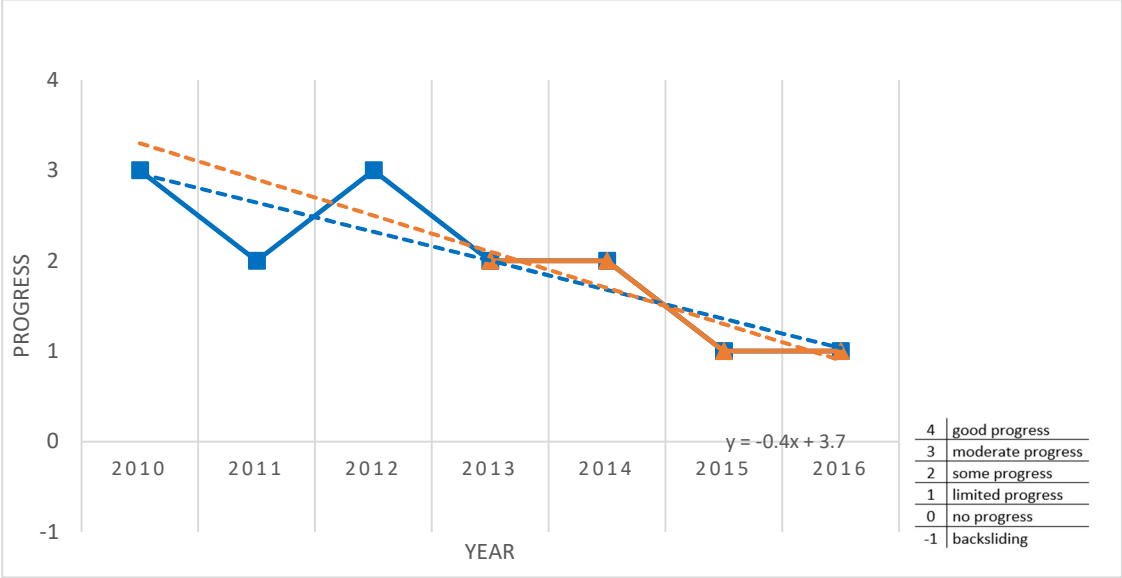
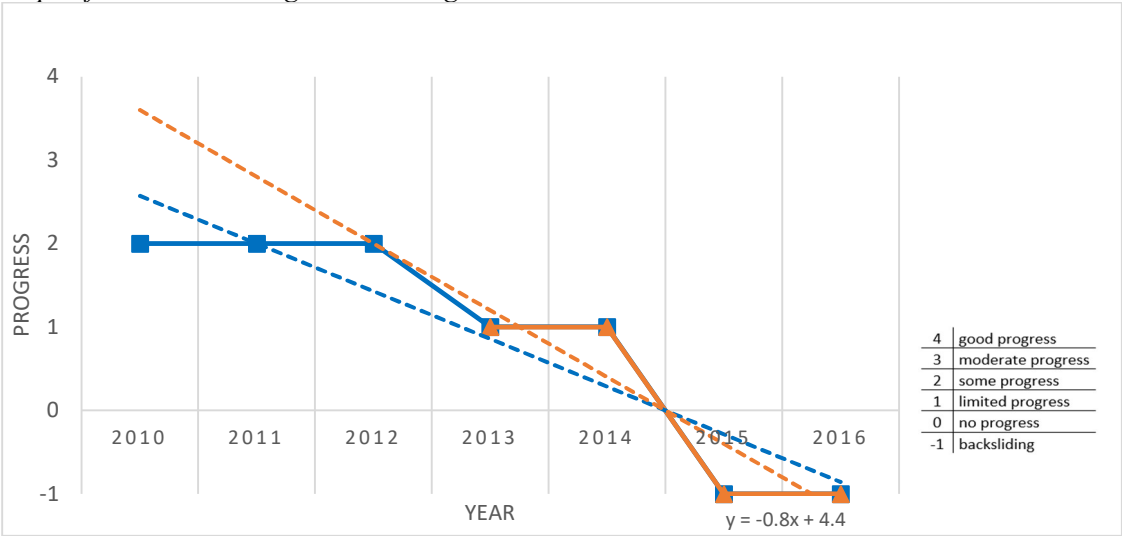


Figure 7
Slope of Trendline is Negative - Strong



The influence of Chinese FDI is therefore operationalized as a decline in the progress of Europeanization in the period after 2013, in comparison to the preceding time period.

After the identification of either no negative influence, limited negative influence or strong negative influence of Chinese FDI on a chapter or criterium, a score shall be assigned to each outcome. When no negative influence is found, this score equals 0. When limited negative influence is found, the score results in 1. When strong negative influence is found, a score of 2 shall be assigned to the influence on that particular chapter or criterium. Subsequently, the total score shall be calculated by adding up these individual scores per country in order to gain insights on the total influence of the Chinese FDI on the Europeanization of that Western Balkan state.

Furthermore, the potential negative influence of Chinese FDI on each individual chapter and criterium shall be determined in another table. When a negative influence is found in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia (the three countries that did receive FDI), the negative influence of the Chinese FDI on that chapter or criterium of Europeanization can be considered as high. If a negative influence can be found in two of these countries, the influence is considered as being of medium impact. If a negative influence can be identified in merely one state, the influence is considered to be low. If no negative effect is identified in all countries, then Chinese FDI is considered to have no influence on this particular chapter or criterium.

4.4.2.2 Determining the prevalent logic of action in explaining Europeanization

In the second part of the research, it will be investigated how effects on Europeanization are manifest. As Chapter 2 has specified, the logic of consequentiality and the logic of appropriateness are two models to explain (governmental) behaviour. This part of the research shall determine which of these two logics is better suited at explaining the Europeanization in the Western Balkans. Do the states in this region conduct cost-benefit analyses on which policy alternatives result in the highest expected returns? Or do they feel an intrinsic connection to the European identity and therefore implement its regulations regardless of other financial incentives.

To measure which logic of action the Western Balkans adhere to, the qualitative coding programme ATLAS.ti is used. Table 8 provides an overview of these codes. Codes that indicate the logic of consequentiality are based on the external incentive model by Schimmelfennig and

Sedelmeier (2004) as well as other insights of the theoretical framework on this logic of action. These concern, firstly, the attribution of funds and/or financial assistance in its broad sense. Due to its broad application, it includes two factors for effective EU conditionality as identified within the external incentive model, namely the size and speed of rewards and the credibility of punishment and benefits. Secondly, if a Western Balkan state has effectuated a reform merely because it was required to do so because of the EU's conditionality principle, this is also considered as an indication for the logic of consequentiality. This code concerns the determinacy of conditions-factor of the external incentive model. Thirdly, if a statement is made that suggests non-identity convergence, this is also considered to indicate the logic of consequentiality. Fourthly, if a Western Balkan state has a lower level of knowledge on either the EU or China, this is also considered as an indication for no identity convergence. This is based on the assumption that identity convergence cannot be perceived if a country has a limited knowledge on the other entity, because potential similarities between the identity will not be observed. Fifthly, if a country mentions disadvantages of EU membership or Chinese FDI, this is considered as a suggestion of the logic of consequentiality. The reason is that when something is considered as a disadvantage, this suggests that a cost-benefit analysis will be or has been performed. However, this code is not considered to be too determinate, as a country may perceive its identity as converged with either the EU or China, but still acknowledge certain disadvantages. Finally, when it is stated within a document that the power and/or impact of the EU is limited, this is also considered to point towards the logic of consequentiality. But again, this code should be held in perspective and not be considered as too determinate on its own.

Codes that indicate the logic of appropriateness are based on the social learning model by Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004) as well as other insights of the theoretical framework on this logic of action. Firstly, a perceived righteousness is considered to indicate the logic of appropriateness. This code concerns the legitimacy aspect of the social learning model, as well as what is more generally perceived as right, appropriate and good according to the Western Balkan state. Secondly, if the language used in the document contains words such as 'justified', 'good', or 'resonating our norms and values', this is also considered to be based on the logic of appropriateness. The code 'use of language pro-EU/China' is partly based on the resonance factor of the social learning model, and partly on the general insights as provided by March and Olsen (1996; 2013). Thirdly, if diffusion of norms is identified, this is also considered to be an indication of the logic of appropriateness. This factor is not part of the social learning model, but is intentionally added to this research because norms diffusion instruments are of great

importance to the perception of shared identity between two parties (Manners, 2002; Brommesson, 2010). Fourthly, if a document states that identity convergence has taken place, this also points towards the logic of appropriateness. Fifthly, if the documents indicate that a reform is effectuated not because it is a requirement of the EU’s conditionality, but because that state wants to implement it, this further suggests the logic of appropriateness. In such cases, that country considers the reform to be a good regulation, which is appropriately in line with its own values, norms and standards. Finally, if a country has higher levels of knowledge on the EU or China, this suggests a higher potential for identity convergence to take place. This is based on the same assumption as the one on limited levels of knowledge. If higher levels of knowledge on the other entity exist, potential similarities may be found between the identity of the EU or China and its own. However, this code is not too determinate on its own, but if the rest of the text suggests identity convergence, this may provide additional supportive evidence.

Table 8
Overview of Codes that Suggest the Logic of Consequentiality or the Logic of Appropriateness

Codes for Logic of Consequentiality	Codes for Logic of Appropriateness
Funds and/or Financial Assistance	Perceived Righteousness
Statement on Non-Identity Convergence	Statement on Identity Convergence
Reforms Effectuated due to Conditionality	Reforms Effectuated not due to Conditionality
Lower Levels of Knowledge	Higher Levels of Knowledge
Disadvantages of EU Membership/Chinese FDI	Use of Language Pro-EU/China
Limited impact/power EU	Diffusion of Norms

Subsequent to the analysis of the documents, tables shall be made that provide an overview of the amounts of codes that suggest the logic of consequentiality and the logic of appropriateness. There tables should be considered as indicative. They do provide useful information, but they should not be considered as evidence on their own. It is required that they are supplemented with data from the contents of the reports, because these quantities of codes do not provide enough information on their own. For instance, if the same disadvantage is mentioned multiple times, this may lead to a distorted view of reality. Nevertheless, in combination with data from the contents of the documents, such tables provide an indicative overview of which logic of action is prevalent in explaining the relations between a Western Balkan country and either the EU or China.

If the logic of consequentiality prevails over the logic of appropriateness, there will be considerably more codes that point towards the former logic than the latter as long as this view is supported by the contents of the reports. On the other hand, if the logic of appropriateness prevails over the logic of consequentiality, there will be considerably more codes that point towards the logic of appropriateness if again this view is supported by the contents of the reports. It is thus not necessary for the logic of appropriateness to prevail that the identities are perceived as exactly the same, but they must be perceived as similar. Furthermore, if the difference between the amount of codes both logics of action do not differ too much, and the contents of the reports do not clearly point in one direction, neither logic of action is considered to prevail over the other.

4.4.3 Meaning of the results for the hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 states:

When a Western Balkan state receives more FDI from China than from the EU, the Europeanization in the Western Balkans will be undermined.

Hypothesis 1 should be accepted, when the findings of this research indicate that the Western Balkan countries that receive more Chinese FDI than the FDI they receive from the EU experience diminished progress in their Europeanization. However, if none of the Western Balkan states experiences diminished progress, or if Western Balkan states that receive more FDI from the EU than China also endure decreased progress, this hypothesis should be rejected.

Hypothesis 2 states:

No matter the height of Chinese FDI, it does not impact the Europeanization process when the Western Balkan state perceives identity convergence with the EU.

This second hypothesis should be accepted if the logic of appropriateness prevails over the logic of consequentiality on the overall Europeanization processes in the Western Balkans. However, if the logic of consequentiality prevails over the logic of appropriateness, or when neither logic prevails, this hypothesis should be rejected. If both logics of action play an equal role in explaining the Europeanization in the Western Balkans, this hypothesis should be partly accepted.

4.5 Validity and Reliability

Internal validity refers to the degree to which the outcomes of an inquiry pose an actual representation of the phenomenon under research, or if they are the result of confounding variables (Brink, 1993). Because the MSSD-I is explicitly designed to control for all confounding variables, the internal validity of this research is high. In addition, a change in the Europeanization developments within the Western Balkans are only assumed to be the result of Chinese FDI if that FDI precedes the adaptations of the Europeanization. This approach further strengthens the internal validity (Bhandari, 2021a). Furthermore, the sample size concerns four cases instead of two, which limits the measurement error and as such increases internal validity (Toshkov, 2016). Nevertheless, it should be noted that a sample size of four is still rather limited. Finally, a pre- and post-test enable the possibility of comparing the situation with and without the treatment, in this case the FDI originating from China. Therefore, the timeframe of 2010 until 2012 poses as a comparable control group, which further increases the internal validity (Bhandari, 2021a). However, it should be noted that if it turns out that not all confounding variables are controlled for in this research, the internal validity of this research decreases.

External validity refers to the extent to which findings of a research are applicable to other contexts (Brink, 1993). As mentioned in the paragraph above, because the case selection is determined based on availability instead of probability, issues may arise concerning the generalizability of outcomes. As such, the sampling method affects the external validity of the research. The generalizability of this research is therefore restricted to cases with comparable characteristics. However, it is important to note that the low external validity within this research is a direct consequence of the high internal validity. The reason is that a trade-off exists between the two concepts. The MSSD-I design ensures that confounding variables are controlled for, but as this requires cases that are as similar as possible, this narrows down the number of contexts to which the outcomes are applicable to. Vice versa, designing the research to be as generalizable as possible hinders the abilities to control for confounding variables (Bhandari, 2021b).

Reliability refers to the repeatability of the research. As such, it concerns how consistent the research methods are at measuring, and not the extent to which the conclusions derived from the research are valid (Middleton, 2020). As the European Commission's Progress Reports [and potentially the other reports] are available online, it is possible for anyone to repeat the research

process. Via consistent process tracing, these reports shall be analysed. In addition, various measures have been taken to decrease measurement error. For instance, the across-case analysis is complemented with within-case data on each Balkan state under examination. This allows for the investigation of possible explanations during the within-case stage, which was not possible at the across-case phase. In addition, the within-case stage enables further insights on the causal relationship (Toshkov, 2016). Both the reliability and validity increase as a result of this combination of within- and across-case evidence, due to reductions in the measurement errors.

5. Empirical Findings

This chapter communicates the empirical findings of this research. The first part of this chapter provides an answer to the academic debate whether or not Chinese FDI negatively influences the Europeanization in the Western Balkans. It subsequently provides an overview in which chapters and criteria of Europeanization this negative influence can be found and whether this negative influence can be categorized as high, medium, low, or none. The second part of this chapter presents the findings on whether identity convergence has taken place between the Western Balkan countries and the EU and/or China. This part of the research is aimed at finding an answer to whether the logic of appropriateness is better suited for explaining the Europeanization in this region, or whether this is the logic of consequentiality..

5.1 Influence of Chinese FDI on Europeanization

5.1.1 Introduction

This part of the empirical findings is aimed at providing an answer for hypothesis 1. This hypothesis inquires whether Western Balkan countries will still guarantee their Europeanization process if they receive higher levels of financial assistance from other entities. If the Western Balkan states do receive higher funds originating from (in the case of this research) China, this would affect the cost-benefit calculations that these states make regarding their policy alternatives. The reason is that these calculations either determine that EU membership will produce the most beneficial outcome, or that the Chinese FDI and participation within the BRI will have to most outstanding consequences. If the results of the cost-benefit analyses indicate the latter, they will put less effort into their Europeanization process because of changed policy priorities.

5.1.2 Results of analysis on progress reports

The outcomes of the analysis on the progress reports of each Western Balkan state are summarized within Table 9. Appendix 1 provides an overview of what each chapter of the *acquis communautaire* entails.

Table 9*Findings on the Negative Influences of Chinese FDI on each Chapter or Criterium of Europeanization*

	Albania	Bosnia and Herzegovina	North Macedonia	Serbia
PC: Parl	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence	Limited Influence
PC: Gov	No Influence	No Influence	Strong Influence	No Influence
PC: PA	No Influence	Limited Influence	Limited Influence	No Influence
PC: JS	No Influence	No Influence	Strong Influence	No Influence
PC: ACP	No Influence	No Influence	Strong Influence	Limited Influence
PC: HRPM	Strong Influence	No Influence	Limited Influence	Strong Influence
PC: RIIO	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence	Strong Influence
EC: FME	No Influence	No Influence	Strong Influence	No Influence
EC: CCCPMF	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence
Chapter 1	No Influence	Strong Influence	No Influence	No Influence
Chapter 2	Strong Influence	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence
Chapter 3	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence	Limited Influence
Chapter 4	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence	Limited Influence
Chapter 5	Strong Influence	No Influence	Strong Influence	Strong Influence
Chapter 6	No Influence	No Influence	Strong Influence	No Influence
Chapter 7	No Influence	Strong Influence	No Influence	Limited Influence
Chapter 8	No Influence	Strong Influence	Strong Influence	No Influence
Chapter 9	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence	Limited Influence
Chapter 10	No Influence	Strong Influence	Strong Influence	Limited Influence
Chapter 11	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence
Chapter 12	No Influence	No Influence	Strong Influence	Limited Influence
Chapter 13	Limited Influence	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence
Chapter 14	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence
Chapter 15	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence
Chapter 16	No Influence	Strong Influence	Limited Influence	No Influence
Chapter 17	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence
Chapter 18	No Influence	No Influence	Strong Influence	No Influence
Chapter 19	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence
Chapter 20	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence
Chapter 21	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence
Chapter 22	No Influence	Strong Influence	No Influence	Limited Influence
Chapter 23	No Influence	Strong Influence	Strong Influence	No Influence
Chapter 24	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence
Chapter 25	No Influence	No Influence	Strong Influence	No Influence
Chapter 26	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence	Strong Influence
Chapter 27	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence
Chapter 28	No Influence	Strong Influence	Strong Influence	No Influence
Chapter 29	No Influence	Strong Influence	No Influence	No Influence
Chapter 30	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence	No Influence
Chapter 31	No Influence	Limited Influence	No Influence	No Influence
Chapter 32	No Influence	No Influence	Limited Influence	No Influence
Chapter 33	No Influence	ND	No Influence	No Influence
Total Score	7	20	30	17

Note: PC = Political Criteria (Parl=Parliament; Gov= Government; PA= Public Administration Reform; JS= Judicial System; ACP= Anti-Corruption Policies; HRPM= Human Rights and Protection of Minorities; RIIO=Regional Integration and International Obligations). EC= Economic Criteria (FME= Existence of a Functioning Market Economy; CCCPMF= Capacity to Cope with Competitive Pressure of Market Forces).

To recap, Figure 3 and Table 2 show that Serbia receives the most FDI from China, followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia respectively. Albania did not receive Chinese FDI during the analysed time period.

5.1.2.1 General insights

The results indicate that although North Macedonia received a smaller amount of Chinese FDI than Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, its progress reports show more downward trends in Europeanization than the reports of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.. In general, this appears to indicate that there is no proportional relationship between Chinese FDI and Europeanization. The reason is that if there would be a proportional relationship, the most negative influence would be expected within Serbia, followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina. Proportional in this sense means that if Chinese FDI will increase with x%, Europeanization would be expected to decrease with x%. Instead, the results indicate that North Macedonia has experienced the most negative effects resulting from the Chinese FDI, although this country ranks third in the percentage of FDI inflows from China. Although Albania did not receive Chinese FDI within the period under analysis, there were still four criteria and chapters in which a downward trend was mentioned, which resulted in a score of 7 concerning its total negative influence. This suggests that there were other influences on the Europeanization of the Western Balkan countries apart from the Chinese FDI. This is elaborated on in Chapter 6. Nevertheless, the results indicate that Albania has been affected negatively the least of these four Western Balkan states. This is as expected, because this Western Balkan country did not receive any Chinese FDI over the period under analysis

Table 10 provides an overview of the percentages which demonstrate the negative effects of the Chinese FDI on the Europeanisation in each Western Balkan state. It must be noted that these numbers are based on qualitative data. Therefore the percentages should be treated as an indication of the size of the negative effects rather than an exact measurement.

Table 10*Negative Influences of Chinese FDI on Europeanization in Percentages*

Country	Negative effect of Chinese FDI on Europeanization (%)
Albania	8%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	24%
North Macedonia	36%
Serbia	20%

5.1.2.2 Political and economic criteria

Concerning the political and economic criteria for EU accession, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina had been affected negatively on one criterium, although the particular criterium differs. This criterium concerns the political criterium Human Rights and the Protection of Minorities for Albania and the political criterium Public Administration Reform for Bosnia and Herzegovina. A negative effect could be identified on Serbia in four out of nine economic and political criteria, whereas North Macedonia was negatively influenced on six out of nine criteria.

What is interesting about the economic criteria is that the results indicate that only one of the criteria in one country was affected negatively by Chinese FDI, namely the Existence of a Functioning Market Economy. Within the timeframe studied in this research, the negative effects of Chinese FDI on the economic criteria of accession for the Western Balkan states have been rather limited. Chinese FDI is thus considered to have a low negative influence on this particular criterium in general. The other economic criterium, the Capacity to Cope with Competitive Pressure and Market Forces within the Union, shows no indication of any negative influence of Chinese FDI in the Western Balkan countries within this policy domain. It is therefore concluded that Chinese FDI has no negative influence on this criterium

Concerning the political criteria, no particular pattern can be identified. There is not a single criterium that suggests a negative influence on all the three countries that did receive the FDI, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia. The political criteria of Public Administration Reform, Anti-Corruption Policies and Human Rights and Protection of Minorities show a negative effect at two countries. This leads to the conclusion that the Chinese FDI has a medium negative influence on these policy areas. The political criteria of Parliament, Government, Judicial System and Regional Issues and International Obligations each indicate

negative influence on one Western Balkan country. These results are too weak to state that these policy domains are consistently negatively affected by Chinese FDI, but it is also not possible to exclude the occurrence of this option. Therefore, Chinese FDI is considered to have a low influence on these criteria. There was no political criterium that indicated no negative influence on any Western Balkan state under analysis.

5.1.2.3 Chapters on EU accession

Concerning the chapters of the *acquis communautaire*, a negative effect could be identified for Albania 3 times, for Bosnia and Herzegovina 10 times, for North Macedonia 11 times and for Serbia 9 times. These result in a score of 5 for Albania, a score of 19 for Bosnia and Herzegovina, a score of 20 for North Macedonia, and a score of 11 for Serbia. Appendix 1 shows gives an overview of what each chapter entails. Not a single chapter demonstrated a negative influence on all the countries under analysis. Merely two chapters indicated a negative influence for three out of four Western Balkan nations. The findings suggests that for Chapter 5, on Public Procurement, a strong negative influence of Chinese FDI was found in Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia. It must be noted that for Albania, this cannot be attributed to the Chinese FDI, because this country did not receive the investments. Therefore, although it is still possible that this policy domain is negatively affected by Chinese FDI, it is not possible to fully attribute the influence to these investments. The other chapter concerns Chapter 10, on Information Society and Media. For this chapter, a strong negative influence was detected within Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia, a limited negative influence was found in Serbia, but no negative influence was found in Albania. This suggests that Chinese FDI has a high negatively influence on the pace of progress towards approximation to the *acquis* within this policy domain in the Western Balkan countries.

Chapters 7, 8, 12, 16, 22, 23 and 28 exhibit a negative influence in two countries. With the exception of Chapter 12, a strong negative influence has been detected in Bosnia and Herzegovina within all chapters. This indicates that, overall, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been affected more negatively in its Europeanization than the other Western Balkan states. Within chapter 7, 12 and 22, a negative influence has been observed within Serbia, although these are all of limited extent. Chapter 8, 12, 23 and 28 indicate a strong negative influence in North Macedonia, and Chapter 16 a limited negative influence in that country. As these chapters indicate a negative influence in two of the three countries that received Chinese FDI, this suggests a mild negative influence that can be attributed to the Chinese investments.

The FDI from China is considered to have a low influence on Chapters 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 18, 25, 26, 29, 31 and 33. Within these chapters, the negative influence of Chinese FDI on Europeanization has been detected for just one country. Moreover, six of these eleven chapters indicate limited negative influence. Although this does not exclude the possibility of negative influence resulting from Chinese FDI, it is not correct to assume that Chinese FDI consistently affects these domains of the *acquis communautaire* in a negative way. The Chinese FDI is therefore considered to have a low influence on Europeanization within these chapters.

Chapters 11, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 24, 27, 30 and 33 do not indicate any negative influence by Chinese FDI on any of the analysed Western Balkan states. The results of Chapters 2 and 13 suggest that progress was negatively influenced within only Albania, but due to the lack of Chinese FDI within this country, this cannot be attributed to these FDI inflows. Therefore, Chinese FDI is considered to have no negative influence on the Europeanization in these chapters.

5.1.2.4 Conclusion on the negative influence of Chinese FDI on Europeanization

Chinese FDI has negatively affected the Europeanization within Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia. That is, because there is a considerable difference between the amount of negative influence identified in the progress reports of Albania in relation to the other countries. The research design should ensure that the differences in progress can be attributed to receiving the Chinese FDI. However, as mentioned, in the case of Albania the four indicators of negative influence, with a total influence-score of 7, show that there are additional confounding variables other than the ones controlled for within the MSSD-I research design. Therefore, it cannot be guaranteed that all the negative influence detected in the progress reports of Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia can be attributed to the Chinese FDI. Nevertheless, by comparing the outcomes of the countries, it is possible to give an indication of the likeliness that the change in progress can be attributed to the Chinese FDI.

Considering that only Chapter 10 out of all criteria and chapters can be fully attributed to Chinese FDI suggests that the negative influence of Chinese FDI on Europeanization has a less than proportional nature. In other words, there would have been more chapters and criteria that would indicate a negative influence in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in North Macedonia and in Serbia. There seem to be no explicit patterns in the results of the analysis on the progress

reports. However, it may be so that Chinese FDI negatively affects the Western Balkan countries in varying ways, which might result in asymmetric effects. Whether this is the case remains to be investigated in future inquiries. Table 11 summarizes the domains in which Chinese FDI is likely to negatively affect each policy area of Europeanization.

Table 11
The Strength of the Impact of Chinese FDI on Criteria or Chapters of Europeanization

Impact Chinese FDI	Criterion or Chapter
High negative influence	Chapter 10
Medium negative influence	Political criteria: PA, ACP, HRPM Chapters 5, 7, 8, 12, 16, 22, 23 and 18
Low negative influence	Political criteria: Parl, Gov, JS, RIIO Economic criterium: FME Chapters 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 18, 25,, 26, 29, 31 and 33
No negative influence	Economic criterium: CCCPMF Chapters 2, 11, 13. 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 24, 27, 30 and 33

Note: PC = Political Criteria (Parl=Parliament; Gov= Government; PA= Public Administration Reform; JS= Judicial System; ACP= Anti-Corruption Policies; HRPM= Human Rights and Protection of Minorities; RIIO=Regional Integration and International Obligations). EC= Economic Criteria (FME= Existence of a Functioning Market Economy; CCCPMF= Capacity to Cope with Competitive Pressure of Market Forces).

5.2 Determining the prevalent logic of action in Europeanization

The second hypothesis aims to discover whether the identities of the cases under investigation are considered as conforming the EU's. According to the logic of appropriateness, this matters for whether the Chinese FDI will have any effect on the EU's Europeanization efforts: if a country feels that their identity is strongly linked with that of the EU, it doesn't matter how high or low the Chinese FDI is, they will ensure their Europeanization because of their intrinsic motivation to belong to the EU. They are persuaded by the appropriateness of those rules and want to change their institutional and legislative frameworks according to those rules. In contrast, if a country does not consider their identity as strongly linked to that of the EU, the amount of Chinese FDI is more likely to have a negative effect on the Europeanization within that country, because that country has a deficiency of intrinsic motivation to belong to the EU.

The coding tables of the analysis on each Balkan country are listed in Appendix 2

5.2.1 Albania

5.2.1.1 *Albania's relations with the EU*

According to the research by the 'Open Society Foundation for Albania' (2014), 66% of Albanians perceive their identity as not only Albanian, but also European – which is the highest percentage on the continent. A mere 25% regard themselves as possessing merely the Albanian identity and only 6.5% perceive accession to the EU as a danger to the preservation of Albania's national identity. These numbers can according to Rakipi & Gjodede (2014) be explained by the country's history:

“For Albania, the European Union signifies more than a union of prosperous states, whereby accession would be economically beneficial. Coming from a troubles communist and authoritarian past, being one of the most isolated countries in the world for more than 45 years, the EU integration is seen as the final completing step of transition for the country and its people. During the first anti-communist protests at the beginning of the 90's the recurring call of the younger generation was: “We want Albania like the rest of Europe”. Thus, the EU in the mind of many Albanian citizens represents a set of values and norms that have in its backbone the principles of democracy, freedom and respect for human rights.” (Rakipi & Gjodede, 2014: p. 8).

This citation indicates the perceived identity convergence of Albanians towards the EU. Firstly, it points out that Albanians do not want to become part of the European Union merely because of the financial advantages that are accompanied with EU membership. It is because of their intrinsic mutual values and sense of belonging that they want to join the Union. Secondly, the plea from the anti-communist protests indicates the desire of resonating Albania with the EU. The protests were anti-communist and with “the rest of Europe” (p.8) they mean the non-communist Western part of Europe. As such, the protesters seem to perceive some righteousness in the values of non-communist Europe, and by wishing for reconstructing Albania as Europe, they seem to suggest perceived identity convergence between Albania and Europe. Third, this suggestion is strengthened by the subsequent sentence, which indicates that Albanians acknowledge three of the core values of the European Union (European Union, n.d.; Rakipi & Gjodede, 2014).

The following citation further underlines the strong feelings of identity convergence with Europe as perceived by Albanians: “The communist past is often considered as a gap in time and the European integration processes are often considered a return to origin, to the European family, where we rightly belong. These attempt to wipe out a part of our history have also contributed to Albanians aspirations for welfare, democracy, respect for human rights and other values and norms which are fanatically reserved by the European Union, which also contributes to a sense of belonging.” (Rakipi & Gjodede, 2014: p. 38). This excerpt suggests that Albanians perceive EU membership as restoration of their own values and a seem to hold a sense of comradeship towards the EU due to mutual acknowledgement of similar norms and outlooks of life. Apart from these two citation, 19 more citations could be identified in which Albanians perceived their identity as converged with that of Europe (Open Society Foundation for Albania, 2014; Rakipi & Gjodede, 2014). In addition, 36 indications have been encountered in which Albanians expressed their judgements towards the EU as righteous. Furthermore, 13 expressions of norms diffusion with the EU could be identified (Open Society Foundation for Albania, 2014; Rakipi & Gjodede, 2014). Moreover, Albanians tend to be well informed in general about the European Union, although some shortcomings exist. More specifically, Albanians tend to have more knowledge on the EU’s values and rights than on the institutional structures of the Union. Albania holds the highest percentage in all of Europe concerning the amount of inhabitants that declare to be informed of the rights of EU citizens (Open Society Foundation for Albania, 2014). Contrastingly, when asked about the institutional and government structures, Albania ranks below the European average. For instance, only 43% of Albanian citizens was informed of the non-membership of Switzerland, and a mere 50% of Albanians indicate their knowledge of the unequal number of Members of the European Parliament per member state (Open Society Foundation for Albania, 2014). Although these knowledge gaps exist within the institutional and governmental frameworks of the EU, when researching identity convergence between Albania and Europe, this is not considered as a hindrance. After all, Albanians are generally well informed of the EU’s norms and rights, and wish to gain access to the EU based on these shared beliefs and principles.

What further strengthens the idea of identity convergence between Albania and the European Union is the small number in which funds and/or financial assistance were mentioned as part of benefits to EU accession in relation to the indicators that point towards shared identity. The majority of Albanians do acknowledge their beliefs that accession to the EU shall bring about economic prosperity and improvement of employment standards such as a professional

development opportunities, better working conditions or better salaries (Open Society Foundation for Albania, 2014). Nevertheless, the reports seem to suggest that although EU membership shall be accompanied with financial benefits, this main reason for Albania's desire for accession concerns normative considerations of perceived righteousness of the Union's values and norms. As such, Rakipi & Gjodede (2014) declare that the European Union "should be aware of the country's enthusiasm regarding accession to the club and take note of the overwhelming support the European values and norms have among the citizens of a country like Albania" (p.28).

5.2.1.2 Albania's relations with China

It is interesting to compare these findings to the relationship between Albania and China. The reports suggest that this relationship is primarily a financial relationship, in which the two countries act as business partners rather than like-minded entities. The findings points towards the financial benefits of cooperating with China 40 times. The reports state that "the general perception of China's BRI is a framework of economic mutual cooperation" (Sylaj, 2020; p. 10) and that "the Albanian media has framed the BRI as a fruitful method of bilateral economic cooperation" (Sylaj, 2020; p. 12). Furthermore, the relationship between Albania and China is portrayed as a win-win collaboration various times. The reports describe various projects in Albania that are funded by China or discuss their trade relations, although these date mostly from after 2017 – outside the scope of the timeframe in this research.

It must be noted however that a diffusion of norms between Albania and China is detected 18 times throughout the various documents. This is because some level of cultural cooperation exists between the two nations. After all, the Sino-Albanian relations go back to the era before the Cold War (Musabelliu, 2020). Sylaj (2020) finds that the media in Albania pay attention to the cultural cooperation between both countries, although to a lesser extent than the economic elements of their relations. The majority of times that diffusion of norms was identified, this did not point towards identity convergence. Furthermore, although norm diffusion was identified in for instance boosting tourism between the two countries or establishing a China-CEEC Youth Development Centre, these identifications were often from after 2017 or were considered as a negative development by Albanians. For example, not only the Albanian flag is waving at Tirana Airport, but also the Chinese flag. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Tritan Shehu stated:

“The view of Tirana’s airport entrance is a clear intent of trying to go towards East. In every sovereign country, at the airports there are present only national flags, or in the case of EU countries, national and EU flag. At the entrance of Tirana Airport, instead of the national flag we have the Chinese flag. We are a candidate member country, and in the lack of own dignity, orientation or as consequence of obscure deals, the Socialist Government (Rilindja) is introducing at the gate of Albania a Chinese flag, as once upon a time. This is intolerable, concessions or not...a clear political signal and a repeated contradiction with our national orientation towards Europe and the West. It is pure arrogance and an affront to our strategic partners, the US and the EU. Albanians should not allow this scandalous presentation” (Musabelliu, 2019; p.3).

An abundant amount of newspapers published articles on this statement, which indicates that his viewpoints might be shared along a broader audience. Furthermore, the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs did neither published an official counterstatement, nor publicly condemned the allegations (Musabelliu, 2019). Furthermore, Albanian PM Sali Berisha argued in 2012 that Chinese language courses should be installed immediately in the Albanian educational system. However, this led to a decrease in popular support for the PM and it is argued by Musabelliu (2019) that it ultimately resulted in him losing the next elections. In conclusion, although some level of cultural relations between Albania and China exists, the findings do not indicate perceived identity convergence by Albanian citizens. In fact, the only statement made within all documents that indicated towards identity convergence between China and Albania was made by a diplomat that formerly worked as Ambassador to Beijing. As such, he leaves room for scrutinization concerning his objectivity on the matter.

5.2.1.3 The prevailing logic in Albania’s relations

Table 12
Number of Codes On Both Logics of Action in Albania

	Logic of consequentiality	Logic of appropriateness
Relations with EU	44	102
Relations with China	52	21

Table 12 provides an overview of the total amount of codes that point towards the logic of consequentiality and the logic of appropriateness in the documents on both the EU and China. This table shows that the amount of codes within the relations between Albania and the EU that

point towards the logic of appropriateness is considerably higher than those that point towards the logic of consequentiality. This suggests that the logic of appropriateness prevails within the relations between Albania and the European Union. Furthermore, the documents on these relations have indicated that a strong level of identity convergence is perceived by Albanian citizens, which has resulted in an intrinsic motivation of Albania to belong to the EU, to implement EU regulations and to proceed in its Europeanization process.

On the relations between Albania and China, the difference between the amount of codes is not as great. Nevertheless, they do suggest an overhand of the logic of consequentiality. This is supported by what the documents indicate. The relations between China and Albania are primarily fuelled by financial gains, while some of the disadvantages accompanied with the Chinese cooperation are shared quite broadly among Albanian citizens.

5.2.2 Bosnia and Herzegovina

5.2.2.1 Bosnia and Herzegovina's relations with the EU

Inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina mainly possess positive sentiments towards EU accession. However, these positive notions appear to be fuelled by the expected financial and institutional benefits of acquiring EU membership, rather than an intrinsic motivation to belong to a like-minded group of states. The documents suggest that the majority of Bosnians are in favour of joining the EU because of the advantages accompanied with EU membership (United Nations Development Programme, 2017). Bosnians believe that “joining would change things for the better” (United Nations Resident Coordinator’s Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2015; p.79) and that “it is more important for BiH to have a good constitutional organization than to be member of the EU” (United Nations Resident Coordinator’s Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2015; p.61). They expect that improvements shall take place in primarily better living and employment standards, an improved institutional framework and increased economic development (United Nations Development Programme, 2017). According to the respondents of United Nations Development Programme’s (2017) study, the core values of Bosnia and Herzegovina are: “honesty, respect, respect for others, morals, tolerance, trust, and humanity” (p.107-108). This quotation concerns one of the three times where identity convergence between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EU could be identified, because there is some overlap with the core values of the European Union. The other two identifications concerned core values of the EU which Bosnians expected to obtain after EU accession (United Nations Development Programme, 2017). However, these three indicators are not considered as convincing for the

logic of appropriateness to prevail, because the values do not completely overlap and because it concerns expected benefits of EU accession rather than intrinsic desires of internalizing these values. Also, identity convergence could only be identified three times in total. Contrastingly, throughout the documents, 16 indicators of funds and/or financial assistance from the EU could be identified. In addition, reforms that were effectuated merely because of the conditionality mechanism of the EU could be identified 26 times. One respondent of the United Nations Development Programme's (2017) research states that the Reform Agenda of Bosnia and Herzegovina "is also a set of tasks that should be completed to secure the assistance from EU and IMF" (p.97). This statement suggests that the reforms to improve the institutional framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina should not be carried out because these are the right modes of governance, but because it would result in aid from the EU. These material motives for EU accession do not point towards adherence of the logic of appropriateness between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union.

Further findings against the prevalence of the logic of appropriateness relates to the difference in quantity of perceived advantages and disadvantages of EU membership. The main advantages of EU accession concern improved employment opportunities, the free movement of people, goods and services, advanced education and receiving EU funds (United Nations Development Programme, 2017). These were categorized under the code 'Perceived Righteousness EU', which was detected 13 times. However, as this code entailed more than just membership advantages, the actual amount of times that the advantages of EU accession were mentioned was twice. Contrastingly, 'Disadvantages of EU Membership', which only concerns disadvantages of accession, was identified 18 times. The indicated disadvantages of EU membership regard the increased dependency of Bosnia and Herzegovina on more advanced member states, the enhanced chances of economic exploitation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the perceived threat to Bosnia's national identity (which further suggests a lack of identity convergence), an inability of local Bosnian enterprises to compete with European enterprises, natural resource exploitation, a depletion of sovereignty and the change of valuta accompanied with losing control of monetary policies (United Nations Development Programme, 2017; United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2015). Thus, inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina tend to be cautious rather than excited when it comes to accession to the EU.

Finally, an interesting discovery within the documents was that a discrepancy could be identified among the different ethnic groups within the country. The inhabitants of the BiH Federation-region have the highest total support for EU membership, with 53.3% in favour and 4.9% that shows no support at all. In contrast, citizens of the Brčko District are for 33.3% in favour, and for 13.3% against EU accession. The residents of Republika Srpska indicate a 19.6% level of support and an 18.0% level of opposition (United Nations Development Programme, 2017). Furthermore, Bosnian Serbs tend to express more negative remarks on the conditions set by the EU than Bosnian Croats and Bosniaks (United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2015). Within the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina's (2015) study, an explanation is provided for this discrepancy among ethnic groups: "One of the distinctive characteristics of BiH is its national, ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. Due to many differences, people often feel as members of certain groups that are different and divided from other groups – municipal, ethnic, national, regional, religious or other. Research has shown so far that, probably for this reason, many people do not share the joint feeling of a BiH identity, but rather feel proud to be the citizens of their town or region, or members of their ethnic or religious groups" (p.45). The absence of an overarching Bosnian identity complicates its convergence with any other identity. Unsurprisingly, no overall identity convergence with the European Union could be identified based on the analysed documents. The logic of consequentiality seems to be more prevalent within the explanation of the Europeanization in Bosnia and Herzegovina than in the logic of appropriateness.

5.2.2.2 Bosnia and Herzegovina's relations with China

Bosnians in general perceive China as a friendly state that has no intentions of meddling into Bosnia and Herzegovina's domestic affairs (Stevic, 2020). However, it is noteworthy to mention that there again seems to be a discrepancy between different ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina concerning their stance on Chinese partnerships. Inhabitants of the Bosnian region Republika Srpska primarily perceive cooperation with China as a means of obtaining an improved international positioning, whereas inhabitants of the BiH Federation-region mainly intend to increase their FDI by means of Chinese collaboration (Stevic, 2020). Four of the five large-scale construction projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina financed with Chinese FDI are located in the Republika Srpska (Stopić, 2020). This region has also enjoyed long-term investments in face-to-face relations and education, and as such, a higher level of cultural cooperation among the inhabitants of Republika Srpska with China could be identified.

Consequently, their knowledge on Chinese culture, economy, politics and laws resulted in higher scores than that of the citizens of BiH Federation (Stopić, 2020). This suggests that the prevalence of the logic of appropriateness among Bosnians from Republika Srpska is higher than that of citizens from the BiH Federation. Nevertheless, as merely two out of three codes of perceived identity convergence with China in the analysed documents relate to the Republika Srpska, it is supposed that actual convergence of identity has not taken place.

A variety of means through which China aims to promote its culture could be identified 47 times, including the establishment of Confucius institutes to popularize Mandarin and Chinese culture, bilateral (diplomatic) meetings, tourism, China-promoting CSOs, or Chinese New Year festivities within Bosnia and Herzegovina (Stevic, 2020; Hirkić, 2020; Stopić, 2020; Bakota, 2019). As Stevic (2020) concludes: “CI’s [Confucius Institutes] serve and have a role in the Chinese public diplomacy by promoting the image of China as the traditional values country” (Stevic, 2020; p.20) and as such “China gets the opportunity to promote not only language and culture but to tell its side of the story and introduce its vision which refers to Chinese development but global order too” (Stevic, 2020; p.21). Nevertheless, the effects of the soft power transmissions remain humble in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are two Confucius Institutes throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, visited by approximately 1 out of 10 respondents of Hirkić’s (2020) study, and most Bosnians do not consider Chinese as important as other European languages for both personal and professional life (Hirkić, 2020). In fact, Stevic (2020) points out that there is a “need for extended knowledge in Asian studies and understanding of language and culture of China [...] which BiH significantly lacked” (p.9). Although these effects presently remain at a moderate level, Bosnians indicate that they would embrace an expansion of Chinese initiatives in the near future (Hirkić, 2020). Yet, these efforts to diffuse Chinese norms into Bosnia and Herzegovina have not resulted in perceived identity convergence by Bosnians.

Various Chinese-funded construction projects in the infrastructure and energy sector have been mentioned throughout the documents. Hirkić (2020) mentions the inadequacy of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s infrastructural system as well as the flexibility of Chinese investment contracts as causes for increased FDI inflow. A majority of 59,1% of inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina are in favour of such construction projects, in contrast to 38,2% of citizens opposing such investments (Hirkić, 2020). In spite of the greater number of proponents, the document analysis suggests that this is not accompanied with perceived identity convergence

or a prevalence of the logic of appropriateness. The reason is that throughout the documents on the relationship between Bosnia and Herzegovina and China, it was mentioned 20 times that the Balkan country received material benefits in funds and/or financial assistance. As there are only three indications that identity convergence with China has occurred, of which two concern the Republika Srpska and one concerns CSOs promoting China in Bosnia and Herzegovina, this suggests that the relationship between Bosnia and Herzegovina and China is mainly of economic nature.

5.2.2.3 The prevailing logic in Bosnia and Herzegovina's relations

Table 13
Number of Codes On Both Logics of Action in Bosnia and Herzegovina

	Logic of consequentiality	Logic of appropriateness
Relations with EU	87	37
Relations with China	32	61

Table 13 provides an overview of the total amount of codes that point towards the logic of consequentiality and the logic of appropriateness in the documents on both the EU and China. However, it must be noted that the total amount of codes that point towards the logic of appropriateness consists of 47 codes of norms diffusion mechanisms by China in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This portrays a distorted picture, because further analysis on these codes on norm diffusion show that this often concerns the same kinds of norm diffusion mechanisms. This is particular due to the 31 codes within the article of Bakota (2019), who discusses the festivities of the 70th anniversary of the Republic of China within Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Within the relations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EU, the logic of consequentiality seems to prevail. Table 13 indicates a substantially larger of codes that point towards this logic, and this view appears to be supported by the contents of the documents. The majority of Bosnians seem to perceive EU membership as financially and institutionally beneficial, although a substantial amount of disadvantages and concerns are discussed. There appears to be a difference between the opinions of varying ethnic groups within Bosnia and Herzegovina, but although some groups tend to have more positive views on the EU, no identity convergence could be detected for either of those groups.

Concerning the relations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and China, even though China is actively promoting its culture within Bosnia and Herzegovina, the general population tends to not perceive its identity as converged with that of China. As mentioned, although Table 13 appears to indicate that the logic of appropriateness is prevalent, this view is not supported by the contents of the analysed reports. Although a potential identity convergence tends to be higher within certain ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina, this has not resulted in the prevalence of the logic of appropriateness. The relationship instead appears to be primarily of economic nature. Nevertheless, Table 13 shows that the codes indicating a more dominant logic of consequentiality are not present to a considerably more extent. This indicates that neither logic of action is prevalent in explaining the relations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and China.

5.2.3 North Macedonia

5.2.3.1 *North Macedonia's relations with the EU*

The documents under analysis indicate that the main motivations of North Macedonian citizens to join the European Union are related to the benefits that are accompanied with accession. No group within North Macedonia could be identified that fully opposes EU integration. Nonetheless, the proponents are mainly driven by external benefits rather than internal considerations (Dimovska, 2016; Petrovski, Marichiki, Nikolovski & Babunski, 2016). The largest bulk of respondents signify that EU accession is expected to result in improvements in the domains of personal freedom, law obedience and democratic principles. The second largest motivation for EU accession is the anticipated increase in economic wealth and monetary opportunities. Other motives for EU membership concern expected higher levels of domestic societal stability, increased employee mobility, and enhanced living standards (Dimovska, 2016). An intrinsic desire of joining a culturally similar collection of states was not mentioned (Dimovska, 2016; Petrovski et al., 2016). Instead, the funds and financial benefits of EU membership could be identified 8 times. Within certain groups in North Macedonia, the “EU is seen as a source of opportunities and a possibility for establishing and maintaining liberal market economy” (Dimovska, 2016; p.12). Although the majority of North Macedonians considers EU accession as favourable, this number declined by one third in the period from 2007 to 2016 (Petrovski et al., 2016). According to Dimovska (2016), this downward trend can be attributed to a combination of backsliding of the enlargement process, domestic issues and the constitutional-name dispute with Greece.

Reforms effectuated due to the EU's conditionality principle could be identified 7 times. Dimovska (2016) reports that Macedonian citizens would vote in proposition of EU membership because of specific reforms that would have to be implemented. For 29%, the highest number, this concerned diminished unemployment rates. For 26% , this was enhanced stability and security. For another 26%, this concerned advancements within the domain of democracy (Dimovska, 2016). Furthermore, 60% of Macedonians would support EU membership only when their constitutional name, the Republic of Macedonia, would be preserved, whereas a mere 25% would support EU membership without that condition (Dimovska, 2016). Ultimately, the constitutional name was modified to North Macedonia, which opened more possibilities for accession negotiations (Grammatikakis, 2020). Among other disadvantages identified, worsened living standards, jeopardization of the Macedonian economy, an enhanced dependency on Brussels and the loss of Macedonia's national identity formed the most important ones. Especially this last mentioned disadvantage is of importance for the question whether Macedonians perceive their identity as converged with that of Europe. At least 13% of citizens fear identity loss as a result of EU accession (Dimovska, 2016), and thus do not perceive converged identities. Furthermore, merely 2% of Macedonians wish to belong to the "European family of states" (Dimovska, 2016; p.7), indicating an intrinsic connection to the Union. And on the question whether the "EU is the best alternative" or "Macedonia should find its own model of development outside the EU" (Petrovski et al., 2016; p.13), a majority preferred the latter. Petrovski et al. (2016) conclude that "generally speaking, in spite of negative assessments about the EU in terms of national and moral issues, the support for EU membership remains high" (p.15), which was based on external motivations rather than an internal sense of belonging. As this section has pointed out, the support of North Macedonians seems not to be based on an intrinsic feeling of identity convergence. Therefore, the logic of appropriateness is not considered to be prevalent.

Within North Macedonia, there again appears to be a discrepancy within ethnical groups' opinions. The majority of ethnic Albanians perceive EU accession as Macedonia's best alternative, whereas the majority of ethnic Macedonians believe the country should aim for another development model outside of the European Union (Dimovska, 2016). Ethnic Albanians also hold more critical positions towards the pace of North Macedonia's accession process (Dimovska, 2016).

5.2.3.2 North Macedonia's relations with China

Analysis of the documents on the relationship between North Macedonia and China suggests that there is also no perceived identity convergence with China according to Macedonians. Although occurrences of norm diffusion could be identified 23 times, it appears that the groups within society where these produced moderately successful results primarily concern the elite. Instances of such norm diffusion include official appointments between the presidents of North Macedonia and China, or summits of the CESEE and CIIE (Gjorgjioska & Vangeli, 2017; Vangeli, 2018a; Adela, 2020). This has resulted in consistent positivity regarding China by a handful of so-called insiders, including certain Macedonian public servants, academia and media characters (Gjorgjioska & Vangeli, 2017; Vangeli, 2018b). However, Vangeli (2018a) points out that North Macedonia does not seem exceptionally ambitious or pro-active concerning Chinese cooperation. Regarding the CIIE cooperation, not a single Macedonian governmental ministry or agency was able to point towards the responsible institution for the national delegation within the CIIE summit, while the responsible institution itself had missed the application deadline for participation (Vangeli, 2018a). Although advocates of increased Chinese collaboration do exist at the elite level, such beliefs are virtually non-existent at the civilian-level. Macedonian citizens feel that they must choose between either EU cooperation or Chinese cooperation, which disadvantages China (Gjorgjioska & Vangeli, 2017). China's investments into North Macedonia's infrastructure are waived as "AliExpress highways" (Gjorgjioska & Vangeli, 2017; p.13) and there is minimal interaction between Macedonian and Chinese citizens due to the remarkably low amount of Chinese migrants in Macedonia (Vangeli, 2018b). A citation from Gjorgjioska and Vangeli (2017) demonstrates the non-existence of identity convergence between the two countries: "The average Macedonian citizens have vague out-dated impressions of China, as a distant, backwards society of the Cold War era. China is often associated with cheap, low quality exports, even though advanced Chinese technological brands like Huawei or Xiaomi had made their way to Macedonian consumers. Racial stereotypes and prejudice also play a role, which requires serious engagement in future empirical research" (Gjorgjioska & Vangeli, 2017;p.6). Although recent efforts aim at bridging the cultural distance, such as the establishment of a Confucius Institute, bilateral promotion of tourism and encouragement of entrepreneurial cooperation, these efforts have not yet resulted in any meaningful outcomes (Gjorgjioska & Vangeli, 2017; Vangeli, 2018b). This shortage of interest in China is reinforced by the media, which rarely reports on Sino-Macedonian collaborations (Vangeli, 2018a; Vangeli, 2018b). All in all, although some level of appreciation exists at the elite-level, no indications of identity convergence could be identified at the civilian-

level. As this level is most important for the inquiry for identity convergence, it is concluded that the phenomenon is absent within the Sino-Macedonian relationship. Therefore, the logic of appropriateness is not considered to be prevalent in these relations.

What further strengthens this the idea that the logic of appropriateness is not prevalent in explaining the relations between North Macedonia and China are the 28 indications of funds and financial assistance from China. This extensive amount as well as its contents suggest a financial relationship between the two nations. Not only does the Chinese president announce that the collaborations between North Macedonia and China uphold “the principles of mutually beneficial cooperation and mutual opening up” (Vangeli, 2018a; p.1), the activities that constitute the Sino-Macedonian relationship are predominantly of entrepreneurial nature. They include amongst others the establishment of investment platforms, business events, and promotion of interstate enterprise relations (Vangeli, 2018b). Furthermore, North Macedonia’s president stated at an BRI Conference that: “Since the EU is not yet supporting great infrastructure projects we have decided for Chinese loans on better terms from the initiative 16+1 in order to build a large part of Corridor 8” (Gjorgjioska & Vangeli , 2017p. 10). Thus, the relationship between China and Macedonia should be regarded as one of economic nature, which suggests a predominance of the logic of consequentiality.

That is not to say that this cooperation is by definition mutually advantageous. The documents indicate that North Macedonia is cautious when it comes to the investments, as they implemented debt-conscious protocols that require thorough scrutinization of loans before they are accepted, are aware of potential ‘divide and conquer’ strategies, and are informed by various EU agencies that cooperation with China might result in reinforced corruption as well as increased political and normative Chinese influence (Gjorgjioska & Vangeli , 2017). These lower levels of trust further suggest no prevalent logic of appropriateness, but rather a cautious cost-benefit analysis conforming the logic of consequentiality. Nevertheless, the overall attitude of North Macedonia towards China is of not of negative nature, and various endeavours are realized that ensure that the Sino-Macedonian relations are not conflicting with the EU’s models of development (Gjorgjioska & Vangeli , 2017). Moreover, the developments in the relationship between North Macedonia and China have been moderately on hold in recent years, as the Macedonian government was preoccupied with the country’s accession to the EU and NATO (Vangeli, 2018a).

5.2.3.3 *The prevailing logics in North Macedonia's relations*

Table 14

Number of Codes On Both Logics of Action in North Macedonia

	Logic of consequentiality	Logic of appropriateness
Relations with EU	41	41
Relations with China	67	32

Table 14 provides an overview of the total amount of codes that point towards the logic of consequentiality and the logic of appropriateness in the documents on both the EU and China. Concerning the relations between North Macedonia and the EU, this table indicates the same amount of codes for both logics of action. North Macedonians foresee the material benefits of EU accession, and they also perceive the EU as righteous. It is concluded that both logics are of importance to explain the Europeanization process within the Western Balkans. Therefore, neither logic of action is prevalent over the other in explaining the relationship between North Macedonia and the EU.

North Macedonia's relationship with China appears to be primarily of economic nature. At the civilian-level, no indications could be identified that suggest identity convergence with China. North Macedonian citizens have outdated, low levels of knowledge on China and initiatives within the Sino-Macedonian relations are primarily aimed at financial cooperation. This suggests a prevalence of the logic of consequentiality to explain their relations. This view is supported by Table 14, which indicates a higher total of codes for the logic of consequentiality than for the logic of appropriateness. Therefore, the logic of consequentiality appears to be prevalent in explaining the relationship between North Macedonia and China.

5.2.4 Serbia

5.2.4.1 *Serbia's relations with the EU*

The desire of Serbia to join the EU seems to primarily be motivated on material gains, which suggests a prevalence of the logic of consequentiality. When asked whether they would currently vote in favour of EU accession, 48% would support membership and 28% would vote in opposition (Serbian European Integration Office of Republic of Serbia Government, 2015). Furthermore, on the questions whether the reforms required for EU accession as well as resolving the conflict between Belgrade and Pristina should be carried out regardless of the EU,

the majority of Serbs supported these developments “in order to create a better Serbia for ourselves” (Serbian European Integration Office of Republic of Serbia Government, 2015; p.16). These statements seem to suggest reforms should be executed not because of the EU’s conditionality, but because of a perceived righteousness of those reforms. Nevertheless, the findings derived from the analysis do not support this suggestion of identity convergence. When asked what the EU means to Serbs personally, the majority of reasons indicate material benefits of accession, whereas two reasons indicate non-identity convergence. These concern “Cumbersome bureaucratic apparatus, waste of time and money” and “Risk of losing our cultural identity”, each obtaining 11% of the total votes (Serbian European Integration Office of Republic of Serbia Government, 2015; p.11). Furthermore, Stojadinović and Rašković Talović (2018) conclude that “when it comes to military and political choice, the results of the research showed that the Serbian citizens prefer the Euroasian Economic Union to the EU. However, when it comes to economy, the citizens of Serbia’s opinions are divided – both Euroasian and European integrations are given equal support” (p.7). The EU is not preferred when it comes to Serbia’s political choice, and as politics often projects the values of a nation at least to a certain extent, this indicates that Serbia does not perceive its identity as converged with the EU.

Although a couple years ago, more Serbs were in favour of EU membership, over time the distribution between positive and negative opinions became more evenly distributed (Serbian European Integration Office of Republic of Serbia Government, 2015). In addition, when asked about foreign influence on Serbia, Serbian citizens regarded the influence of China, Russia and Germany as positive, but the that of the US and EU as predominantly negative (Jeremić, 2017). These negative views of the EU on the country are fuelled by certain fears and disadvantages as perceived by Serbs. These range from fears that EU membership will only result in more problems, that the EU will collapse, and that membership will result in blackmail and slavery, to rules that are too strict and the loss of national identity and language (Serbian European Integration Office of Republic of Serbia Government, 2015; 2016). Furthermore, Serbs are annoyed by the EU’s constant conditioning and feel they made more concessions to the European Union than vice versa (Serbian European Integration Office of Republic of Serbia Government, 2015; Jojić, 2017). All this resulted in a change of course for Serbia: “Instead of blind obedience towards the European Union, Serbia is, today, open for a cooperation with all parts of the world. It is in some way a message to the EU that alternatives exist for Serbia, tired of the multi-year integration process, without improvements or certainty regarding the date of

access to the Union” (Jojić, 2017; p.8). This citation further suggests no identity convergence, because Serbia is looking for alternatives for the EU because of the duration of the accession process, which it would not do if Serbians felt their identity was intrinsically connected with that of Europe. It appears that the logic of appropriateness is thus not the most suitable for explaining Serbia’s Europeanization.

Statements on non-identity convergence were mentioned 21 times in total. Respondents mentioned their fear for national identity loss various times (Serbian European Integration Office of Republic of Serbia Government, 2015; 2016). Furthermore, when asked which country’s institutional model Serbs would prefer, the majority indicated Switzerland, which is officially no EU member state (Serbian European Integration Office of Republic of Serbia Government, 2015). Moreover, 36% of Serbs signalled that the foreign policy of the country should rely firstly on China, 35% indicated this should be Russia, whereas the EU only obtained 27% of the votes (Jeremić, 2017). All in all, although Serbia seems to recognize that accession to the EU can be beneficial, there seem to be large groups in Serbian society that oppose EU membership at least to a certain extent. The benefits concern financial gains as well as improved living standards and institutional reforms (Serbian European Integration Office of Republic of Serbia Government, 2015). However, there were no indications that Serbians perceive their identity as converged with the European identity.

5.2.4.2 Serbia’s relations with China

The relationship between Serbia and China appears to be profound. The duration of the Sino-Serbian relations is long and their ties are relatively strong. More specifically, their connection started in 1955 with the formal establishment of diplomatic ties and continued throughout the Cold War era and the subsequent time period (Stojadinović & Rašković Talović, 2018). Since 1999, the Chinese are portrayed within Serbia as merchants. Today, they are still perceived as such by Serbian inhabitants and this perspective is reinforced by the high availability of Chinese stores, (fast food) restaurants and even shopping malls (Petrović, 2018). The funds and financial assistance that Serbia obtains as a result of its cooperation with China could be identified 97 times. This large number suggests strong economic relations between the two and also a prevalence of the logic of consequentiality. However, this does not mean that the relationship is restricted to merely economic benefits.

The strength of the relations between China and Serbia is noticeable in their mutual support of norms. Varying methods of norms diffusion by China within Serbia could be identified 54 times throughout the documents under analysis. These include elite summits such as the CEEC 16+1 cooperation between China and the Central and Eastern European countries, bilateral meetings and mutual visitations of presidents into the other's capital. They also include norm diffusion approaches aimed at lower levels of society, such as the establishment of Confucius Institutes in Serbia and a Serbian culture centre in Beijing, the promotion of exchanges in amongst others the domains of education, culture, media, and science, the establishment of Chinese shopping malls and restaurants within Serbia, and the mutual lifting of visa restrictions and launch of a direct flight line to increase tourism flows (Petrović, 2018; Stojadinović & Rašković Talović, 2018; Jojić, 2017). Contrary to the norm diffusion practices between China and the other Western Balkan states, the Sino-Serbian relations appear to be more profound. The Serbian culture centre in Beijing, the exchanges and tourism flows suggest mutual curiosity rather than a one-sided demonstration of Chinese values. Furthermore, pilot projects to teach the Chinese language within Serbian high schools started in 2016 (Petrović, 2018). This goes further than the optional language classes as offered by Confucius Institutes in all Western Balkan countries. In addition, various developments indicate an increased importance of Serbia for China. These include Chinese President Jinping's visit to Serbia, the choice of Belgrade as location for the 16+1 Summit and the attribution of the highest number of investment projects of the whole Balkan region (Jeremić, 2017). The strength of the Sino-Serbian relations is visible in particular in their reciprocal support within the international arena. Where Serbia consistently upholds the One-China policy, China is persistent in respecting the territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia. Serbia will not join international initiatives that criticize China, and therefore affiliated with the boycott against the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize awards (Jojić, 2017). China, on the other hand, has not recognized Kosovo as a sovereign state and vetoes against its admission into the United Nations (Jojić, 2017). China also strongly denounced the NATO bombings against Serbia in 1999 (Stojadinović & Rašković Talović, 2018). As a result, "along with other positive effects, this official Chinese foreign policy significantly contributes to the creation of a positive atmosphere among the members of both Serbian political elite and most of its citizens as well" (Stojadinović & Rašković Talović, 2018; p.5). All in all, the logic of appropriateness is thus widespread within the relations between Serbia and China.

Although some downsides to the Chinese FDI could be identified, Serbians in general perceive China as righteous. These disadvantages could be identified three times and relate to concerns

on the feasibility and advantageousness of the state guarantee loans over a longer period of time (Stojadinović & Rašković Talović, 2018; Jojić, 2017). Nevertheless, instances where China was regarded by Serbians as right were detected 61 times. Serbian citizens indicate that both China and Russia influence Serbia's foreign affairs positively (Stojadinović & Rašković Talović, 2018). In addition, Serbians expressed high levels of trust towards China and Chinese citizens, resulting from a combination of the accomplishments of the CEEC partnership, the BRI and long term mutual comprehension (Petrović, 2018). Consequently, the Sino-Serbian relations are on occasion referred to as a "steel friendship" (D37 p. 4) where Serbia values its "Chinese special friend" (Jojić, 2017; p.8). As mentioned within the section on the relations between Serbia and the EU, the political and military preference of Serbian inhabitants even goes towards the Euroasian Economic Union instead of the EU (Stojadinović & Rašković Talović, 2018). Moreover, the Serbian Ministry of Defence stated: "China does support our national interests, since it consistently respects the five principles of peaceful coexistence; China does not act as a world power and it has no unsolved issues and requirements when it comes to Serbia; both countries could benefit from bilateral relations development, primarily in terms of economy; China has never endangered the safety and security of Serbia; China has never done any damage to Serbia and vice versa; persistence, tolerance, diligence, patience and creativity are national, distinguishing features of the Chinese people" (Stojadinović & Rašković Talović, 2018; p.5).

Although the analysed documents did not provide a statement in which Serbia explicitly regards its identity as converged with that of China, various declarations that suggest some level of convergence could be identified, albeit to a lesser extent than the convergence between Albania and the EU. Jojić (2017) concludes that for Serbia, next to the economic benefits of cooperation with China, their relationship extends to the political level: "For Serbia, importance of cooperation with China within these initiatives is twofold: economical, which includes intensive cooperation in improving infrastructure, Chinese direct economical investments and financial cooperation; and geopolitical and security significance, which includes mutual political support between Serbia and China in international organizations and maintenance of peace and faith in prosperity in the unstable region of the Balkans" (p.1). Furthermore, Jojić, (2017) states that a conformity of the interests of both China and Serbia exists to a considerable extent. The documents indicate that there is a stronger tendency of Serbian citizens to steer its foreign policy toward China than towards the EU (Stojadinović & Rašković Talović, 2018; Jeremić, 2017). All in all, the two countries have cooperated for a long time and share similar

values, norms and identities, such as safeguarding territorial integrity and the principles of peaceful coexistence. Although their identities are not identical, they seem to have a certain level of identity convergence. In particular the many ways in which norm diffusion between China and Serbia occurs appears to signify this. The high level in which China is perceived as righteous by Serbians in combination with the preference of Serbian citizens to adapt their political and military framework towards the Euroasian Economic Union rather than the EU seems to indicate that they are persuaded by the appropriateness of China’s policies. For that reason, it is concluded that Serbia’s identity is in convergence with that of China. The prevailing logic of action within the relations between Serbia and China is thus the logic of appropriateness.

5.2.4.3 The prevailing logic in Serbia’s relations

Table 15
Number of Codes On Both Logics of Action in Serbia

	Logic of consequentiality	Logic of appropriateness
Relations with EU	67	32
Relations with China	106	171

Table 15 provides an overview of the total amount of codes that point towards the logic of consequentiality and the logic of appropriateness in the documents on both the EU and China. It must be noted that there have been 97 codes for the funds and/or financial assistance by the EU in Serbia, in which the same EU investment has been coded multiple times. However, this does not lead to a different conclusion to be drawn from this table. Within the relationship between Serbia and the EU, no identity convergence could be identified. A little less than half the Serbian citizens would vote in favour of EU membership. The reasons as indicated by the proponents mainly concern material benefits. Furthermore, large groups within Serbian society exist that indicate their concerns regarding accession to the EU. Moreover, the findings in Table 15 indicate that codes pointing to the logic of consequentiality are identified substantially more than codes indicating the logic of appropriateness. Therefore, the relationship between Serbia and the EU can best be explained by means of the logic of consequentiality.

Within the relations between Serbia and China, a certain level of identity convergence could be identified. Serbian citizens regard China as being righteous, they expressed high levels of trust and prefer to adapt their political and military framework towards the Euroasian Economic Union. They share similar norms, which are further strengthened by various methods of norm diffusion. Furthermore, the findings in Table X indicate that codes suggesting the logic of appropriateness can be identified to a considerably higher extent than codes suggesting the logic of consequentiality, especially since the codes pointing towards the latter concern 97 codes that are partly overlapping. Therefore, the logic of appropriateness is considered to best explain the relations between Serbia and China.

5.3 The prevailing logic in the Europeanization of the Western Balkans

In order to clarify the results derived from the inquiries, these are summarized into Table 16. This table shows that the logic of consequentiality is prevalent in explaining the relations between the European Union and Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. Neither logic is prevalent in the relations between North Macedonia and the EU. Albania adheres to the logic of appropriateness in regard to its Europeanization. It can thus be concluded that the logic of consequentiality is prevalent in explaining the overall relations between the Western Balkans and the EU.

Within the relations between the Western Balkans and China, only Serbia adheres to the logic of consequentiality. The relations of Albania and North Macedonia are primarily construed along the logic of consequentiality. In the relationship between Bosnia and Herzegovina and China, neither logic is prevalent. Therefore, the logic of consequentiality is also considered to be prevalent in explaining the relationships between the Western Balkans and China.

Albania adheres to the logic of appropriateness, and experiences no diminished progress in its Europeanization as a consequence of the Chinese FDI. The other Western Balkan countries do not adhere to the logic of appropriateness concerning their Europeanization process. They do experience negative influences as a result of the Chinese FDI.

Table 16*The Prevalent Logic of Action in the Explanation of Europeanization in the Western Balkans*

	Europeanization negatively influenced by Chinese FDI?	Prevailing logic in relations with EU	Prevailing logic in relations with China
Albania	No	Logic of appropriateness	Logic of consequentiality
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Yes	Logic of consequentiality	Neither logic
North Macedonia	Yes	Neither logic	Logic of consequentiality
Serbia	Yes	Logic of consequentiality	Logic of appropriateness

6. Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings of the previous chapter. Firstly, it will discuss whether the hypotheses of this research can be confirmed, or whether these must be rejected. Secondly, it will merge the findings of these two hypotheses, in order to derive new insights for the academic body of literature. Thirdly, it will link the findings of this research to the findings on the logics of actions and the Chinese FDI of other researchers. Fourthly, the limitations of this research shall be addressed. Fifthly, future research avenues will be recommended. Finally, some policy recommendations shall be provided on the subject of this research.

6.1 Concluding on Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 aimed to inquire whether Western Balkan countries will still guarantee their Europeanization process if they receive higher levels of financial assistance from other entities. If the Western Balkan states do receive higher funds originating from (in the case of this research) China, this would affect the cost-benefit calculations that these states make regarding their policy alternatives. This cost-benefit analysis determines whether they put all their efforts into approximating with the EU's legislation or whether they will look into other policy avenues

To determine whether negative influences of Chinese FDI can be detected within the Europeanization process of the Western Balkan countries, the progress reports have been analysed. If the first hypothesis is correct, this would result in the expectation that when the amount of Chinese FDI that a Western Balkan country receives is higher than the financial assistance of the European Union, this will have negative effects on the Europeanization within those prospective member states. As Figure 3 and Table 2 show, the total amount of funds that Serbia receives from China is higher than those from Europe. Bosnia and Herzegovina receive a same amount of funds from both entities. North Macedonia does receive FDI from China, but receives more from the EU. Albania does not receive Chinese funds, but is instead financed completely by the EU. The findings of Table 9 provide an overview of the chapters in which a negative influence on the Europeanization of each Balkan state can be identified. A glance at this table shows that the most negative influence was found within North Macedonia, followed by Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and lastly by Albania. By comparing these results with the percentages of total Chinese FDI that these countries received within the timeframe of this research, it appears that the order that would be expected by hypothesis 1 (i.e. Serbia first) did not materialize. If hypothesis 1 would be fully accurate, the anticipated sequence would emerge

as Serbia experiencing the most negative influence, followed by respectively Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia, and Albania encountering no negative effects on their Europeanization. In contrast to these expectations, North Macedonia experienced the most negative influence, although they received less Chinese FDI than both Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Albania did endure the least negative influence, albeit that four instances could be identified, namely the political criterium Human Rights and Protection of Minorities and chapters 2, 5 and 13. This alternative outcome for Albania may partly be explained by the limitations of the research design, which does not seem to control for all confounding variables. This shall be elaborated on in paragraph 6.6 Limitations of this chapter. The negative effects identified in the other Western Balkan states can still be attributed to a large extent to the Chinese FDI, although they need adjustment for this limitation.

There appears to be a general trend that countries that did receive Chinese FDI do experience more negative influences on their Europeanization. The findings of this research do suggest an impact of Chinese FDI on the Europeanization within the Western Balkan countries: when Chinese FDI is present, more negative influences on Europeanization can be identified. This means that Chinese FDI does not have to be higher than the amount of FDI from the EU for Europeanization to be negatively affected, Chinese FDI just has to be present. However, the findings do not demonstrate that Europeanization is systematically adjusted as a consequence of adaptations in the amounts of Chinese FDI. In other words, the negative effects of Chinese FDI on Europeanization are not of proportional nature. Because of this lack of proportional effect between X and Y, the relationship between Chinese FDI and Europeanization is considered to be an association rather than correlation or causation (Altman & Krzywinski, 2015). It appears that there is no direct relationship between Chinese FDI and Europeanization, but that other mediating or moderating variables than the ones considered in this research seem to have an impact on this relationship as well. North Macedonia experiences the most diminished progress, even though it receives more FDI from Europe than from China. Bosnia and Herzegovina also experience quite substantial diminished progress, even though it receives a same amount of FDI from the EU and China. For Serbia, the hypothesis seems to hold, but that is not enough for a confirmation of the expectations. All in all, hypothesis 1 should be rejected. This hypothesis expected that only Serbia would experience diminished progress because only this country received more FDI from China than from Europe, but the findings indicate that North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina also experienced negative

influences even though they received the same amount or even more FDI from Europe than from China.

6.2 Concluding on Hypothesis 2

The second part of this research is aimed at testing hypothesis 2. The second hypothesis states that the height of the Chinese FDI does not matter for Europeanization in the Western Balkan countries, because these states perceive their identities as converged with that of the European Union. When the Western Balkan's identity is compatible with the EU's *acquis communautaire*, it will be consistent in its compliance to and implementation of the EU's regulations (Freyburg & Richter, 2010). They have an intrinsic motivation to belong to this collection of states, and will therefore ensure a smooth accession process without being obstructed by outside powers. In order to disclose the motivations behind the Western Balkan countries' EU accession process, a variety of documents have been analysed that concern the relationship between each Western Balkan state and the EU as well as China.

This research has indicated that Albania perceives its identity as converged with that of Europe, Serbia perceives its identity as converged with China, and Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia perceive their identities as converged with neither the EU nor China. Only Albania adheres to the logic of appropriateness in its Europeanization, which means that Albania will attempt to attain full approximation of the *acquis communautaire*, because of its intrinsic motivation to belong to a collection of states that is harmonious to its own identity (March & Olsen, 1996; 2013). As a candidate member to the EU, it determines its choice of policy alternative based on which they perceive is most appropriately in line with their own norms, values and identities (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier 2004) Albania's relations with China adhere to the logic of consequentiality. These are not based on a deep-rooted feeling of connectedness.

For the other Western Balkan nations, alignment with the EU's legislative framework is not fuelled by such as an inherent desire. They may still attempt to approximate to the *acquis*, because of motivations concerning the material benefits that are accompanied with EU accession. Serbia adheres to the logic of consequentiality regarding its Europeanization process, but adheres to the logic of appropriateness in its relationship with China. It recognizes many similarities between China's identity and its own, and will behave according to what norms and values are prescribed to them within this particular identity (March & Olsen, 2013). These

mutual values can be summarized as non-interference and economic prosperity. As these are not directly in conflict with the EU's accession criteria, Serbia maintains its approximation to the *acquis*, albeit with strategic intentions rather than an intrinsic motivation. Bosnia and Herzegovina also adheres to the logic of consequentiality in regard to its Europeanization. Its decision to Europeanize is based on extrinsic rather than intrinsic motivations, because it results from positive outcomes in their cost-benefit analyses (Dewulf, Klenk, Wyborn & Lemos, 2020). Within their relations with China, neither logic was found to be prevalent. In the relationship between North Macedonia and the EU, neither logic prevailed over the other logic in explaining their Europeanization. Both played a role, which means that North Macedonians partly perceive the *acquis communautaire* as appropriate ways to arrange their governance, but they also effectuate the *acquis*' reforms because they aspire EU membership because of the material benefits that are accompanied with it. The relations between North Macedonia and China are primarily motivated according to the logic of consequentiality. The material benefits that result from this cooperation are the main reason for the relations to exist.

Based on this research, it must be concluded that the second hypothesis remains undetermined. It cannot be concluded or rejected. As Table 16 shows, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia adhere to the logic of consequentiality in their Europeanization process. For them, the height of Chinese FDI is thus not negligible for their Europeanization, but instead is part of their cost-benefit calculation. Within the Europeanization of North Macedonia, neither logic appears to be prevalent. Although this suggests that the height of Chinese FDI is negligible, at the same time it indicates that the height of these investments determine the outcomes of their cost-benefit analyses. Albania is the only Western Balkan state that adheres to the logic of appropriateness in regard to their Europeanization. Only for Albania, the height of the Chinese FDI is negligible for its Europeanization process. However, the problem for this hypothesis is that Albania is the country that did not receive Chinese FDI. Based on the empirical material in this research, it is therefore not possible to either confirm or reject this second hypothesis.

6.3 Combining the two hypotheses

New findings for the academic body of literature appear by comparing the outcomes of both parts of this research that were aimed at verifying two different hypotheses. Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia experienced a (partial) lack of internalized perception on the appropriateness of the EU's *acquis communautaire*. Following the logic of appropriateness, this may explain why these countries suffered from diminished progress in

their Europeanization. The reason is that these states do not feel that their identities oblige them to fully incorporate the EU's accession requirements, because they do not feel a deep-rooted interconnectedness with those regulations. Because they feel less obliged to fulfil the requirements, these states are considered to be more easily side-tracked by the provision of other material incentives by other entities. Because Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia do not perceive their identities as converged with the EU, this may explain why hypothesis 1 had to be rejected: those countries' non-adherence of the logic of appropriateness may have contributed to the negative influences on their Europeanization. These states' policy decisions had been determined by whichever outcome of their cost-benefit analysis would result in the highest revenues (and in the case of North Macedonia, their decisions were partly determined by these outcomes). They will try to maximize their profits, so they will attempt to combine their Europeanization with acquiring Chinese FDI. For combining these, it is not required to have a higher amount of funds from China than from the EU, because this combination can unfold in a variety of distributions. Receiving a lower amount of Chinese FDI than from the EU may still result in a higher total revenue than receiving no Chinese FDI at all. Whether the non-adherence of the logic of appropriateness is indeed

Furthermore, a pattern seems to emerge between the countries that receive the most FDI from a country and how they perceive the convergence of identities. Albania receives the most FDI from Europe, and feels intrinsically connected to the Union. Serbia receives the most FDI from China, and considers its identity as commensurate with that of China. Bosnia and Herzegovina receives an equal amount from both entities, and North Macedonia receives more FDI from the EU than from China. For these latter two countries, no prevalence of the logic of appropriateness could be identified. However, because this study contains merely four cases, it is complicated to say whether this pattern is of causal nature, and is therefore considered to be an association.

6.4 Connection to the literature

6.4.1 Linking the findings on the prevalent logics to the academic literature

On the question which logic of action is prevalent in explaining the Europeanization within the Western Balkans, the logic of consequentiality seems to have the upper hand. Three out of the four Western Balkan states indicate that they do not consider their identity as converged with Europe. Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina both adhere to the logic of consequentiality in their relations with the EU. For North Macedonia, neither logic is prevailing over the other. Only in

the case of Albania, identity convergence with the EU and a prevalence of the logic of appropriateness in its relations with the Union could be detected. However, it is important to note that the two logics used in this research should not be perceived as mutually exclusive (March & Olsen, 1998; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2004). The findings within this research seem to indicate that as well. This is most apparent in the case of North Macedonia, in which both logic play an equal role in explaining the country's Europeanization. But Table 12, Table 13 and Table 15 show that although one logic is prevalent over the other in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, the other logic is still identifiable, albeit to a lesser extent. For Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, here are still parts of the European Union that they perceive as right, which may subsequently result in the adoption of legislation because of the perceived righteousness of certain rules. For Albania, they still acknowledge the financial benefits that result from EU membership, and this may partly contribute to their wishes for accession. Therefore, although the logic of consequentiality is prevalent concerning the overall explanation of Europeanization within the Western Balkan countries, the logic of appropriateness still plays a role in the clarification of this phenomenon, albeit to a lesser extent.

March and Olsen's (2013) hypothesis that the logic of appropriateness is more likely to prevail when knowledge on particular issues has had more time to develop is cannot be confirmed by this research. The initiation of the relations between the EU and the Western Balkan countries (with the exception of Kosovo) started around the same time in 1999 with the Stabilisation and Association Process framework and the Stability Pact (De Munter, 2021). Therefore, the Western Balkan countries have had an equal time to develop their knowledge on the EU. The findings of this research nonetheless indicate that identity convergence has only emerged within Albania, and they do not suggest identity convergence within the other countries in the near future. Given the analysed timeframe within this research, the Western Balkan countries have had 17 years to develop relations with the EU, namely from 1999 until 2016. Contrastingly, the timeframe used for the relations of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia with China for the second part of the research results in a total of 7 years in which identities could reciprocate, from 2013 until 2020. This would lead to the expectation that the logic of appropriateness would be more dominant in the findings on the relationship with the EU. Instead, the logic of appropriateness only prevailed in the case of Albania. This points towards rejection of March and Olsen's (2013) hypothesis. However, on the relationship between Serbia and China, which held relations since 1955, identity convergence could be observed. This phenomenon could not be identified within the relations between China and the other Western

Balkan countries. The Sino-Serbian relations were able to develop for a substantially longer period than the relations with the other Western Balkan states. This suggests that, within the relationships between the Western Balkan countries and China, the logic of appropriateness indeed prevails when the relations have had time to develop. To conclude, the findings on the relations between China and the Western Balkan states seem to indicate that the hypothesis of March and Olsen (2013) can be confirmed, because of the longstanding relationship between Serbia and China and the subsequently prevailing logic of consequentiality. However, the data on the relations between the EU and the Western Balkan countries seem to reject this expectation. The relations between the EU and the Western Balkans have had an equal time to develop, but only Albania adheres to the logic of appropriateness. If the hypothesis was right, the expectation would be that more Western Balkan countries would adhere this logic of appropriateness. Therefore, March and Olsen's (2013) hypothesis should be rejected.

6.4.2 Linking the findings to the concerns of other authors on the Chinese FDI

Various authors have expressed their concerns about the impact of the Chinese investments within the Western Balkan region. Firstly, Makocki (2017) cautioned for subversion of the EU's reform programmes as a result of FDI originating from China. He gives the example of the Chinese preference of state-led decisions over market-based arrangements as possible changes of course. The results of this research indicate that Chinese investments do influence the Europeanization within the Western Balkans in a negative way. Although a clear pattern does not arise from the data, there are 12 criteria and chapters in which Chinese FDI has a high to medium negative influence on Europeanization, as can be seen in Table 11. Chapter 8 on Competition Policy, which includes regulations against state aid, is one of the chapters that is categorized as being affected with a medium negative influence by Chinese FDI. Based on the data within this research, Makocki's (2017) concerns are therefore considered as justified.

Secondly, Makocki (2017) also expressed his uneasiness about the high debts that he expects to unfold within the Western Balkan region as a consequence of the FDI inflows from China. Table 9 shows that for the economic criteria, only one criterium within one country was negatively affected. This concerned the criterium of the Existence of a Functioning Market Economy within North Macedonia. For that reason, although one indication was found within the data that suggests a negative impact, this number is relatively low. Based on the findings of this research, the concerns expressed by Makocki (2017) regarding high debts are not considered as justified. However, it must be noted that the negative effect detected within North

Macedonia is categorized as strong. Furthermore, the European Commission (2014b) states that “the rapidly increasing public debt and related financing risks are sources of macroeconomic vulnerability” (p. 33) and that “the external imbalances have narrowed but remain a source of vulnerability, especially in view of the potential adverse impact of the volatile environment on FDI inflows” (p. 32). Similar remarks were made in the progress reports of other countries. Therefore, although the negative influence of the Chinese FDI on this subject has been limited to one country within the analysed timeframe, this does not mean that the risk is averted outside the scope of the current analysed timeline. Nevertheless, based on the findings within this research, these concerns were not identified except for Serbia.

Thirdly, Meunier (2014) argues that China is purposively exploiting the EU’s fragmentation on FDI inflow databases by setting up a variety of bilateral agreements in order to divide Central and Eastern Europe by means of increased disintegration. This research does not cover the first part of her argument, which regards the motivations behind the Chinese FDI. The second part of her argument, on the bilaterality of the agreements, should be rejected based on this research. The analysis on the documents of hypothesis 2 indicate that China indeed establishes bilateral agreements with all four Western Balkan states. However, these documents also point multiple times towards the 16+1 Cooperation, a partnership in which China collaborates with a combination of 16 Central and Eastern European Countries. China thus also participates in multilateral agreements with the Western Balkans. The third part of her argument, on increased disintegration, can partly be confirmed by this research. The analysis of hypothesis 1 points out that the progress towards EU accession slows down or sometimes even backslides regarding certain criteria or chapters. The percentages to which chapters and criteria of the entire Europeanization accession requirements are negatively affected by Chinese FDI in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia are respectively 8%, 24%, 36% and 20% as indicated in Table 10. These numbers indicate the chapters in which hindrances to Europeanization progress could be identified. Although impediments to progress may not have to result in disintegration, it is likely that this will occur at least to a certain extent. So although these numbers do not fully support Meunier’s (2014) argument, it is reasonable to expect that Chinese FDI within certain chapters and/or criteria will result in increased disintegration of Europeanization within the Western Balkans. All in all, her concerns are partly justified.

Fourthly, Meunier (2014) also claims that the Chinese FDI is different in nature than FDI originating from other countries. According to her, Chinese FDI aims to put Chinese businesses

in direct competition with those in Europe, and consequently, the recipient state does not gain the technological capabilities it usually obtains. The chapters of the *acquis* that concern these subjects are Chapter 6 on Company Law and Chapter 20 on Enterprise and Industrial Policy (see Table 9). The data derived within this research indicates that for these two chapters, Chinese FDI has a low negative influence on Chapter 6 and no negative influence on Chapter 20. This makes the argument of Meunier, based on the data derived in this study, not particularly probable. Nevertheless, it must be noted that these two chapters do not fully cover the subject of Meunier's (2014) argument. Whether this phenomenon occurs with the Western Balkan region is not explicitly mentioned within the progress reports. Therefore, this argument can only be rejected with a low level of certainty.

Finally, Le Corre (2018) states that China uses its FDI provision as a means to reinforce its international stance using soft power tools. It is interesting to note that the data on Serbia, which receives the most Chinese FDI of all the Western Balkan states, indicates that it experienced a strong negative influence concerning its political criterium of Regional Issues and International Obligations. Furthermore, the analysis of the documents of hypothesis 2 suggest a reciprocal support between the two countries within the international arena (Stojadinović & Rašković Talović, 2018; Jojić, 2017). In addition, the research for hypothesis 2 has found a wide variety of soft power instruments that are used by China. This suggests that Le Corre's (2018) argument is valid. However, it must be noted that a similar support for China within international politics could not be identified within either Bosnia and Herzegovina or North Macedonia, even though these nations also received Chinese FDI. Either other variables might be of importance for Serbia's international support, or the soft power tools have not achieved their goal yet within Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia. Which of these options is the correct statement should be explored in future research. For the time being, Le Corre's (2018) can be accepted, albeit with some sidenotes.

6.5 Contribution to theory

On the central question how Chinese FDI affects the Europeanization within the Western Balkans, various scholars had found diverging answers. Where some academics argued that the investments negatively affect the Europeanization within the Western Balkans (e.g. Makocki, 2017; Meunier, 2014; Rogelja, 2020), others disagree that the Chinese FDI negatively influences these states (e.g. Shaohua, 2019; Kang, 2005; Grgic, 2017). The findings of this research indicate that Chinese FDI does negatively affect Europeanization in the Western

Balkans. It is not required that this Chinese FDI is of a higher amount than the FDI from the EU for this phenomenon to occur. Although no proportional relationship could be found, an association was found between the countries that obtained Chinese FDI and the negative effects on Europeanization could be identified. More specifically, the findings indicate that Chinese FDI contributed to 8% of diminished progress in Albania, to 24% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to 36% in North Macedonia and to 20% in Serbia (see Table 10). Although these numbers must be slightly adjusted to correct for the limitations research design, that has not controlled for all confounding variables, they do provide an indication on the extent of negative influence on Chinese FDI.

This research did not merely contribute to the academic debate on whether or not Chinese FDI has a negative influence on Europeanization within the Western Balkans. It also provides an overview as well as an estimation of likeliness in which exact chapters and criteria of EU accession this influence manifests. Furthermore, the results indicate that the negative effects of China's investments are of a less than proportional nature, which means that some countries are affected less negatively than others, while they received more FDI. Moreover, this research has discovered that the logic of consequentiality prevails over the logic of appropriateness in the explanation of the overall *acquis* adoption in the Western Balkan region. Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina adhere to this logic of consequentiality in their Europeanization, within North Macedonia, neither logic is prevalent, and only Albania adheres to the logic of appropriateness. That is not to say that the logic of appropriateness is not relevant within the policy domain of Europeanization. This logic plays an equal role in the explanation of North Macedonia's Europeanization, and it mostly explains the behaviour of Albania regarding its approximation to the *acquis*.

Finally, in the Theoretical Framework, a causal relationship between FDI and Europeanization existed according to various scholars (Penev & Rojec, 2014; Hadjit & Moxon-Browne, 2005; Wood, 2009). However, other scholars questioned whether this causal relationship was also applicable in the case of Chinese FDI. This research concluded that the relationship between Chinese FDI and Europeanization can be considered as an association, but not as causality.

6.6 Limitations

This section discusses the limitations of this research. Firstly, the limitations of the research design used in this thesis shall be elaborated on. Secondly, shortcomings in of the methodology will be discussed. Finally, the limitations regarding the data collection will be addressed.

6.6.1 Limitations of the research design

Although the small-N comparative MSSD-I design is considered as the most appropriate for this research, its biggest limitation can be found within its design. As previously indicated, Table 9 signals that supposedly Albania has been negatively affected by Chinese FDI in its Europeanization processes. However, this is simply not possible, because Albania did not receive Chinese FDI in the period covered in the analysis. Therefore, these investments cannot be the cause of this diminished progress. This means that there are other variables that negatively influence Europeanization other than the ones controlled for within the MSSD-I research design. These variables could for instance follow from the national political situation or external crises. Nevertheless, although the findings of Table 9 need adjustment to correct for this limitation, they still provide valuable insights on the research conducted. The reason is that the other countries that did receive the treatment, have experienced considerably higher amounts of negative influence.

Secondly, as it concerns a small-N design, it is by definition impossible to depend on the toolbox of large-N studies to counter measurement error. Hence, randomization, the principle of large numbers and conditioning are inexecutable approaches due to their lack of diversity and scarcity (Toshkov, 2016). In order to address this limitation, measurement validity in small-N comparisons can be opposed by combining cross-case with within-case data. This research does exactly that. The within-case data on the progress of Europeanization as well as the potentially perceived identity convergence is combined with a cross-case analysis on four Western Balkan countries. It must be noted, however, that the stage cross-case examination encounters difficulties concerning the differentiation between causation and association (Toshkov, 2016). In addition, instead of merely comparing two cases, in which one receives a lot of Chinese FDI in comparison to the other, this research includes four cases in total. This further limits the extent to which measurement error might result in incorrect conclusions (Toshkov, 2016).

Thirdly, the MSSD-I design is not suitable for weak and complex causal relationships. Nevertheless, these shortcomings can also be partially relieved by adding more cases (Toshkov, 2016). Although the total number of cases this research equals four, this number is still quite small. This may have led to difficulties in making conclusions on the relationship between Chinese FDI and Europeanization, which according to this research turned out to exist, but not be of proportionate nature.

Finally, as addressed in the Research Design, it is beyond the bounds of possibility to maintain fixed values for all possible confounding variables in social or political sciences (Anckar, 2008). Therefore, by keeping the values of the confounding variables as similar as possible, as well as by selecting cases close to each other in terms of geography and culture, the rigidity of the similarity-requirement can be relieved (Anckar, 2008). Nevertheless, there may still be implications to the generalizability of the conclusions to other context, as the case selection is based on the availability rather than probability.

6.6.2 Limitations of the methodology

Certain limitations can also be found within the methodology used within this research. Firstly, not all the progress reports are organized in the same manner. In addition, the European Commission was not consistent in their evaluation of political criteria. Sometimes there were new criteria that had not been mentioned in the previous years, certain criteria stopped being evaluated after a couple years, and sometimes a criterium was only evaluated in one particular country. The incomplete political criteria have not been included within this research, because it was not possible to conduct a longitudinal cross-country analysis on these subjects. In addition, the progress reports of Bosnia and Herzegovina were not organized according to the chapters of the *acquis communautaire*. This required a restructuring of the data, but unfortunately resulted in one missing chapter.

Secondly, within most progress reports, the European Commission was consistent in classifying a Western Balkan state's progress either as good progress, moderate progress, some progress, limited progress, no progress, or backsliding. However, there was a handful of occasions where the European Commission merely labelled the advancement as 'progress'. Within such cases, it was often possible to determine which level of progress was meant based on the remainder of the text. However, the analysis would have been more consistent if the same actor labelled all progress according to the same standards.

Thirdly, the results of Table 9 have been arranged into ‘strong’ and ‘limited’ negative influence. The reason is that although a general difference could be found within the strength of the negative effect, no specific numbers could be assigned to the slope of the trendline. Of course, this trendline did have an exact slope. But as this line was based on qualitative data, the attribution of an exact number would suggest a certain level of precision that does not exist. Therefore, the extent to which Chinese FDI has had a negative influence on Europeanization has been categorized under two, rather broad, outcomes.

Fourthly, the data derived from the trendline would have more reliable if it had included more years. Unfortunately, this was not possible. The European Commission did produce an overarching progress report for all the (potential) candidate countries in 2017, but the data within this documents is far from specific. It does neither offer the opportunity to compare each state per political or economic criterium and nor per chapter of the *acquis*. It was therefore decided to end the timeframe at the year 2016.

Finally, within the research on identity convergence, the designation of codes to the documents concern a personal interpretation of the conductor of the research. Another researcher could have interpreted the same piece of text slightly different. Furthermore, it is possible that certain relevant excerpts are not identified as such. In order to increase the credibility of the results, data collection triangulation was employed (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). Nevertheless, this limitation should be kept in mind.

6.6.3 Limitations of the data collection

Certain limitations to the data collection could be identified as well. The first concerns the documents used to investigate whether identity convergence has occurred, as displayed in Table 5. These are inquiries by other scholars, which classifies them as secondary sources. This is not necessarily a problem, as they may allow for triangulation (Nowell et al., 2017). However, there are some disadvantages to using secondary sources as well. It makes this research dependent on the interpretation and the research focus of the original research. It also results in a less consistent approach, because these documents concentrate on varying subjects, which makes comparisons across cases more difficult. Additionally, the majority of the documents are either funded by the EU or by the China-CEE Institute. This may not be problematic, but it does raise

concerns about objective, independent data. However, it was necessary to use these secondary sources, due to language barriers and limited availability of useful data.

Secondly, the documents used for the analysis on identity convergence on China are from years outside the timeframe of the research on the influence of Chinese FDI on Europeanization. This was a necessity, because an entity has to be present for a longer duration of time in order for identity convergence to take place (March & Olsen, 2013). As China was only present within the Western Balkans since 2013 (with the exception of Serbia), using data from an earlier timeframe would not produce the sought answers. It did however result in some difficulties regarding the analysis, because it had to be determined whether for example certain projects that had been discussed in the documents dated from before or after the end of the timeframe in this research.

Finally, this research used two documents to discover the prevalent logic of action between a Western Balkan state and the EU. It used four documents to determine this per Western Balkan state in its relations with China. The use of additional documents was not considered as feasible, due to the limited time available for the conduction of this research. The internal validity of this research would however increase if supplementary documents had been analysed.

6.7 Future research recommendations

This section proposes seven avenues for future research projects.

Firstly, further research may be directed at the verification of various statements made in the Empirical Findings and Discussion, that may have been affected by the limitations of the research. For instance, future research may be aimed towards verifying whether China was indeed able to use its FDI provision as a means of gaining the support of Serbia within the international arena, but not the support of Bosnia and Herzegovina or North Macedonia. It could include other potentially relevant variables into a conceptual model in order to discover why this phenomenon occurred in Serbia, but not in the other Western Balkan countries. The findings in this research indicate that Le Corre's (2018) argument is correct. But because this research cannot use the tools of large-N inquiries to counter measurement error, verification of such statements would increase the internal validity of this research.

Secondly, another avenue for future research concerns the finding that when Chinese FDI is present, more negative influence on Europeanization can be identified. This research has found that this relationship can be considered as an association. But there is currently no information on whether there are more variables at play that constitute this association. Further research could focus on uncovering such additional variables, which potentially result in a stronger connection such as a correlation or even a causation.

Thirdly, future research may be aimed at discovering why Albania did not receive this Chinese FDI within the timeframe under analysis. If they chose to not cooperate with China, because they did not consider its rules as appropriate, this would make the findings in this research on the logic of appropriateness more reliable. However, if there were other prevailing considerations, the opposite should be concluded.

Fourthly, the limitations of the MSSD-I research design in this thesis indicate that other confounding factors had a negative influence on the Europeanization in the Western Balkans that have not been controlled for. Forthcoming research could be aimed at discovering which exact variables were at play concerning the progress of Europeanization within the Western Balkans. This would allow for a more precise measurement of the negative effects of Chinese FDI on the Europeanization.

Fifthly, this research has provided an overview of the likeliness that particular chapters will be negatively affected by Chinese FDI. However, it does not provide information on the specific ways in which this influence occurs. Future research could provide insights on the precise mechanisms that are at play. Furthermore, this research has focussed on whether and how Chinese FDI negatively affects Europeanization, because of the current scholarly debate. However, it is conceivable that this FDI from China may also positively influence Europeanization, because its funds may enable possibilities for reform towards EU standards. Research could be conducted to explicitly focus on the positive effects of Chinese FDI on Europeanization in the Western Balkans.

Sixthly, this research did not extend to the motivations of China to provide FDI in the Western Balkan region. It could be that the identified influences of these investments were partly or completely unintentional. Therefore, future research could inquire the intentions behind the Chinese FDI provision.

Finally, based on the empirical findings of this research, the second hypothesis remains undetermined. Therefore, research could be aimed at validating this hypothesis in particular. This is possible by including supplementary cases, that do receive Chinese FDI but that also adhere to the logic of appropriateness in their relations with the European Union. It could also inquire Albania's Europeanization after 2017, when this Western Balkan country did start receiving Chinese FDI, and determine whether a decrease in Europeanization progress could be found as a result of these FDI inflows from China.

6.8 Policy recommendations

This research offers some practical recommendations for the European Union. Firstly, the EU should reconsider when the strict bureaucracy behind its own FDI provision is favourable, and when these could be designed in a more flexible manner. Due to its strictness, the Western Balkan countries do not always have access to FDI from the EU, which drives them towards the Chinese FDI. Not all Chinese FDI will result in negative consequences for either the Western Balkans or the EU. However, if the EU gains a clear picture in which situations they would rather not have a negative influence of China, they could ease their FDI provision requirements in these areas.

Secondly, the EU could demand from the Western Balkans that the investment deals that they make with China become publicly available. One of the current problems with the Chinese FDI provision is the secrecy of these deals (Zweers et al., 2020). This lack of transparency is not beneficial for the EU, because it counters their principles on transparency and accountability and may for instance result in increased corruption.

Finally, if the EU wants to reinforce the Europeanization processes in the Western Balkans, it should ensure that the candidate members do not experience a Europeanization-fatigue. The documents that are provided within Table 5 pointed several times towards a decline in motivation to implement acquis regulations due to the long duration of the accession process (e.g. United Nations Development Programme, 2017; Petkovski et al., 2017; Serbian European Integration Office of Republic of Serbia Government, 2015). By adopting measures that accelerate the Europeanization process, this fatigue may be opposed, which reduces the chances of the Western Balkan states seeking assistance from other entities.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Answer to the research question

The research question of this thesis was stated as the following: “*How does Chinese FDI affect the Europeanization in the Western Balkans?*”, in which Chinese FDI is the independent variable and Europeanization the dependent variable. The logic of consequentiality and the logic of appropriateness are two theories that provide different answers to the same question, because they are based on different kinds of reasoning. These two theories have been used as theoretical background to provide an answer to the research question. This has resulted in two hypotheses. The first hypothesis emerged from the logic of consequentiality and it was expected when a Western Balkan state would receive more FDI from China than from the EU, it would experience negative influences in their Europeanization. The second hypothesis emerged from the logic of appropriateness and it was expected that no matter how high the Chinese FDI would be, if a Western Balkan country perceives identity convergence between its own identity and that of the European Union, its Europeanization would not be affected. A debate amongst academic relates to the question whether or not Chinese FDI negatively affects the Europeanization in the Western Balkans. Therefore, this research is aimed at discovering whether or not a negative effect of Chinese FDI on Europeanization exists.

This research has been designed as a MSSD-I, in which the cases under investigation are as similar as possible as regards the control variables, but differ in their amounts of received Chinese FDI. The cases selected for this research concern Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia. Albania did not receive any Chinese FDI over the analysed time period. North Macedonia did receive Chinese FDI, but received more investments from the European Union. Bosnia and Herzegovina received an equal amount of FDI from China and the EU. Finally, Serbia received more FDI from China than from the EU. For the first part of this research, the progress reports of these Western Balkan states have been analysed in order to determine whether negative influence of Chinese FDI on their Europeanization could be detected. The timeframe of this research is from 2010 until 2016, in which the years of 2010 until 2012 are compared to the years 2013 until 2016. The reason is, that Chinese FDI started to flow into this region in the year 2013, and therefore enables the possibility of a comparison in negative effects on Europeanization between these two timelines. The second part of the research was aimed at discovering which logic of action is prevalent in explaining the Europeanization in the Western Balkans. This is inquired by means of the qualitative coding

programme ATLAS.ti, in which the external incentive model, the social learning model and several additional codes derived from the literature are used to determine the prevalent logic in the relations with the EU and with China in each Western Balkan state.

The findings of the first part of this research provide an overview of the extent to which each chapter and criterium of Europeanization is affected by Chinese FDI. However, the identified negative influence of Chinese FDI on Europeanization has a less than proportional nature. The countries that did receive Chinese FDI experienced considerably diminished progress in their Europeanization. The first hypothesis had to be rejected, because the findings on North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina also indicate negative influences resulting from Chinese FDI, even though they received the same or a smaller amount of FDI from China than from the EU. Nevertheless, this part of the research did discover that an association between Chinese FDI and Europeanization exists, and thus contributes to providing an answer on the academic debate. Other variables than the ones considered in my research seem to have an impact on this relationship as well.

The second part of this research discovered that the logic of consequentiality prevails over the logic of appropriateness in clarifying Europeanization in the Western Balkans, although both logics are still relevant in explaining this *acquis* adoption. The research found that in the relations between the EU and Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the logic of consequentiality prevailed. In North Macedonia, neither logic was prevalent over the other. Only Albania adheres to the logic of appropriateness in its relations with the EU, and therefore in their Europeanization. Hypothesis 2 remains undetermined, because although a prevalence was found of the logic of appropriateness in Albania, this Western Balkan state did not receive Chinese FDI during the analysed timeframe. As Chinese FDI was not present, it could not be determined whether the FDI height is negligible for Albania's Europeanization. Nevertheless, the research still provided knowledge on the prevalent logic of action in explaining Europeanization.

7.2 Summary of contribution

This research contributes to the body of knowledge firstly by merging the findings of the two hypotheses. The three countries that indicated negative influences in their Europeanization, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia, held no prevalence of the logic of appropriateness in their relations with the EU. Their lack of internalized perception of

identity convergence may be explained by the logic of appropriateness as the reason why this Europeanization is more negatively affected than in the case of Albania. This may explain why hypothesis 1 had to be rejected: those countries' non-adherence of the logic of appropriateness may have contributed to the negative influences on their Europeanization.

Secondly, this research found a pattern between the adherence of the logic of appropriateness and the height of FDI that it receives from a country: Albania held on to the logic of appropriateness in their relations with the EU, that is its main investor. Serbia adheres to the logic of appropriateness in their relations with China, from whom it receives the most FDI.

Thirdly, this research challenges the findings of some authors and supports others. It rejects March and Olsen's (2013) hypothesis that states that the logic of appropriateness is more likely to prevail when the relations between two entities have been present for a longer period of time. The research on the prevalent logic in the relations between the Western Balkans and the EU indicate that, although the Western Balkan states have had an approximately equal time to develop their relations with the European Union, only Albania adheres to the logic of appropriateness. Furthermore, the concerns on Chinese FDI of other authors have been addressed. Makocki's (2017) argument that Chinese investments negatively affect Europeanization is supported by this research, but his concerns on the high debts in the Western Balkans could not be supported based on this research. Meunier's (2014) concerns on the bilateral nature of China's agreement are rejected by this research, although her argument on increased disintegration could be confirmed. Finally, Le Corre's (2018) finding that China uses its FDI provision as a means of reinforcing its international stance could also be found in China's relations with Serbia, but not in its relations with the other Western Balkan states.

Fourthly, in the academic debate on whether Chinese FDI negatively affects the Europeanization in the Western Balkans, this research finds that this FDI provision indeed slows down and sometimes even results in backsliding in the accession progress of the Western Balkan states. However, it must be noted that the findings of this research indicate that there is no direct relationship between Chinese FDI and Europeanization and is considered to be an association rather than a correlation or causation. This research has discovered that there are more confounding variables at play in the relationship between Chinese FDI and Europeanization than the ones controlled for in Table 3.

Finally, on the overall *acquis* adoption in the Western Balkans, the logic of consequentiality is considered to be prevalent in the explanation of their Europeanization. This does not mean that the logic of appropriateness should be disregarded, because this logic of action still plays a role in clarifying the Europeanization. Therefore, although one logic prevails over the other, their interplay is of importance in establishing a full picture on the Europeanization in the Western Balkans.

Appendix 1

Table 17

Chapters of the Progress Reports (and the Acquis Communautaire).

Chapter	Subject
Chapter 1	Free movement of goods
Chapter 2	Freedom of movement for workers
Chapter 3	Right of establishment and freedom to provide services
Chapter 4	Free movement of capital
Chapter 5	Public procurement
Chapter 6	Company law
Chapter 7	Intellectual property law
Chapter 8	Competition policy
Chapter 9	Financial services
Chapter 10	Information society and media
Chapter 11	Agriculture and rural development
Chapter 12	Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy
Chapter 13	Fisheries
Chapter 14	Transport policy
Chapter 15	Energy
Chapter 16	Taxation
Chapter 17	Economic and monetary policy
Chapter 18	Statistics
Chapter 19	Social policy and employment
Chapter 20	Enterprise and industrial policy
Chapter 21	Trans-European networks
Chapter 22	Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments
Chapter 23	Judiciary and fundamental rights
Chapter 24	Justice, freedom and security
Chapter 25	Science and research
Chapter 26	Education and culture
Chapter 27	Environment
Chapter 28	Consumer and health protection

Chapter 29	Customs union
Chapter 30	External relations
Chapter 31	Foreign, security and defence policy
Chapter 32	Financial control
Chapter 33	Financial and budgetary provisions

Note: Retrieved from European Commission (n.d.)

Appendix 2

Table 18
Results ATLAS.ti Codes Albania

	Open Society Foundation for Albania (2014)	Rakipi, Llubani & Gjodede (2014)	Musabelliu (2020)	Sylaj (2020)	Musabelliu (2019a)	Musabelliu (2019b)	Totals
○ Diffusion of norms China	0	0	2	10	4	2	18
○ Diffusion of norms EU	3	10	0	0	0	0	13
○ Disadvantages of Chinese FDI	0	0	0	3	0	4	7
○ Disadvantages of EU Membership	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
○ Funds and/or Financial Assistance China	0	0	9	14	9	8	40
○ Funds and/or Financial Assistance EU	5	3	0	0	0	0	8
○ Higher Level of knowledge on EU	10	3	0	0	0	0	13
○ Lower Level of Knowledge on EU	17	7	0	0	0	0	24
○ Partnership China from after 2017	0	0	6	12	10	7	35
○ Partnership China from before 2017	0	0	3	24	0	3	30
○ Perceived Righteousness of China	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
○ Perceived Righteousness of EU	22	14	0	0	0	0	36

○ Reforms Effectuated due to Conditionality EU	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
○ Reforms Effectuated not due to Conditionality EU	0	7	0	0	0	0	7
○ Statement on Identity Convergence China	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
○ Statement on Identity Convergence EU	5	16	0	0	0	0	21
○ Statement on Non-Identity Convergence China	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
○ Statement on Non-Identity Convergence EU	4	3	0	0	0	0	7
○ Use of Language Pro- China	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
○ Use of Language Pro- EU	0	12	0	0	0	0	12
Totals	67	79	21	63	25	29	284

Table 19
Results ATLAS.ti Codes Bosnia and Herzegovina

	UNRCOBiH (2015)	UNDP (2017)	Stevic (2020)	Hirkić (2020)	Stopić (2020)	Bakota (2019)	Totals
○ Diffusion of norms China	0	0	31	9	3	4	47
○ Diffusion of norms EU	10	0	0	0	0	0	10
○ Disadvantages of Chinese FDI	0	0	2	7	0	0	18

○ Disadvantages of EU Membership	15	3	0	0	0	0	18
○ Funds and/or Financial Assistance China	0	0	3	11	6	0	20
○ Funds and/or Financial Assistance EU	6	10	0	0	0	0	16
○ Higher Level of knowledge on EU	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
○ Limited Impact/Power EU	0	5	0	0	0	0	5
○ Lower Level of Knowledge China	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
○ Lower Level of Knowledge on EU	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
○ Partnership China from after 2017	0	0	0	1	3	0	4
○ Partnership China from before 2017	0	0	0	0	4	0	4
○ Perceived Righteousness of China	0	0	1	4	2	0	7
○ Perceived Righteousness of EU	6	5	0	2	0	0	13
○ Reforms Effectuated due to Conditionality EU	11	15	0	0	0	0	26
○ Reforms Effectuated not due to Conditionality EU	4	0	0	0	0	0	4

○ Statement on Identity Convergence China	0	0	0	1	2	0	3
○ Statement on Identity Convergence EU	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
○ Statement on Non-Identity Convergence China	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
○ Statement on Non-Identity Convergence EU	5	15	0	0	0	0	20
○ Use of Language Pro-China	0	0	1	1	2	0	4
○ Use of Language Pro-EU	4	3	0	0	0	0	7
Totals	66	56	41	36	22	4	225

Table 20
Results ATLAS.ti Codes North Macedonia

	Petrovski, Marichiki, Nikolovski & Babunski (2016)	Dimovska (2016)	Gjorgjioska & Vangeli (2017)	Vangeli (2018a)	Vangeli (2018b)	Adela (2020)	Totals
○ Diffusion of norms China	0	0	10	4	8	1	23
○ Diffusion of norms EU	5	1	3	0	1	0	10
○ Disadvantages of Chinese FDI	0	0	9	2	0	0	11
○ Disadvantages of EU Membership	7	6	0	0	0	0	13
○ Funds and/or Financial Assistance China	0	0	11	5	3	9	28

○ Funds and/or Financial Assistance EU	6	2	0	0	0	0	8
○ Higher Level of knowledge on EU	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
○ Limited Impact/Power EU	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
○ Lower Level of Knowledge on China	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
○ Lower Level of Knowledge on EU	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
○ Partnership with China from after 2017	0	0	4	3	0	0	7
○ Partnership with China from before 2017	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
○ Perceived Righteousness of China	0	0	2	0	0	1	3
○ Perceived Righteousness of EU	8	5	0	0	1	0	14
○ Reforms Effectuated due to Conditionality EU	5	2	0	0	0	0	7
○ Reforms Effectuated not due to Conditionality EU	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
○ Statement on Identity Convergence China	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
○ Statement on Identity Convergence EU	6	1	0	0	1	0	8
○ Statement on Non-Identity Convergence China	0	0	13	5	6	4	28

○ Statement on Non-Identity Convergence EU	7	1	0	0	0	0	8
○ Use of Language Pro-China	0	0	0	0	3	3	6
○ Use of Language Pro-EU	2	4	1	0	1	0	8
Totals	52	22	54	19	24	18	189

Table 21
Results ATLAS.ti Codes Serbia

	SEIORSG (2015)	SEIORSG (2016)	Petrović (2018)	Stojadinović & Rašković Talović (2018)	Jeremić (2017)	Jojić (2017)	Totals
○ Diffusion of norms China	0	0	14	28	2	10	54
○ Diffusion of norms EU	3	2	0	0	1	0	6
○ Disadvantages of Chinese FDI	0	0	1	1	0	1	3
○ Disadvantages of EU Membership	6	3	0	1	1	4	15
○ Funds and/or Financial Assistance China	0	1	17	40	15	24	97
○ Funds and/or Financial Assistance EU	2	3	0	0	1	0	6
○ Higher Level of knowledge on EU	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
○ Limited Impact/Power EU	5	7	0	0	0	0	12
○ Lower Level of Knowledge on China	0	0	6	0	0	0	6
○ Lower Level of Knowledge on EU	5	4	0	0	0	0	9
○ Partnership with China from after 2017	0	0	1	1	0	3	5

○ Partnership with China from before 2017	0	0	3	13	1	1	18
○ Perceived Righteousness of China	0	0	16	27	10	8	61
○ Perceived Righteousness of EU	9	4	0	3	1	0	17
○ Reforms Effectuated due to Conditionality EU	0	0	0	0	3	1	4
○ Reforms Effectuated not due to Conditionality EU	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
○ Statement on Identity Convergence China	0	0	6	7	5	5	23
○ Statement on Identity Convergence EU	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
○ Statement on Non-Identity Convergence China	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
○ Statement on Non-Identity Convergence EU	7	3	0	5	3	3	21
○ Use of Language Pro-China	0	0	9	14	4	6	33
○ Use of Language Pro-EU	3	3	0	0	0	0	6
Totals	41	32	73	140	47	66	399

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