

Mapping the Global Balkans: Sovereignty, Governmentality and the
Practices of Serbia's Encounters with Emerging Economies and the EU

by

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ABSTRACT --- Seen as simultaneously a part of Europe and not-yet-fully European, as a liminal space straddling the borderlands of Europe, the Western Balkans usually appear as peripheral within the international order. Measured against the continuing centrality of the EU to wider international economic and (to a lesser extent) political relations, the region is often seen as falling short of the necessary associations and global connections. Yet, the rise of new powers and groupings, such as the BRICS countries, has crystalized Western Balkan imbrications and active participation in global politics. Using Serbia as my case study and China and Russia as emerging economies of focus, this dissertation traces the logics and practices of the latter processes. It argues that Serbia's integration into global network formations is constituted through a series of interplays between sovereign-reign and economic-governmental forms of reason. The region's global engagements are constituted through a "Balkan-style" signature of power that brings into play (and blends), simultaneously, concessions and augmentations of sovereignty alongside (neo)liberal/biopolitical governmentality and glorifies both of these in a national(ist) praxeology.

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1. Introduction

Excluded from the international community following close to a decade of civil war, the Western Balkans are still widely regarded as disconnected and marginal – as the “borderlands of Europe” (Duffield, 2001) to be policed and reformed.¹ Whether in the popular media, academic or public policy literature, knowledge production on the region has been overwhelmingly confined to the region’s relationship with Europe, specifically its shortcomings in implementing the European Union’s (EU) reform program. As with other spaces and places located outside the West, underlying much of the writing on the Western Balkans is a binary between the latter and Europe, with Europe representing the standard against which the region is defined and evaluated (see Chakrabarty, 2000). This hierarchical relationship has in turn lead to conclusions that the Balkans are the most nationalist and primordial, least cosmopolitan and “enlightened” region in Europe and therefore in need of the EU's "civilizing" influence.

Yet, while the region's efforts at EU integration have consumed academic and public policy attention, less noted are the region’s connections with spaces and places outside Europe. Less attention has been devoted to the political, economic and social connections that have been

¹ Wary of cultural and political essentialisms often associated with “the Balkans,” I am interested in exploring the region referred to as the “Western Balkans” as a site of global connectivity. Geographically, the label refers to six out of the seven countries of the former Yugoslavia (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo [under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99]) plus Albania. While all of these but Albania have the experience of common statehood, the European Union effectively invented the region as a political and economic entity through the Regional Approach and then more formally through the Stabilization and Association Process (Elbassani; 2008), a policy framework that grouped the eight states together and offered the prospect of EU membership provided that they satisfy a common set of conditions. These conditions were designed to address the challenges said to be specific to and faced by all eight states – and thus provided the basis for the differentiation and creation of the Western Balkans as coherent and distinct from “the Balkans” more generally. As my aim is to understand the global network formations in the post-Yugoslav space in the context of the latter’s relationship with the EU – and thus, in the context of the regional and global political processes within which it is embedded – I have chosen to use the “Western Balkan” label because it emerged from, and is an effect of, these same processes and practices.

established between the region and various so-called “emerging economies,”² such as the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), MINTs, (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey) or the Gulf states. Some of these connections are reviving old ties, such as those between Russia and Serbia, or between Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Others are newer in nature, such as those with China and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and represent new sources of economic development for the region. Relationships range from diplomatic cooperation, investments in strategic industries, and logistical and infrastructure projects that link the Balkan peninsula with Central Europe, the Middle East and North Africa (Poulain, 2011), to initiatives that are more spontaneous in nature, such as the formation of the Chinese diaspora (ibid.; Korac, 2013). In certain instances, relations with emerging economies are reviving transnational projects with imperial histories and legacies, such as those associated with pan-Slavism and neo-Ottomanism. In others, as is the case with the states of the Gulf and China, modernist-developmental solidarities are being mobilized. Therefore, measured against EU associations, the region may fall short of the EU's insertion in the global political economy. However, these growing ties with emerging economies, established through a variety of cultural, economic and diplomatic connections, suggest a higher degree of connectivity, a more “global Balkans,” than is usually perceived.

By exploring the nature of the region's global encounters, this research project makes three main contributions. First, in bringing to light the Western Balkans' relations with rising global powers and therefore their participation in the shifts that have come to characterize global politics, the region can be reconceptualised as something other than the “the periphery of the

² I use scare quotes here to acknowledge both the social construction of the “emerging economy” label and the multiform historical trajectories of the respective states, which may be more accurately captured by the term (re)emerging. I nonetheless employ the “emerging economies” label throughout the dissertation in continuity with the popular understanding of the nature of the presence of the respective states on the global stage.

periphery of Europe” (Bechev, 2012). Second, with respect to the conventional assumption that global and transnational networks are voluntary, horizontal and rooted in civil society (e.g. Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Castells, 2000a; Khagram et. al. 2000; Rosenau, 2002), my research will highlight the strategic, state-sponsored processes through which the latter are created and maintained.³ Moreover, while networks are predominantly regarded as devolving power from the state (ibid.; Castells 2000b), this project will detail how statehood may be strengthened in the context of networked connections. Third, by examining the power logics constitutive of emerging economy engagements in the Western Balkans, my research brings forth a richer understanding of emerging economies than is provided by accounts (see Naim, 2007; Ikenberry, 2011) which view them as either straightforward challengers or endorsers of the status quo.

Argument

My research project explores global encounters in the Western Balkans. While the project is situated within a broader perspective of understanding the region’s overall integration into global network formations, its focus will be on the region’s (and specifically Serbia’s) encounter with emerging economies (specifically, Russia and China) in the context of EU integration. It asks: how have emerging economies inserted themselves and been positioned in the region and how are these connections in turn positioned in relation to the region’s relations with the EU?

To answer this question, I undertake a two-fold examination. First, drawing on a Foucauldian governmentality analytic, I map the attributes of the region’s encounters with

³ While recognizing that distinctions between global, transnational and international networks are not straightforward, I define “international networks” as those between state actors. In line with Basch et al. (1994), “transnational networks” comprise social relations which transverse borders to link societies of origin and settlement. “Global networks” are meetings or exchanges between state and/or social actors on the scale of the world. Going forward, I will mostly refer to global networks and connections to underscore the ambitions and orientations of the examined encounters.

emerging economies. I trace the “mentalities of rule” (Dean, 1999) that underwrite the programs and practices through which connections with emerging economies are (re)produced. I focus on the “topologies of government” (Walters and Haahr, 2004: 292), and thus on the subjects and objects of government, the ends towards which government is directed and the techniques of governing constitutive of the encounters I detail. A governmentality reading of emerging economy presence allows me to supplement mainstream accounts, which view the activities and areas of cooperation in the region in terms of the rational/national interests and material power of states, by illuminating the productive, that is, discursive-epistemic and practical-technical, forms of power imbricated within and (re)produced through these various encounters of and beyond states.

Second, using Bourdieu’s (1977; 1992; 2010) concepts of field, habitus, capital, *illusio* and *doxa*, I formulate a practice-theoretical account of Serbia’s political-diplomatic and economic relationships at the nexus of its relationship with the EU and emerging economies. I focus on the “every-day practices” (cf. Adler-Nissen, 2011; Adler-Nissen and Pouliot, 2014) of the connections forged between the region and emerging economies and the “practical sense” (Bourdieu, 1997; 1992) informing their (re)production. As my approach towards uncovering the practical sense informing each of the fields that I survey focuses on the political actors in the Western Balkans involved in these encounters, the project includes as its subjects actors that tend to be situated at the margins of global politics and are treated predominately as the objects of analysis. This project can therefore be situated not only within the “interpretive turn” (Neufeld, 1993), but the “globalizing International Relations” (IR) project (Hutchings, 2011, Tickner, 2004; Vasilaki, 2012), which seeks to articulate the voices, and theorize from the position, of

those located outside the centres of power.⁴ This is an important contribution given the exclusion of “indigenous” historiographical and theoretical sources in theorizing the region, and the related tendency to treat the Western Balkan region “as a source of data, rather than knowledge” (Kusic, 2020), as a setting from which to gather empirical information and test theory, rather than a site generating knowledge of its own.

Therefore, using Serbia as a case study, and China and Russia as emerging economies of focus, I argue that engagements between emerging economies and Serbia are neither unitary nor uniform, but are constituted through a series of interplays between sovereign-reign and economic-governmental forms of reason. Serbia’s integration into global networks takes place through a “Balkan-style” signature of power, one that brings into play (and blends), simultaneously, concessions and augmentations of *sovereignty* alongside (neo)liberal and biopolitical forms of *governmentality* and glorifies both of these in a national(ist) praxeology. Distinct iterations of this interplay are identified in the Western Balkan-EU encounter in the context of EU accession (chapter 2), and in the Western Balkan-emerging economy encounters in the diplomatic-political and infrastructure/economic fields (chapters 3 and 4). The effect of the governmental practices constituting Serbia’s regional and global encounters, through various intergovernmental frameworks and transnational material connections, has not been a disaggregation of sovereignty, but rather the mobilization of the national community understood

⁴ In making the latter claim, it should be acknowledged that there are tensions in the straightforward identification of the Western Balkan subject with the subaltern. Rather than asserting any definitive status, it is as a site of knowledge production, that I include the Western Balkans as “subaltern” within the “globalizing IR” project. Unlike Spivak’s (2008) subaltern subject, the Western Balkans lack experience with the type of European colonialism that Africa, Latin America and South Asia experienced (Baker, 2018). While the region has been marked by a persistent investment in the reproduction of modernity/coloniality, it has never quite attained this dual status as such (Kusic, *under review*). Thus, unlike other spaces and places located outside the centre, that is the West, the region’s “many expressions of national, urban and socioeconomic identity enact an identification with Europe” (Baker, 2018:11).

both as a population to be managed and regulated and as an entity to be augmented as a sovereign state.

Preliminary notes on the research design as it relates to the argument

Serbia is well positioned as the site for this research project given its ability to “activate more actors and more basic mechanisms” (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 229) with respect to the research question than is the case with other Western Balkan states. As elaborated in the Research Design and Methodology section of this chapter, the extent of Serbia’s simultaneous relations with both emerging economies as well as the EU makes it a particularly rich source of information on the presence of emerging economies in the region and their positionality vis-à-vis the EU. Thus, it is not because Serbia represents a surrogate for the Western Balkans as a whole, but rather an exception of sorts, that informs my decision to use it as the case study for this research project – Serbia is meant to function as a “paradigmatic case” (ibid.: 230) since it highlights general characteristics of the mentalities and practices at play and can serve as a model case for further study of emerging economy connections in the region. Corresponding to my understanding of the Western Balkans as a political effect of EU accession, and thus drawing on the broader idea that the Balkans were “invented” through their encounters with the West (Todorova, 1999), I similarly trace and therefore treat the Serbian nation as an effect of regional and global encounters.

Before proceeding, I also want to briefly reflect on my positionality – my status as both an insider and an outsider, and my own “global-Balkan” identity as a scholar and young professional – because it has influenced the research process throughout, affecting both the “formulation of knowledge and its interpretation” (Sherif, 2001: 437). Without being able to

pinpoint any immediately identifiable bias, the questions I asked, the way I interpreted the empirical data and my interactions in the field were undoubtedly shaped by my childhood in the Western Balkans,⁵ experiences of immigration to and education in Canada and the United Kingdom, and experience of working in international development in general and Chongqing, China⁶ in particular. As someone born in the region, yet raised and educated elsewhere, I was both an insider and an outsider in the field. As a result, by emphasizing my local heritage, I could claim both belonging and proximity to my research site and subjects, as well as distance myself from it, by emphasizing my foreign credentials. I had a certain degree of agency over how I was perceived, which allowed me to “manage” my positionality to an extent (much like I argue Serbia does within its “global-Balkan” trajectory).

My identity in the field was dependent on the context of the particular interaction and the social positioning of the particular interlocutor, so that individuals associated with the EU or whose politics aligned with Serbia’s EU integration tended to perceive me as an insider, whereas those individuals associated with emerging economies and whose politics aligned with a more nationalist-conservative agenda tended to treat me as an outsider. However, since I could move from being an insider to an outsider through the course of interacting with my interview subjects, my position, whether as an outsider or an insider, was not fixed but dynamic. For example, while prior to my interviews with Serbian officials I was often regarded as someone who belonged to the region (due to my family name and linguistic fluency), the consent forms and note taking, my credentials and sources of research funding tended to distance me from my initially perceived regional identity. This worked to progressively position me as an outsider in the course of the

⁵ I was born in Bar, Montenegro and grew up in Belgrade, Serbia. I have family from Croatia and Macedonia.

⁶ My experience working on the Canadian government-funded Migrant Labour Occupational Health and Safety Project just prior to starting the PhD program at Carleton was in part responsible for the success I had in securing interviews with Chinese foreign service officials in Serbia. I relied on the contacts I made with officials at the Chinese Ministry of Commerce in Beijing to connect me to officials working at the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.

interview process. During certain interactions, my identity as a scholar allowed me to project a certain degree of neutrality as well as authority on account of being a scholar from the West.

This in turn affected my experience in the field. As detailed in the Research Design and Methodology section, when I was positioned as an insider, interview subjects were willing to be both more candid and more willing to share their contacts for additional interviews, as well as inform me about relevant research and workshops that may be of interest. When I was perceived as an outsider, certain individuals were unwilling to even be interviewed by me. Oftentimes, interview subjects and interlocutors tried to deduce my politics from my positionality, which likewise affected the nature of our interaction. Finally, it could also be said that my use of governmentality and practice-theory, both of which are rooted in a post-positivist epistemology, is connected to the lived experience of my shifting positionality. This experience sensitized me to the discursively and intersubjectively constructed nature of the social world and made me more inclined to challenge the supposed naturalness of social structures, both of which governmentality and practice-theory give us the conceptual tools to undertake.

Literature Review

The Western Balkans

The Western Balkans' post-conflict, post-socialist trajectory has been largely understood in relation to the region's engagements with the EU (Anastasakis and Bechev, 2003; Pippan, 2004; Bartlett, 2007; Pridham, 2007; Elbasani, 2008; Bastian, 2008; Belloni, 2009; Levitsky and Way, 2010; Bieber, 2011; Rupnik, 2011; Radeljic, 2013).⁷ Evaluated against these processes, the

⁷ Flemming notes (2000:1226) “it is during moments of ‘crisis’ (as in the disintegration of Yugoslavia or the conflict of Kosovo) that most scholarly, or semi-scholarly, work on the Balkans has been written.” For the most part, the region has been made knowable within the scholarly community through its history of instability and conflict. The same tends to apply within Political Science in general and international relations (IR) in particular. While

region is seen as falling short in terms of meeting the requirements of EU membership, and a "discourse of lack or insufficiency" (Sidaway, 2003)⁸ prevails in the academic and public policy literatures concerning the social, political and economic affairs in the region. Assessments of the region's trajectory have led scholars and policy experts to refer to the region as the "super-periphery" (Bartlett and Prica, 2013), "periphery of the periphery" (Bechev, 2012), an "anomaly" (Kostovicova and Bojicic-Dzelilovic, 2005: 227), a "problematic cluster" (Batt, 2004), a "ghetto" (European Stability Initiative, 2005) or "invariably late" (Ristic, 2009:122). These evaluations carry with them both spatial and temporal connotations. Temporally, the region is seen as lagging behind the rest of Europe – implying that it lacks a number of features of modern polities and societies. Spatially, it questions the region's belonging within Europe. In both instances, "Europe" is the primary reference point in understanding the region and its development.

In seeking to explain the region's shortcomings, the academic literature within political science has tended to focus on diagnosing the region's shortcomings, specifically those that are a barrier to closer association with the EU. Batt (2004) seminally identified a number of "complex conditions" in the region, including societies that are fragmented into small informal networks at the expense of the formation of robust social movements and parties capable of keeping leaders

challenging the view of the region as inherently violent, even a seminal work within critical IR studies, Lene Hansen's (2006) *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, uses the case study of war to problematize conventional discourses. It is therefore consistent with the dominant trend of knowledge production on the region which makes the region knowable through insecurity and violence (the same applies to David Campbell's (1998) *National Deconstruction: Violence, Identity, and Justice in Bosnia*). To this, I would add the growing body of literature (to be discussed shortly) situated at the intersection of comparative politics and (international) public policy, that is concerned with studying the region's accession to the European Union. This body of literature is focused on evaluating the reform efforts as well as the effectiveness of the various policy mechanisms employed by the European Union, such as conditionality, to secure compliance with the necessary reforms (for an example of the latter, see Shelton, 2015). Taking Europe as the standard of developed statehood, this scholarship invariably constructs the region as "less than" and as "falling short." Thus, while the former reads the region as violent and unstable (on the basis of cultural characteristics), the latter sees it as inherently undeveloped (on the basis of internal political and economic characteristics). Both essentialize the region as inherently deviating from the norm, implying that the societies in question are "governed by determinate natures that inhere in them in the same way that they are supposed to inhere in the entities of the natural world" (Inden, 1990).

⁸ Sidaway (2003) has used the phrase to describe discourses relating to African state sovereignty. I use the phrase here because I find that it captures the discourse on Western Balkan states equally well.

accountable, distorted economic liberalization, and state weakness caused by corruption and the expansion of military and security forces within the state. Bieber (2011) cites the unresolved "status issues," which he defines as the contested nature of borders and the formal and informal challenges to the symbolic and material power of the state. Elbasani (2013) identifies historical legacies, weak states and the feebleness of pro-EU reformers as conditions undermining EU integration.

Two inter-related assumptions are shared by the above diagnostic literature. First, the literature assumes an essence to the Western Balkans that is a deviation from "the norm," one that is unambiguously found within Europe defined in terms of political, economic, and cultural modernity. In this context, Western Balkan states are treated as inherently undeveloped, undemocratic, or corrupt, and the focus tends to be on studying the prevalence, nature and intensity of these phenomena rather than the processes through which they are produced. Second, and relatedly, rather than treat the above "shortcomings" as outcomes, connected to the region's particular insertion into the global political economy – shortcomings that have been produced through a particular configuration of "the domestic" and "the international" – the above literature tends to treat the prevalence of corruption, state weakness, and illiberalism as products of voluntary actions. It brackets the more structural aspects from its analysis. The region's shortcomings are treated as confined to it and as phenomena that are largely a product of processes internal to Western Balkan states.

To the extent that scales "above and beyond" the nation-state are examined – i.e., the global or the transnational – these are examined not to demonstrate how "internal" phenomena are products of complex processes that transverse scales. Rather, they too are examined within voluntary frameworks of social action to suggest that when combined with certain internal

features of statehood, such as the absence of rule of law, they make certain associations more likely than others. For example, the region's involvement with transnational crime and terrorist networks has figured prominently in the literature and has been cited as an important barrier to Europeanization (Bardos, 2004; Andreas, 2004; Kostovicova and Bojicic-Dzelilovic, 2008; Bardos, 2014). Similarly, diaspora networks (Baraulina et. al. 2007; Ragazzi and Balalovska, 2011) have been examined in the context of civil war and the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia. The transnational connections that have been explored have overwhelmingly been those connections that undermine the region's cosmopolitanism. In the latter scholarship, the region is treated as a passive subject, vulnerable and susceptible to negative feedback loops, as illegal elements or diasporic networks lead to or "capture" weak states.

As with the above bracketing of the international/global, discussions of the prevalence of violence, crime, terrorism etc., treat the region as an aberration of the international order rather than constitutive of it. Rather than seeing state weakness as ontologically constitutive of the international system (Hozic, 2006), in that, following Agamben (1998), it is the exception and not the law which constitutes the essence of power, the Western Balkans are Othered in much of the literature as an anomalous periphery rather than a formative part of the international order. Much of the literature pathologizes the Western Balkans by essentializing them, rendering them peripheral to the "centre of things" in the process. Acknowledgment of the region's agency, the diversity of associations, and the interplay between them is absent from the literature that seeks to primarily attribute the region's shortcomings to conditions internal to it.

Against these prevailing trends, a body of scholarship has been evolving since the 1990s which seeks to denaturalize the above taken for granted assumptions and problematize the symbolic geography informing the (above) representations of the region (see Goldsworthy, 1998;

Flemming, 2000; Bjelic, 2002; 2006; Hozic, 2004; 2006; Lindstorm, 2003; Bjelic, 2011; Zivkovic, 2011). In its earliest manifestations, this scholarship was characterized by the application of Edward Said's *Orientalism* to the study of the cultural politics in the region. Bakic-Hayden (1992) and Hayden (1995) were seminal in pointing out the “nested orientalism” that have been internalized by the region.⁹ The scholarship has since established *Balkanism* as a separate and distinct analytical lens from *Orientalism* (Bjelic, 2002: 4).¹⁰ Rather than seeking to specify what the Balkans are, this body of scholarship has been interested in probing the construction of “the Balkans” in the Western imaginary (Bjelic, 2002). My interest in this line of research stems from its commitment to denaturalizing the dominant systems of representation through which the Western Balkans have been made knowable and the questions that the research poses about the region's inclusion/exclusion from Europe.

In addition, two additional sets of critical interventions have been made in recent years, and it is on their sentiment that my research project draws. First, both Baker (2018a; 2018b) and

⁹ Explaining the concept, Bakic-Hayden, (1995: 918) states, “The gradation of “Orient” that I call “nesting orientalism” is a pattern of reproduction of the original dichotomy upon which Orientalism is premised. In this pattern, Asia is more “East” or “other” than eastern Europe; within eastern Europe itself this gradation is reproduced with the Balkans perceived as most “eastern”; within the Balkans there are similarly constructed hierarchies.” For example, it follows that Macedonia is more “East” than Slovenia.

¹⁰ Balkan scholars have come to insist that Balkanism is not a subspecies of Orientalism, but has its own unique properties (Bjelic, 2002). While the contours of Balkanism and its definition are themselves a subject of debate, several differences between Balkanism and Orientalism were seminally articulated by Todorova (1997; 2009). First, Todorova argues that the historical and geographic concreteness attributed to the Balkans was never characteristic of the intangible nature of the Orient. Second, whereas Said notes that the Orient served as an escape from civilization and contained a mystical, “female” appeal, Todorova argues that the unimagined concreteness and almost total lack of wealth in the Balkans induced a “straightforward attitude, usually negative...a distinctly male appeal: the appeal of medieval knighthood, of arms and plots” (Todorova, 2009:14). Third, whereas the West and the Orient are usually represented as two incompatible entities, two wholes opposed to one another, characteristic of Balkan representations is their transitory status, the image of a bridge and/or crossroad between East and West as well as in terms of stages of growth (hence the labels “semideveloped,” “semicolonial,” and “semicivilized”). Todorova notes that the Balkans are constructed not as an incomplete Other, but an incomplete Self. Therefore, unlike Orientalism, which she argues is a discourse of “imputed opposition,” Balkanism is a discourse of “imputed ambiguity.” Fourth, she notes the differences concerning the experiences and history of colonialism in the region as well as the prevailing perception by the peoples of the Balkans that they are part of Europe and were not colonial subjects. She therefore questions whether the task of “provincializing Europe” when speaking from the Balkans can be meaningfully carried out. Finally, on the issue of race, she notes that while Orientalism deals with a difference between imputed “types,” Balkanism deals with the imputed difference within “one type.”

Bjelic (2017) have sought to connect Balkan postcoloniality with global structures of coloniality and race. Challenging how the Balkans have been excluded and have excluded themselves from discussions of race, racism and whiteness – on account of never having possessed overseas empires – both Baker and Bjelic detail the region’s history of participation and investment in racialized imaginaries that order global politics into spaces that are and those that are not modern. The second intervention takes up the call by Chari and Verdery (2009:12) to foster research connections between postsocialism and postcolonialism in order “to think critically about colonial relationships together with market and democratic transitions.” *Decolonial Theory and Practice in Southeast Europe* (2019) seminally invites scholars to complement postsocialist readings of South East Europe with post- and decolonial theory “in order to appreciate the region’s imperial and (quasi-) colonial legacies, contemporary forms of domination, hierarchy and resistance and for identifying practices of complicity and collaboration, but also of struggle, protest and resistance (Kusic, Lottholtz, and Manolova, 2019: 8).” Both interventions extend initial concerns with deconstructing the epistemic frames that have positioned the region as lagging behind Europe by opening up new methodological and conceptual avenues of research and critique. Both interventions seek to understand the region in relation to, and as connected with, global politics and transnational processes.

Global Networks

While networks first emerged as an object of study in sociology and social psychology (Lazer, 2011: 61), they have subsequently been taken up by a number of disciplines and sub-disciplines including management and organizational studies (Tharelli, 1986; Powell, 1990); public policy (Borzel and Heard-Laureote, 2009; Jung and Lake, 2011); political economy (Gereffi et al., 2005) and political geography (Brenner, 2001; Keil and Mahone, 2009). Within international

relations (IR), networks tend to be understood either as a specific mode of organization or as a structure-like formation. With respect to the former, networks are treated as a mode of organization that facilitates collective action and cooperation, exercises influence, or serves as a means of international governance (Hafner-Burton et. al., 2009). Within this line of research, networks are a type of organization that is distinguished from both markets and hierarchies (see Powell, 1990), they are a "third sector" (Khagram et. al. 2000: 11) that is separate from both the public and private spheres. Research on transnational advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink, 1999; Risse and Sikkink, 1998; Khagram et. al. 2000; Kahler, 2009), epistemic communities (Haas, 1992) and global governance (Rosenau, 1999; Held and McGrew, 2002) is emblematic of this line of research. Within this strand of the literature, networks operate outside of systemic structures. Networks (as one form of organization) are regarded as a challenge to the state (another form of organization). Since networks are seen as devolving power from the state, the relationship between states and networks is generally treated as zero-sum.¹¹

Alternatively, networks have also been conceptualized as structures that constrain and enable agents towards particular courses of action (see Montgomery, 2005; Hafner-Burton and Montgomery, 2006; Kinsella, 2006; Flesmes, 2013). Integrating the theoretical assumptions and methodological tools of social network analysis (SNA),¹² the "network approach" is employed to measure patterns of relationships between actors (such as degree of closeness, centrality and in-betweenness), test propositions about causality and develop predictions (Hafner-Burton, 2009). As the focus of this literature is on interactions between nodes rather than their attributes, the

¹¹ Castells' concept of the "network society" shares many of the assumptions held by this strand of the literature. While he regards networks as an automation, and sees the emergence of the network society as an outcome of the spread of information and communication technologies, something that is secondary to the study of networks in IR, he regards global networks as a type of organization that is challenging the power of the state, which has "stopped being a sovereign entity" (Castells, 2000a: 19). His views on power within networks, specifically the dissolution of centers and hierarchies within them, is likewise shared by this strand of the literature.

¹² For an overview of what SNA is, see Wasserman and Faust (1994).

“network as structure approach” is associated with a relational account of world politics. Events are explained through relations between states, rather than states’ internal attributes. Thus, for example, Goddard (2009) argues that change in international politics occurs when political entrepreneurs, who, in a position to act as brokers between networks, remake and transform structures by contesting norms and shifting identities. Her argument is premised on the ontological claim made by social network theorists that norms and identities are endogenous to relations between actors rather than external to them (see Jackson and Nexon, 1999).

While the "networks as modes of organization" and "networks as structure" literatures differ with respect to the focus of their analysis and the degree to which they see social action as a product of voluntary versus structural inducements, they nevertheless exhibit certain similarities. In their application, both focus on networks within the context of *inter*-national relations. Both tend to assume the distinction between the inside and outside of states (Walker, 1993) that has been foundational to IR (see Wight, 1960). They share a state-centric orientation, or what Beck (2006) refers to as "methodological nationalism."¹³ Here, the inside and outside of the nation-state are regarded as two separate levels of analysis. At the same time, the analytical tools that are used for the study of processes outside the state, such as the formation of issue-specific networks, tend to be those that have been developed for the study of processes within the state. For example, Keck and Sikkink (1998) refer to the domestic social movement literature in their discussion of transnational advocacy networks; Adamson (2005) applies the domestic analogy to her study of transnational networks of violence. Inter-/transnational networks are therefore studied in the context of state-centric concepts and methodologies, rather than those that reflect the specificity of these processes.

¹³ Much of the discussion on global networks within international political economy (see Gilpin, 2001) and seminal writings on transnational connections within critical theory (see Cox, 1986) are likewise written from the state-centric perspective.

Second, both under-theorize power which limits their understandings of network relations in practice. The “network as mode of organization” scholarship neglects to account for the influence of structural power on the formation of networks, relations within networks, and their effectiveness (i.e., the ability of networks to exert an influence on systemic structures). Power is conceptualized as a “one-dimensional” (Lukes, 1974/2005) property that some wield over others. Moreover, while not all actors within networks are treated as necessarily being equal, the assumption of horizontality nonetheless means that the latter approach is largely silent on the superiority of certain network participants to create, disproportionately shape or exit from networks. While the “network as structure” literature is more alert to the power asymmetries within networks (e.g., Padgett and Ansell, 1993; Goddard, 2009 mentioned above), while it emphasizes the structural dimensions and effects of network participation and introduces a relational concept of power, its treatment of power remains flat as the more productive or “intensive” (Allen, 2009) aspects of power cannot be captured by the methodological tools of SNA.¹⁴ Finally, as both approaches bracket from their consideration how power may be embedded and mobilized through networks, they tend to reify networks rather than treat them as social processes.

Outside this international relations literature, scholarship within anthropology, sociology, economic geography and diaspora studies has been more attuned to both the productive and deductive nature of power and the social processes through which networked connections are created and sustained. In contrast to the abstract conceptualization of networks found in political science, studies of global connections within sociology and anthropology (Burawoy et al., 2000;

¹⁴ In his definition of intensive power, Allen (2009:198) contrasts it with extensive power. Whereas the latter is associated with territorial power and authority, and tends to emanate outwards from an administrative center, the former involves a “topological mix of distanced and proximate actions” which compose the spaces of which they are a part.

Hardt and Negri, 2000; Dicken et al., 2004; Kendall, 2004; Ong and Collier, 2005; Tsing, 2005) have tended to account for the specific programs and practices that make up global networks.¹⁵ Methodologically, these approaches are concerned with tracing connections as opposed to measuring the strength of relations. They therefore produce accounts that treat networks not as reified organizations, but as systems that are constantly recreated through social interaction. They tend to focus on examining the *work* of building and maintaining networks, rather than the ties themselves, emphasizing the “mediated forms of interaction which effectively bridge, and connect people and things in some provisionally stable patterns of relationships” (Allen, 2009:204). Moreover, in contrast to the studies of globalization that associate networks with the emergence of a "network society" (Castells, 2000a; 2000b) or the proliferation of global value chains (Georeffi, 2005), both of which interpret globalization flows as a "unified global enterprise” (Kendall, 2004), writings in anthropology and sociology tend to be more attuned to the multiplicity of global networks making up globalization.

With respect to the limitations associated with the application of the domestic analogy and the separation between the inside and outside of nation-states, writings in economic sociology (Robinson, 2004; Sassen, 2007), economic and human geography (Brenner, 1999; 2001; Harvey, 2001; Allen, 2003; Coewn, 2014) and diaspora studies (Rouse, 1991; Basch et. al, 1994) tend to problematize the impermeability of boundaries between national and inter-/trans-national processes and the zero-sum relations posited between the two. By showing how global processes are organized within national arenas, and the participation of various international actors within national processes, they challenge binary thinking that assumes a clear-cut

¹⁵ Literature that does not deal explicitly with global networks but explores "the global," such as Neumann and Sending (2010), is likewise useful in specifying the social processes of network formations and the power logics behind these.

distinction between the global and the national.¹⁶ Moreover, they tend to be explicitly concerned with the political processes through which the “global,” “national” and/or “local” are constructed and maintained as separate social entities.

In recognizing the multi-stranded social relations that span borders and link together migrants' societies of origin and settlement (Basch et. al, 1994: 7), diaspora studies recognize both the existence of boundaries and flows that transverse them, without reducing them to zero-sum relations. For example, in arguing that the domestic abroad is propelled by the state and that it in turn reaffirms state authority, Varadarajan (2010) sees diaspora networks as state-sponsored strategies responding to the reconfiguration of the capitalist state.¹⁷ Studies of migration and diaspora, like the above studies of globalization more generally, all challenge the idea that global networks are an inherent challenge to state sovereignty. Therefore, in contrast to the conventional IR conceptualizations of global networks as withering the power of the state, global networks are seen as social processes that are actively reproduced across scales, with states participating and, in certain instances, benefiting from the process.

Emerging Economies

Much of the literature on emerging economies is concerned with debates over classification and understanding the latter's emergence in relation to existing international and systemic arrangements. Questions have been raised concerning how best to label this phenomenon - "emerging" or "re-emerging" - partly as a way to question the extent to which the contemporary

¹⁶ In making this argument, they also challenge the writings within international political economy that treat the nation-state as a distinct and separate level of analysis.

¹⁷ Varadarajan (2010) introduces the concept of the domestic abroad to capture the new form of transnationalism that is produced through state policies and initiatives aimed at institutionalizing the relationship between nation-states and their diasporas. According to her (2010:6), the production of the domestic abroad rests on the constitution of diasporas as subjects of an expanded, territorially diffused nation and is linked to the neoliberal restructuring of the nation state.

emergence signals a new occurrence.¹⁸ The literature has explored which countries should be considered emerging economies and on the basis of what criteria it could be determined that a country is "emerging" on the international scene (Shaw et. al., 2009; Laidi, 2012; Cooper and Flemes, 2013). With respect to the BRICS, debate has centered on whether the countries form a collective block, and on the status of individual countries, especially Russia, within that grouping (Roberts, 2010; Rowlands, 2013; Mielniczuk, 2013).¹⁹ Where similarities have been found amongst the emerging economies, the following characteristics tend to be noted: commonality of exclusion from the ideological frameworks and governance structures of the world economy (Fourcade, 2013); history of (neo)colonialism; respect for sovereignty and non-interference; provision of aid without conditionalities while tying it to trade and investment opportunities (Woods, 2008). The emergence of these states has been linked to the transformation of the global economic order – away from one based on centre-periphery relations, towards one that is multipolar or polycentric (Subbaci, 2008; Flemes, 2013).²⁰ Finally, the extent and nature of cooperation between emerging economies has been surveyed so as to draw conclusions about the sustainability of emerging economy institutional arrangements (Woods, 2010; Viera and Alden, 2011).

Besides classification, the literature also seeks to position the rise of emerging economies in the context of the perception of the declining geopolitical importance of the West. Among international relations scholars, a prominent debate is concerned with the structural changes that

¹⁸ For a discussion on 'continuity and/or novelty' of these phenomena see Southall and Melber (2009) *The New Scramble for Africa? Imperialism, Investment and Development* and Shaw et. al (2009) "Emerging Powers and Africa: Implications for/from Global Governance." In recent years, with the slowdown of economic growth in Brazil, China and Russia, the usefulness of the label "emerging economies" has been questioned within popular media and public policy discussions. See Sharma (2012) "Broken BRICs."

¹⁹ For a useful empirical reference history of the BRICS as a term and institution see Stuenkel (2015).

²⁰ With an ever more increasing and prominent role played by countries outside the West, a debate has emerged about the continued relevance of concepts such as First World/Third World, Global North/Global South. For a useful overview of this debate as it pertains to emerging economies see Hurrell (2013).

the rise of new players on the international scene has induced (Zakaria, 2008; Brooks and Wohlforth, 2009; Khanna, 2009; Schweller, 2011; Schweller and Xiaoyu, 2011). From a policy perspective, there are some that see emerging economies as fundamentally different from, and posing a direct challenge to, the West. Speaking in the context of aid, Naim (2007: 97) argues that in contrast with Western donors, which are motivated by the desire to help developing countries, emerging economies are "motivated by a desire to further their own national interests, advance an ideological agenda, or sometimes line their own pockets." For Naim, emerging economies are revisionist powers seeking to replace the status quo with values that are fundamentally different and confrontational to existing arrangements. While differences between emerging economies may be acknowledged, the line of reasoning presented by the likes of Naim nonetheless tends to group all emerging economies together on account of their assumed monolithic, rigid, top-down structures. The central coordination of aid and foreign policy decision-making (Rowlands, 2012; Ban and Blyth, 2013) and the prominence of statist models of capitalist development in emerging economies (Stephen, 2014) are here implicitly contrasted with the supposed openness, flexibility and horizontality of Western states.

On the other hand, there are those who see the rise of emerging economies as more benign – as a matter of de-centering Western dominance within the existing international system. Ikenberry (2011:57), articulating the liberal institutionalist position, argues that while the United States' position in the global system is changing, emerging economies do not want to contest the basic rules and principles of the liberal world order, but seek to gain more authority and leadership within it. Contrasting Naim, Woods (2008:1206) argues that the emergence of new donors serves neither to overturn nor replace the rules of multilateral development assistance, but instead introduces competitive pressure the existing framework. Comparing the re-emerging

states to the G77 and the Non-Aligned Movement, both Golub (2013) and Prashad (2013) see the former as attempting to claim a central place in the current world-capitalist system rather than posing a fundamental challenge to it – providing a class analysis, they see the re-emergence as a case of elites in emerging economies not wishing to overturn the existing system of global governance but merely to join it. While this literature does question the extent to which emerging economies are a straightforward challenge to the established order, it does not challenge the discursive frame that sees emerging economies as either challengers or “status-quo” endorsers. It forecloses the possibility that emerging economies can be both challengers and status-quo endorsers depending on the situation and actors in question (cf. Jaeger, 2014).

While more recent scholarship has attempted to move beyond binary classifications to explore the hybrid nature of emerging economy engagements (Hurrell and Sengupta, 2012; Ban, 2013; Ban and Blyth, 2013; Stephen, 2014; Jaeger, 2014 and to some extent Hurrell, 2013), an overwhelming tendency to see emerging economies as variations of existing regimes and practices remains. That has perpetuated a constrained analytical framework within which to understand global changes, neglecting the possibility that the latter engender social forms that differ from binary conceptualizations presented in the literature. By studying emerging economies in the context of Dean’s “signature of power” (more on that below), my research project is sensitive to the way in which emerging economies can be both alternatives and/or complementary to the established order, both challengers and status-quo endorsers. By exploring the specific dynamics between emerging economy and EU engagements in the Western Balkans, I focus on specifying the practices and mentalities through which these competitive and/or complementary relations unfold. I therefore leave open the space to consider the “dynamic social

forces that both shape and are shaped by these multiple and diverse encounters” (Rajak 2012:171) without reducing them to either inherently revisionist or status-quo projects.

Theoretical Framework

My research project draws on practice-theoretical and governmentality approaches in international political sociology (IPS). IPS combines sociological analysis, the study of power and “the international – or perhaps global – dimensions of our collective experience” (Bigo and Walker, 2007a: 1). IPS seeks to challenge some of the foundational claims of international relations, on the separation and distinction between the inside and outside of the state (see Wight, 1960), by problematizing disciplinary practices that seek to affirm the sharp boundaries, borders and limits of modern political life (Bigo and Walker, 2007a). It does so, in part, by reflexively engaging with the lines of disciplinary inclusion/exclusion that have been institutionally (re)enforced, thus bringing into conversation the “traditional objects of study in sociology: social structures, practices and institutions” (Sassen, 2007:11) with questions concerning international power, political authority and identity. By bringing these two lines of research together, IPS explores the possibility of political life beyond the state and the social forces and spaces conventionally understood as traversing or outside it.

Governmentality studies (Miller and Rose, 1990; Rose and Miller, 1992; Larner and Walters, 2004; Dean, 2010; Walters, 2012) provide me with the main conceptual tools with which to think through the encounters between the Western Balkans and emerging economies. The governmentality lens looks at the activities that seek to shape conduct according to a particular set of norms and ends (Dean, 2010: 18). Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, governmentality studies examine the organized practices, techniques and knowledges though

which government takes place, paying attention to the ethical substance of government – to *what* is governed – the work of government – *how* one is governed – its subjects and objects – *who* is being governed – and the *telos* of ethical practices – the end goal sought by the activity of government (ibid., 26). Scholars within the governmentality framework see the exercise of political power as being marked by particular rationalities of rule, and it is those rationalities that they seek to expose. Therefore, in applying the theoretical tools of governmentality studies, my research project pays attention to the forms of reason that are embedded in the various practices through which Western Balkan engagements with emerging economies and the EU are (re)produced. I am especially interested in the objects and subjects of political power, the end goals towards which these various engagements are directed, and in Chapter 2, the techniques and technologies of rule.

Foucault did not only use the concept of governmentality as an analytic, however, but to name a particular, historically situated form of power (Walters and Haahr, 2004). I draw on governmentality in this historically situated sense when I speak about the interplay between sovereign-reign and governmental-economic forms of reason. Governmentality here refers to a type of power that first emerged in nineteenth century Europe (Walters and Haahr, 2004: 292) and had “as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security” (Foucault, 2007: 108). The latter refers to the techniques and knowledges through which the economy – defined as the proper management of individuals, wealth and goods (ibid.,: 94) – was introduced into the workings of the state, and thus become the subject of political practice. In contrast to the immanence of sovereignty and the latter’s concern with extending and exercising political power *over* territory, governmental power seeks to dispose “men and things” so as to lead to a “suitable end” (ibid., 96). Rather than

intervene directly on the objects over which power bears, governmental power governs through the arrangement and coordination of people and things. Within the government-population-security nexus, “the population” emerges as both the object and subject of government. Its members are no longer treated as the sources of the sovereign’s strength, and thus as subjects who are bound together in a territory and are required to submit to their sovereign, but are seen as social beings defined in relation to matters of life and death, health and illness, propagation and longevity (Dean, 2010: 127).

In developing his understanding of power, Foucault spoke of disciplinary power, biopolitics and developed concepts such as *raison d’Etat* and the police to refer to specific “regulatory ideas” (Foucault, 2007: 286), each of which corresponded to a specific mentality of rule. I draw on these, as appropriate, to further develop our understanding of the nature of Western Balkan engagements with both the EU and emerging economies. For example, as disciplinary power involves the regulation, ordering and surveillance of people in a territory (Dean, 2010: 29), I point to disciplinary forms of rule in the practices employed to monitor and direct the progress of Western Balkan states within the EU accession process. I identify elements of the “proto-governmentality of *raison d’Etat*”²¹ (Jaeger, 2013) in Serbia’s diplomatic relations with both China and Russia as these relations are concerned with the growth and the proper management of the state’s forces (e.g., wealth, individuals, goods etc.). The main concern of biopolitical rule – circulation – informs the construction of transnational roads and railways, which is to increase the volume, density and intensity of goods and people moving through Serbia. As the object on which this biopolitical power bears is the construction of the global

²¹ The proto-governmentality of *raison d’Etat*, which originally emerged in the sixteenth century, is the incipient early modern form of governmental power whose concern is with the detailed regulation of individuals and goods (police), the military and diplomatic conduct of the external relations of the state, and the proper management of the its wealth (mercantilism). This form of power “realizes itself” as governmental when it comes to concern itself with the population, specifically with augmenting its longevity, increasing its well-being, containing disease, etc.

market economy, and the imperatives driving these processes are (particular forms of) freedom and competition – to legitimize and augment Serbia’s position in its relations with the EU and its neighbouring states – elements of liberal and neoliberal governmentalities can also be identified.

In thinking about how these various forms of power relate to one another, I rely on Dean’s “signature of power” (Dean, 2013). For Dean, power is marked by a permanent movement between two poles, themselves changing in the process. The concept of power is only possible as a result of a series of binary distinctions – distinctions between “power to” versus “power over,” “power as capacity” versus “power as right,” etc. A reoccurring process takes place whereby these distinctions become unities in relation to other oppositions, which then become united in relation to new oppositions, and so on. For Dean, this process is an indication that there is an excess to the concept of power, beyond what it might capture, and it is that which propels this movement towards opposition, unification and further opposition. “In the sense that ‘power’ is marked by this recurrent bipolarity, it is... less a concept and more ‘a signature’ attached to the concept of power” (Dean, 2013:12). The idea of “the signature of power” is therefore introduced in order to account for this excess in the concept of power – the recurring presence of “power to” alongside “power over,” “power as capacity” alongside “power as right.” It is with reference to Dean’s “signature of power” that I conceptualize the above engagements as a series of interplays – as interplays between governance through freedom and governance through domination, between governmental and sovereign forms of reason, *raison d’Etat* and (neo)liberal/biopolitical concerns.

While governmentality provides me with the conceptual tools with which to understand the rationalities imbricated within Serbia’s encounters with the EU and emerging economies, I rely on Bourdieu’s practice-theory (1977; 1989; 1992) to think through the social dynamics and

the role of agents in (re)producing the various engagements. In other words, practice-theory allows me to complement governmentality's attention to the "mentalities of government" (Dean, 1999: 16) and related technologies with attention to how both of these take effect in the practices of Serbian political actors conducting relations with China and Russia.²² I use Bourdieu's (1977; 1992) concepts of field, habitus, *illusio*, capital and *doxa*, which he develops in order to explain the emergence of "practical" or "common sense" (Bigo, 2011; 226). Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 96) sees the social world as made up of relatively autonomous social fields. He defines fields as "particular configurations of objective relations between positions" (ibid.). A social space created through ongoing relations, Bourdieu sees each field as characterized by a particular arrangement of positions between actors in that field. As each field sees actors competing over a stake particular to that field, he likens a field to a game (ibid., 97). For example, within the political field, actors compete for elected office and appointments. Within the literary field, they compete for recognition and honours. Bourdieu argues that actors play the game and "oppose each other to the extent that they concur in their belief (*doxa*) in the game and its stakes; they grant these a recognition that escapes questioning." (ibid.). In other words, actors compete for stakes, abiding by the "rules" of the game, to the extent that they see the game and its stakes as legitimate. To say that actors "grant games a recognition that escapes questioning" is to say that the game appears as self-evident and natural, and is treated as such by the actors in the field. *Illusio* is the interest actors have in playing the game; it is that aspect of practical sense that motivates actors towards the pursuit of the stakes in a given field. As argued by Bourdieu (1987: 88), interest is at once the condition of the functioning of a particular field – it is why actors engage in a particular game – and a product of the way the field functions.

²² While practice-theory allows me to insert a social reading of the mentalities of power, a governmentality reading allows me to treat the practices as governmental, meaning that practices are not without power, but in their enactment seek to "shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons" (Gordon, 1991:2).

The structure of a field and the positions actors occupy within it are determined by the distribution and possession of capital within that field. Actors can draw on the various different forms of capital, or resources, in their possession (e.g., social capital, cultural, symbolic, and corporate capital) to act in a given field (Williams, 2007). Capital is efficacious within a field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 98), meaning that it does not have a force independent of the social field of which it is a part. The value of specific capitals is not transferable across fields, so that different capitals are valued differently in different fields. Cultural capital may be the most important resource in the literary field, whereas in the political field it may have low or no value. The concept of habitus refers to the system of dispositions that are generated within fields. Neither a product of conscious aiming nor mechanical determination, Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 99) sees the habitus as nonetheless generating fairly consistent strategies on the part of actors to act in ways that correspond to their positions within fields. Actions are rooted in dispositions, which, at the point of intersection with socially defined positions in a particular field, are actualized as practices (Pouliot and Merand, 2013: 31). Practical sense – the production of “self-evident” courses of action (ibid.) – is produced from the interaction of a set of dispositions (habitus) and positions (field) (Pouliot, 2008: 281).

Following the International Political Sociology literature that utilizes Bourdieu and Foucault to understand international politics (e.g., Abrahamsen, 2004; Adler-Nissen, 2013; Bigo and Tsoukala, 2008; Ilcan and Lacey, 2011; Isleyen, 2015; Jaeger, 2013; Kauppi, 2003; Pouliot, 2008; Salskov-Iverson et al., 2000; Sending and Neumann, 2006; Slater, 2006; Vauchez, 2008; Williams, 2007), I proceed to map the mentalities and practices constitutive of Serbia’s engagements with the EU, China and Russia. There are three reasons that I rely on IPS. First, apart from theoretical innovation, IPS has also introduced sociological empirical sensibilities to

IR. IPS thus allows me to build on the empirical data we have from the more mainstream literature and policy papers on the areas of cooperation between Western Balkan states and the EU and emerging economies (e.g., Centre for Euro-Atlantic Studies, 2016; Grgic, 2019; Larsen, 2020; Lachert, 2018; Mardell, 2020; Stratfor, 2015) by allowing me to delve into the “topologies of power” (Walters and Haahr, 2005: 292) that underpin the political and economic encounters that I examine. Whereas accounts grounded in realist, liberal-institutionalist or constructivist theoretical frameworks focus on the actors and their interests, institutions, and norms respectively, and how these may facilitate or undermine cooperation, governmentality studies allow me to study the forms of reason embedded in the various practices by focusing attention on the objects and subjects of government, the techniques of government and the ends towards which the latter is directed. A governmentality reading also supplements the emphasis on coercive, institutional, and normative forms of power in mainstream approaches with a focus on productive power and the concerns, types and forms it assumes in Serbia’s relations with the EU, China and Russia. The governmentality analytic thereby highlights that power is not only increased or decreased, applied, negotiated, or legitimized but may be *articulated* in discursive, epistemic, technical, and subjectifying (“identity-creating”) modes in different areas of cooperation.

Second, whereas classic and mainstream accounts of the changing dynamics within the international system (Gilpin, 1981; Morgenthau, 2001; Waltz, 1979) and similar discussions pertaining to the EU (Nitoiu, Cristian and Monika Sus, 2019; Rynning, 2010) and the Western Balkans treat the central concepts of their analysis, such as states, national interests and capabilities, as given and objective, IPS provides the analytical tools with which to trace the rationalities, practices and techniques through which the latter are produced (and thereby become

meaningful in the first place). While not necessarily dislodging, for instance, concerns with state power or national interests, IPS allows for denaturalizing the taken for granted categories like these with reference to the social and political processes through which they come to appear as natural and objective. This is a particularly important intervention with respect to our understanding of the Western Balkans given the tendency in the existing scholarship to ascribe an essence to the region, of lawlessness, corruption, weak statehood, etc., and to see its growing ties with emerging economies as products of those same essences. Larsen's (2020: 3) argument that Serbia's relationship with Russia is a product of "corrupt politicians seeking to consolidate their power by appealing to identity politics," for instance, is quite typical in treating corruption as a trait that is inherent to the Serbian political class.

Finally, the Balkans are prevailingly regarded as a site or object of great power struggle – as residual spaces left over after great power politics have been played out (Green, 2005). The region, as the "super-periphery" (Bartlett and Prica, 2013) or the "periphery of the periphery" (Bechev, 2012) is assumed to be lacking in agency and is relegated to the margins of international society. In contrast, through a practice-theoretical account I explain how Serbia is simultaneously forging closer relations with emerging economies and pursuing EU membership not with reference to the political calculations of great powers and decisions over "spheres of influence" made elsewhere, but in terms of the common sense informing its professionals of politics. Through a practice-theoretical account, I shed light on how political actors involved in encounters with established and emerging powers understand the practices that they are engaged in, how they explain their political orientations and justify their actions. While Western Balkan actors tend to be absent from the above-cited literature that nonetheless may not hesitate to name

them corrupt, a practice-theoretical account not only gives voice to actors hitherto absent, but treats them as active subjects in the changing dynamics of global politics.

Research Contributions

My argument about the Balkan-style signature of power makes a three-fold contribution to the literature. First, my research opens up the theoretical space to conceptualize the Western Balkans as something other than “the periphery of the periphery of Europe” (Bechev, 2012). The standard account of the Western Balkans assumes that they are an empty and agentless space, what is left over after relations between global powers have been played out (Green, 2005). I, however, detail the active participation of the region in world politics. Accounting for the way in which, on the one hand, the Serbian sense of “self” – its national habitus – has been shaped through its engagements with the EU, China and Russia, and, on the other, the way in which Serbia is an active participant in the articulation and projection of forms of power with global ambitions, I show that the region is a constitutive components in the changing dynamics of global politics. Moreover, in noting the interplays between freedom and domination, sovereign and governmental forms, *raison d’Etat* and (neo)liberal/biopolitical concerns, I attempt to overcome the conceptual binaries of “popular geopolitics” (Dittmer, 2010) through which the region is prevailingly understood. The latter constructs narratives around world politics in terms of essentialized categories of enemies and allies, core and periphery, agency and dependence, great powers vs. small states.

Second, with respect to emerging economies, while writing on emerging economies/rising powers in international relations has centered around their impact on the structure of the international system, discerning, for example, whether emerging economies are

status-quo or revisionist powers, my research project is concerned with understanding *how* emerging economies are situated within particular spaces and places. Moreover, whereas most writing on emerging economies/rising global powers has focused on “government as an empirical activity” (Dean, 2013:28), examining, for example, emerging economy-led institutional arrangements and the extent to which they depart from the established economic and political order, I examine the mentalities and practices behind emerging economy engagements with the purported margins and peripheries of global politics. I therefore shed light on the conditions of possibility of emerging economy presence in a place such as Serbia. By pointing to the interplay of different forms of political reason through which their presence is manifest, my research presents a more textured account of emerging economies than is the case with those who regard them as either challenging or endorsing the established order.

Theoretically, this dissertation contributes to the conceptualization of global networks. Against the prevailing “network approach,” I utilize the conceptual and methodological tools of international political sociology to focus on those aspects of networked connections that are not captured by SNA. SNA's focus is on measuring the strength of the relationship between the network participants rather than studying their attributes or identities. It is beyond the methodological tools of SNA to consider relations and network identities as constitutive of one another.²³ As already discussed in the literature review, politics is beyond the scope of substantive analysis and power remains flat within SNA. From my theoretical framework, I draw on the assumption that participant attributes are constitutive of relations within networks.

²³ While practitioners of social network analysis, such as Goddard and Adamson, argue that relations within networks have the potential to affect identities, and thus in effect argue that identities are produced through social interaction, I agree with Jackson and Nexon's (1999: 305) assessment that “network theory has often been relational, but not processual,” meaning that, rather than taking network participants and the associations that are formed between them as constitutive of one another, the former are treated as distinct, already formed entities. This is important to acknowledge because it means that an essence to the entities is assumed, which makes it impossible to claim that they are constitutive of one another.

Against the essentialization of network relations and actors inherent to SNA, my dissertation details the mentalities and power logics through which connections are maintained between network participants. I do that by paying attention to the mentalities and practices through which relations within networks are formed and maintained, the mentalities and practices through which network participants have come to assume their positions within networks, and the identities constituted through these processes. I attempt to build a configurational analysis that escapes the reduction of social actors to essences by noting the sets of interplays through which power is articulated.

At the same time, I also challenge many of the assumptions of the "network as mode of organization" literature. I move beyond the standard idea that networks are horizontal, voluntary and reciprocal and therefore positively associated with political and economic liberalization (Levitsky and Way, 2010; Bunce and Wolchik, 2006; Keck and Sikkink, 1998).²⁴ I do this by paying attention to the power relations mobilized within networks (Hardt and Negri, 2000; Allen, 2003) and the various different sites "powering" global encounters. My project finds that Serbia's connections with emerging economies are created through state-sponsored processes, involving various public and governmental bodies. China and Russia mobilize the spirit of national community in their engagement with Serbia. Moreover, while international networks and transnational connections are prevailingly regarded as devolving power from the state, and thus as undermining state sovereignty, my research details how various connections that reach through, above and beyond the nation state may strengthen statehood, without constituting a more or less deliberate disaggregation of state sovereignty as argued by Slaughter (2004). My

²⁴ It should also be noted that given that many of the emerging economies are not liberal states, insights into the nature and local dynamics generated by networks emanating from these societies have the potential to account for a different type of network than that acknowledged by the preceding literature.

research therefore enables a move beyond zero-sum understandings of the relationship between sovereignty, statehood and networks.

Research Design and Methodology

In trying to understand the presence of emerging economies in the Western Balkans, I have chosen Serbia as my case study. Serbia is a case with strategic significance to the study of emerging economies since it is able to, as stated above, “activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied” (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 229) than is the case with neighbouring states. Serbia’s simultaneous connections with both Europe and emerging economies in general and BRICS in particular have been more long lasting and are more numerous than other countries in the region. This makes Serbia into a greater source of information on the topic in question than other Western Balkan states. While the utility of the single case study method has been questioned on account of its limited representativeness and ability to generate testable theory (see King, Keohane and Verba, 1994), I maintain that, not only is the single case-study appropriate given my post-positivist epistemological commitments, but that there is important knowledge-generating value in it.

Serbia is both a *paradigmatic* and a *critical case* for the study of emerging economies in the Western Balkans. It is a case that is both strategically well suited to illuminating the mentalities and practices of emerging economy engagements in the Western Balkans vis-à-vis the EU, and one that highlights more general characteristics of the mentalities and practices at play. As a legal inheritor of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and one of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement, Serbia has a tradition of diplomatic relations with states situated outside the West. Serbia’s experience of state socialism has generated a certain

convergence of lived experience with both the formerly communist East and the once socialist South. Serbia's history of close ties with Russia, founded on a shared cultural and religious heritage (Byzantine-Orthodox and Slavic identities) and a history of cooperation, such as when it welcomed 40,000 Russian émigrés following the Russian Revolution (Jovanovic, 2006), laid the foundation for Serbia's present-day relations with the Russian Federation. Serbia has received more loans from China than any other country in the region. Serbia is Europe's fourth largest recipient of Chinese investment; measured as a percentage of GDP, Serbia was the number one recipient of Chinese greenfield foreign direct investment in 2019 (FT, February 7, 2020).

At the same time, Serbia's geographic location within Europe and the active cultivation of its Christian tradition both prior and following the collapse of state socialism have provided a basis for and nurtured its connections with Europe. As noted by Todorova (2009), the prevailing perception of the people in the region is that they are a part of Europe. This perception has been somewhat reciprocated. Writing about Balkan states at the time of their independence from the Ottoman Empire, Siano-Davis (2003:8) notes, "Christianity mediated the position of the Balkans, bringing it closer to 'Europe' and distinguishing it from the 'Orient.' It reinforced the idea that the new Balkan states should be granted recognition and this allowed them a relatively easy passage into international society..." While the dispute over Kosovo's independence and Serbia's non-compliance with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia initially obstructed Serbia's path towards EU membership and strained its relationship with the European Union (Di Lellio, 2009), since the coming to power of the Serbian Progressive Party in 2012, Serbia has been regarded as a regional frontrunner in the accession process (Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia, 2018).

Flyvbjerg (2006) has argued that it is not so much the number of cases, but the nature of the case that is chosen that is important. In instances in which the objective is to gather the greatest possible amount of information on a given phenomenon, a representative or a random sample would not be the most appropriate; rather, a strategic choice of sample, one that is expected to be a particularly rich source of information, would be preferable (ibid.: 229). Given Serbia's history of relations with both Europe and emerging economies, Serbia is a strategic case that can offer the greatest insights on the practices and mentalities through which emerging economies are situated in the region and how these interact with established centers of power. Serbia is an information-oriented case selection, which can function as an initial reference point for the study of global network formations in the region more generally.

Research Design

Using Serbia as my case study, my research design consisted of three components. While the first two occurred in successive stages and can be thought of as two different phases, the third informed my analysis throughout. The first component involved secondary source research to understand the integration of the region into EU political and economic networks and in order to identify the general trends in emerging economy network formations in the region. Secondary research was initially conducted in order to provide a general account of both emerging economy and EU networks in the region and to outline the contours of the fields in question. For that, I consulted Serbian government statistics, reports, and strategies; documents published by think-tanks and international organizations; academic literature; and popular media, which I began to follow daily a year-and-a-half prior to conducting field research. Two emerging economies were then selected for more in-depth inquiry: China and Russia. They were selected on the basis of the

following criteria: level of investment, size of diaspora community, diplomatic and institutional presence. Two social fields were delineated: the diplomatic and the infrastructural/economic.

The second component of my research involved field research in Serbia. I spent a total of five months in the field, from May to July 2015 and November to December 2015. I used the field research to conduct semi-structured interviews with various actors involved in facilitating Serbia's relationship with Russia, China and the EU, and to experience first-hand the social landscape through which these connections were being maintained. With respect to the former, I conducted 51 semi-structured interviews in Serbia. Because I consider participants within emerging economy networks to be both Russian/Chinese and Serbian actors, I conducted interviews with emerging economy state representatives (i.e., embassy staff); employees of Russian and Chinese firms, as well as Serbian companies working in China and Russia; non-governmental organizations implementing Russian and Chinese-sponsored projects, associations (such as chambers of commerce) and cultural organizations and institutes that promote cooperation with emerging economies in the region; representatives of diaspora communities; and Serbian government officials handling relations with China and Russia. I sought individuals that were directly involved in facilitating connections with China and Russia as my interview subjects.

In addition to the interviews, I used the fieldwork as an opportunity to immerse myself within the social landscape and to gain, to the extent that it was possible, a first-hand experience of the various fields. During my first trip to Serbia (May to June 2015), I volunteered at the European Movement in Serbia (EMS), a prestigious non-governmental organization advocating in favour of Serbia's EU membership. The organization works to produce research and advocate in favour of Serbia's EU membership. While at EMS, I attended weekly meetings of the Forum

for International Relations, a group that brings together leading figures from Serbian diplomatic and foreign policy circles. In addition to the talks delivered by Serbian government officials and European representatives, such as Michael Davenport, Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia, I was exposed to leading debates and candid elite discussions on Serbian politics. I also used my time in the field to attend public events hosted by Chinese and Russian cultural institutions, NGOs, and state-owned firms. I attended relevant workshops and conferences, such as “The Role of the OECD in Ending the Ukraine Conflict,” which was attended by Leonidovič Žarihin, Deputy Director of the Institute of the Community of Non-Aligned States in Moscow. Finally, I visited sites that were “places of encounters,” such as *Ruski Dom* (the Russian Center for Science and Culture) and the Chinese Trade Center in Serbia. These allowed me to observe the less visible, everyday and more subtle practices involved in maintaining diplomatic and economic connections. While not ethnographic in the strict sense, these visits nonetheless provided me with insight into the way Serbia’s relations with China and Russia are mediated in particular places and spaces.

The third component of my research methodology consisted of conducting discourse analysis. Discourse analysis, as I utilise it here, is the study of the representational practices through which meanings are generated. It involves an examination of how and why things appear the way that they do, and how certain actions become possible (Dunn and Neumann, 4). As I draw on Foucault’s (1989) theorization of the power/knowledge nexus, I ground my discourse analysis in a post-positivist epistemological commitment. For Foucault, knowledge of the world is not neutral or attained through an awareness of universal truths, but is socially constructed, contingent and mediated through relationships of power and vice versa. Power both constructs knowledge and makes use of it. While discourse analysis is most readily associated with the study of language, in

seeing discourse as maintaining a degree of regularity in social relations, I also see it as producing preconditions for social action (Neumann, 2002). I therefore treat practices as discursive. As a result, I not only employ discourse analysis to analyze interview transcripts, official press releases, joint-statements, government documents, newspaper editorials, think-tank and public policy pieces, but the practices of diplomacy (state visits, military parades, meetings with respective ambassadors) and infrastructure development (financing arrangements, politico-legal agreements, the materiality of roads and railways).

Since this research project inquires into the region's imbrications within emerging economy networks in the context of EU integration, the focus of this research project is the post-2003 period, with 2003 marking the start of formal-legal relations between Western Balkan states and the EU. Prior to 2003, the EU's approach towards the region was guided by the aim of stabilizing and containing the conflicts in the region (Elbasani, 2008; Pippan, 2004). This was done through a number of internationally-led security-focused initiatives, such as the Stability Pact.²⁵ In 2003, at the Thessaloniki Summit, the EU offered each Western Balkan state the prospect of EU membership provided that they satisfy the required conditions; progress towards membership was contingent on the merits of each state in satisfying the necessary conditions. Thus, this signalled the gradual displacement of the internationally-led logic of stabilization with the "locally-owned" logic of accession. Since 2003, all Western Balkan states have established contractual relations and developed institutional links with the EU; they have been harmonizing, albeit to different degrees, domestic legislation with EU standards and adopting EU treaties into domestic law. This change in the qualitative nature of the European Union's relations with the Western Balkans, aimed at the gradual integration of the region into the EU's institutional

²⁵ The Stability Pact, a "conflict prevention strategy" established in 1999 for the region was aimed at promoting "peace, democracy, human rights and economic prosperity," and was endorsed by 40 countries and seven major international organizations (Elbassani, 2008).

structures through contractual relations, forms the governmental configuration from which I study Serbia's growing relations with China and Russia. The latter, while predating this period, likewise expand in scope alongside Serbia's pursuit of EU membership.

Therefore, using network theory as a guide towards studying the mentalities and practices produced through these simultaneous encounters, my focus is on examining the arrangements that generate encounters between Western Balkan (specifically Serbian), EU and emerging economy (specifically Chinese and Russian) actors. I examine different inter-governmental agreements, loan arrangements, commemoration events, joint projects and initiatives as examples of such arrangements. Hence, my focus is on the ties and connections that constitute networks rather than the "breaks," or, to use the language of network theory, the "structural holes"²⁶ (Goddard, 2009: 250) within networks. While recognizing that violent disruptions, exclusions, and diplomatic realignments feature in the region's history, such as, for example, the Balkan wars of the early and late 20th century, socialist Yugoslavia's break with the Soviet Union in 1948 and subsequent rapprochement between the Republic of Serbia and the Russian Federation in the 1990s, etc., as I focus on the post-2003 period, I examine the arrangements in the context of the tendencies towards global integration and "connectivity" that are constitutive of that period.²⁷

²⁶ Structural holes are gaps or disconnections between actors within a network.

²⁷ Other histories of relations between the Western Balkans and the EU, China and Russia could of course be told. Just prior to offering the Western Balkans the prospect of EU membership, in the 1990s, the EU and its Member States applied economic sanctions and embargoes, undertook military interventions, peacekeeping missions, and humanitarian aid initiatives in response to the wars in the region. With respect to China and Russia, the relations that I examine, do not emerge following the civil war, but have a longer history. Yugoslavia established formal diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in 1955, with close diplomatic and trade relations developing from 1969 onward (Johnson, 1971:11); during the 1990s, China was one of Yugoslavia's only diplomatic allies. Similarly, Russia was not only an important protector of Serbian sovereignty and war criminals in the 1990s and 2000s, but an important source of diplomatic and military support as Serbia fought for independence from the Ottoman Empire in the 19th and early 20th century (see Mazower, 2000). This history is important to acknowledge not simply because it points to the disruptions in the region's connectivity with its "outside," but because it highlights the way in which conflicts and wars have not only been disruptive, but generative, creating new and reinforcing existing connections.

In order to do so, I use the strategic partnerships that Serbia forged with both China and Russia as my starting point in mapping the various connections. I build an account of the governmentalities and practices at play as they develop through the agreements and initiatives made possible through the strategic partnerships. This had a two-fold consequence with respect to my research design. First, it further narrowed down the individuals I sought for interviews and the documents I chose to analyze as part of my discourse analysis. Second, because the two strategic partnerships are linked to a strategy – that sees Serbia’s foreign policy as resting on four pillars: having good relations with the EU, Russia, the United States of America and China – that emerged in response to the geopolitical realignments following the disintegration of Yugoslavia (Petrovic and Djukanovic, 2012), using the strategic partnerships as the starting point of my analysis reinforced my focus on relations with China and Russia as they unfolded in the post-2003 period. Other connections and relations outside this time period were referenced, (such as, for instance, Serbia’s participation within the Non-Aligned Movement), however, these figured into the analysis only when they informed the professionals of politics’ common sense. In other words, when they appeared in the context of explanations that my research subjects offered for their actions.

Challenges to implementing my research design

I will focus on three challenges and corresponding limitations of my research design: challenges related to gaining access to interview subjects, quality of information collected, and issues of positionality. First, the main challenge that I was confronted with during my field research was related to gaining access to individuals who were directly involved in facilitating emerging economy connections and securing their participation in my research project. While identifying Serbian participants in the various networks was relatively unproblematic, gaining access to

Russian and Chinese actors proved more difficult. Part of this was related to the nature of their presence, the other was related to the context in which my research project was unfolding. Both Chinese and Russian presence, while visible in certain respects, was notably “hidden” in others. On the whole, Chinese nationals residing in Belgrade –diplomatic staff, merchants, traders – tend to live and work in remote suburban neighbourhoods and non-descript sites. Chinese firms, for example, have a particularly fluid presence. As my interlocutors noted, aside from a handful of high-profile firms, such as Huawei, it is difficult to establish contact with Chinese firms since they frequently change addresses and are reluctant to meet with strangers.

While Russian firms and cultural institutions have a more long-established and visible presence, they likewise tend to be less accessible when compared to EU institutions. As an anecdote, while most of my interlocutors knew where the Russian embassy was located, they reported not to know where Russian nationals spent their time in Belgrade – few had any recollection of running into them. According to my interlocutors and interview subjects, they were rarely formed personal relationships with their Serbian counterparts. An air of mystery surrounds Russia’s presence in Serbia. Staff at the Canadian embassy confirmed the same. My difficulty in securing interview subjects was also affected by the political sensitivities surrounding my research project. My visit to the field coincided with Russia’s annexation of Crimea and the imposition of international sanctions on Russia. Since Canada was a strong proponent of the sanctions, I was positioned as an antagonist to Russian national interests.

While I was ultimately successful in gaining access to diplomatic and economic actors within the Chinese community in Serbia, even spending some time observing and attending a church service with members of the Chinese community residing in the neighbourhood of Ledine, my ability to interview members of the Russian network proved largely unsuccessful. I attempted

to address this limitation by placing an emphasis on gathering information that was available in the public domain. Not only did I regularly scan news media and official Serbian and Russian government web sites and social media accounts, but as noted above, I also attended events hosted by Russian organizations and made an effort to identify and interview Serbian researchers, civil society organizations and businesspeople who had worked for or participated in Russian-sponsored initiatives.

The second issue relates to the quality of information gathered during the interviews. All the interviews conducted took place off the record and are therefore anonymous.²⁸ The information that I was able to gather during my interviews depended on what the interview subjects were willing to disclose. I expect that some of the information communicated to me was scripted and that certain information was withheld from me during interviews. Cynicism was an attitude I encountered repeatedly – “Don’t you know that nothing works here?” “What did you expect, these are the Balkans?” – and had to navigate through. While my interviews never turned confrontational, I sensed that certain interview subjects were suspicious of my motives. Interview subjects were frequently defensive, while at other times boastful and self-congratulatory. These social dynamics affected what my interview subjects were willing to disclose to me.

As with secrecy and the unwillingness to participate, I took the seemingly scripted and self-congratulatory nature of the statements not as an absence of the Truth or as deviations from the information that I was “supposed” to collect, but as part of a narrative I had to understand. Sentiments and statements were indicative of how subjects wished their participation in the emerging economy networks to be perceived. They therefore formed part of the *work* of forming

²⁸ Assurances were sought that I would be able to maintain the anonymity of my interview subjects during several interviews, despite the fact that that was explicitly addressed in the consent form.

global connections in Serbia, and were in and of themselves the content of connections I was studying.

Moreover, and more importantly, rather than taking the information gathered during interviews as statements of fact, I understood them as an invitation to see emerging economy presence in a particular way. Given the epistemological commitments informing my work, the purpose of the interviews and secondary research was not to uncover a definitive account of Russian or Chinese presence in Serbia. My aim was not to adjudicate between what was true and what was false (cf. Kuus, 2014), but, following Jorgensen and Phillips (2002: 21), to work with what has been said or written, to explain patterns in and across statements and identify the social consequences of different discursive representations of reality. In other words, my aim was to discover the social function performed by the various claims being made and sentiments expressed (cf. Kuus, 2014).

Finally, there is the issue of positionality (my social position vis-à-vis my interview subjects). The effects of positionality on the research process have been written about widely (see Sherif, 2001; Chacko, 2004; Vasundhara, 2014). As noted by Vasundhara (2014: 400) positionality informs the access, acceptability and answers that the researcher receives. In my case, my gender shaped my interaction with interview subjects – most of whom were male. In addition to that, the insider/outsider axis proved particularly relevant during my field research. In my case, I was perceived as both an insider and an outsider. On the one hand, I spoke the local language (although initially with some difficulty), I have a local first and last name as well as experience of living in Serbia, all of which constructed my identity as an insider. At the same time, I was raised in Canada and was conducting research as part of a Canadian institution, through a Canadian government grant. On the basis of that, interview subjects would make

inferences about my politics as well as class, which tend to correlate in Serbia – Westerners, who tend to be materially better off than the average Serbian (such as a civil servant, many of whom I interviewed) tend to be regarded as pro-EU integration.

My positionality was not something that operated in the background, it came up frequently during interviews. Interview subjects would inquire about how long I had lived in Canada and expressed subtle envy that I had the opportunity to leave Serbia. Moreover, in a relatively polarized political environment being perceived as belonging to the West impacted the extent to which certain interview subjects were willing to open up to me. Certain interview subjects felt comfortable with my outsider status, others felt uncomfortable and were guarded. The same dynamic was true when I was perceived as an insider. Being perceived as an outsider was an advantage especially during interviews with representatives from the pro-EU network, as it gave me social and cultural capital. Oftentimes, I felt that when I was perceived as an outsider, interview participants, especially members of the pro-EU network, were comfortable opening up to me about their various frustrations with the government and direction of policy. Yet interview participants who were not part of pro-EU institutions or organizations, were more guarded. When they perceived me as an outsider, interview subjects often felt that they had to walk me through the basics – sometimes they did so in a patronizing manner.

My handling of challenges related to my positionality was dependent on the interview. While working to secure interviews with Russian and Chinese representatives, I emphasized my connection to Serbia. When interviewing EU and pro-EU representatives, I emphasized my Canadian background. In all situations, I tried to emphasize my credentials. That proved successful in some instances, while in others, such as in my attempts to schedule interviews with Russian and Chinese representatives, it failed to convince them of my impartiality.

Chapter Breakdown

In developing my argument, I begin with the EU accession process. All Western Balkan states have entered into contractual relations with the EU with the aim of attaining formal membership. With its attention to the mentalities of rule through which the Western Balkans are governed as a coherent region by the EU, this chapter provides a straightforward link with my intention to say something about the post-Yugoslav space as a whole as well as a foil for my main research focus on Serbia's engagements with China and Russia in chapters 3 and 4. Given these objectives, Serbia is not singled out in the analysis of the governmentalities informing the EU accession process. In the second chapter, I argue that an interplay of governance through domination and governance through freedom characterizes the technologies of performance and techniques of agency that are employed to encourage the reform of Western Balkan states towards meeting the conditions of EU membership. I note, first, that while the use of instruments such as contracts and agreements seeks to produce Western Balkan states as active participants responsible for their own improvement, the freedom that is elicited is regulated and technical. Similarly, while technologies of performance, such as progress reports and benchmarks, encourage the optimization of performance, competition and the self-reinvention of states, these technologies are products of hierarchical observation and normalizing judgements and are thus imbued with disciplinary rationalities of rule. As EU accession involves the suspension of Western Balkan choice over what constitutes proper conduct and involves methods such as training in "correct forms of behaviour," I show that elements of domination are contained in the very processes of responsabilization and subjectification that are also the loci of "freedom."

With chapters 3 and 4, I change focus. Rather than exploring how the region is governed through its relationship with the EU, I examine Serbia's political engagements with China and

Russia from the perspective of Serbian “professionals of politics” (Bigo, 2002). As these chapters theorize *from* the position of those located at the margins of global politics, the focus is on Serbian political actors rather than those from emerging economies. Moreover, while the region is treated more as an “object” of governance/governmentality in chapter 2, in chapters 3 and 4, following from the latter epistemic commitment, Serbia features more as a “subject” of governmentality and an “author” of knowledge practices.

In Chapter 3, I argue that Serbia’s diplomatic encounters with China and Russia are constituted through an interplay between sovereign concerns with territory and the law and the proto-governmentality of *raison d’Etat* that is primarily concerned with managing the state’s forces. Turning to the everyday practice of diplomacy, I argue that relations with China and Russia are a product of the geopolitical habitus – a posture for practice whose logic holds that geography determines a state’s foreign policy and, in Serbia’s case, disposes policy makers towards simultaneously cultivating both diplomatic relations with Russia and China and pursuing EU membership. I argue that the geopolitical habitus produces a conflicted self-understanding. On the one hand, the idea that geography determines policy is associated with a sense of reliance, dependence and inequality. On the other, the geopolitical habitus produces a sense of agency, initiative and active participation in the domestic political field.

In Chapter 4, I note the role Chinese and Russian states and state-owned firms play in financing, providing the materials, labour and expertise on a growing number of road and rail infrastructure projects that have been prioritized by the Serbian government as projects of national interest. The interplay governing these projects consists of a geopolitically deployed state developmentalism and a (neo)liberal/biopolitical concern with engendering transnational circulation. When it comes to the economic relationships, relations with China and Russia have

embedded Serbia within relations of both autonomy and dependence. However here, rather than the self-understanding that Serbia is situated *between* the East and West, the guiding logic is one of Serbia as a *bridge* between the two. Employing a Bourdieusian analysis, I argue that the realization of infrastructure projects is motivated by a competitive ethos and nationalist affect, which generates an interest, or *illusio*, in the “infrastructure game.” Nationalist affect is both the condition of the functioning of the field – it is that which motivates the construction of roads and rails – and it is that which is the product of the improvement of Serbia’s transportation infrastructure system, given that the latter has been associated with national independence in the popular imagination. Given the role of infrastructure in the construction and connectivity of a Balkan, European and, ultimately, the global economy, I argue that infrastructure projects construct the “global Balkans” in a material sense.

In the concluding chapter, I summarize my findings and present some final thoughts on the contributions of my dissertation. I discuss how the “Balkan-style” signature of power and the “emerging economy-style” ordoliberalism that I sketch disrupt both the conventional distinction that is assumed to exist between different scales and the assumption that global networks lead to a disaggregating of sovereignty. I show how national institutions and public bodies realize global political and economic projects – that they are key sites powering and enabling the construction of the global political economy and projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative – but also that the Serbian nation is itself an effect of its global encounters. I then acknowledge my methodological limitations and provide some thoughts on how these could be overcome. I conclude the chapter by outlining my contributions to practice-theory and governmentality studies, noting how the insights gained through my application of them allows for the Western

Balkans to become a site that is generative of theory rather than simply a site onto which the latter is tested.

2. EU Accession in the Western Balkans: Interplays of Governance through Freedom and Governance through Domination

Since the breakup of Yugoslavia, the Western Balkans have been the site of numerous international interventions. In the 1990s, these consisted of a number of diplomatic, military, economic and humanitarian measures that coalesced around the logic of stabilizing the conflict in the region. A common feature of many of these interventions was that they deployed some form of coercion and involved the suspension of *de facto* sovereignty. While some of these interventions opened up spaces for the circulation of certain kinds of transnational processes to unfold, formally they sought to contain the conflict and to keep the region “apart from the European mainstream” (Elbasani, 2008). Beginning with the Declaration of the Zagreb Summit in 2000 and the Thessaloniki Summit in 2003, however, logics of stabilization began to be complemented by logics of association. At the Thessaloniki Summit in Greece, the Western Balkans were for this first time offered the “European perspective”: the prospect of European Union (EU) membership provided that they satisfied the necessary conditions (European Council, 2003). The summits inaugurated a “transformational agenda” for the region, promising to turn the newly independent republics into “stable, self-sufficient democracies, at peace with themselves and each other, with market economies and the rule of law” (Independent Task Force, 2002: 28).

This chapter seeks to understand the mentalities of government informing this “transformational agenda.” Against, on the one hand, readings that see EU accession as an instance of coercion or as a consensual initiative on the other, against assumptions which posit a fundamental break between the interventions of the 1990s and the international community’s

approach since then, I argue that elements of both coercion and consent are assembled within the accession process. I see accession as imparted through an interplay of governance through freedom and governance through domination, thus disrupting the binary that is assumed to exist between the two. Furthermore, whereas governmentality, in the context of “the conduct of conduct” (Foucault, 2007: 95), “entails the idea that the one governed is, at least in some rudimentary sense, an actor and therefore a locus of freedom” (Dean, 2010: 21), whereas power in liberal societies involves attempts to govern not in opposition but through the freedom of individuals (Walters and Haahr, 2005: 289), I argue that accession contains “elements of unfreedom” (Merlingen and Ostrauskaite, 2005) that underwrite the very practices that seek to cultivate autonomy and agency. Accession, rather than a break with the paternalism of the past, exhibits continuities with it.

In making this argument, I first outline the reform agenda behind the stabilization and accession process. I draw on Foucault’s writings on disciplinary power (1975) and the power/knowledge nexus (1984) to note how the accession process produces the Western Balkans as objects of reform. Next, I turn my attention to the practices through which Western Balkan states are governed, focusing on two: techniques of agency (Dean, 2010) and technologies of performance (Haahr and Walters, 2004: 123). I note, first, that while the use of instruments such as agreements and contracts seeks to produce states as active participants responsible for their own improvement, the freedom that is elicited is regulated and technical. I then turn my attention to technologies of performance, such as progress reports and benchmarks, to note how they encourage flexibility and entrepreneurialism. However, here too, these subjectivities are not free of constraint; rather, they are a product of a governmental power that is provisional and experimental. Thus, whereas accession is at once premised on the idea that Western Balkan

states are rational agents capable of free choice, both the technologies of performance and techniques of agency manage the subjects they construct. As these techniques and technologies of government involve the suspension of Western Balkan agency and choice, elements of domination are contained in the very processes of responsabilization and subjectification that are also the loci of freedom.

In developing my argument in this chapter, I draw on governmentality studies. I employ the analytics of government (Dean, 2010: 30-37) approach in order to explore the conditions under which the Western Balkans emerge as both the objects and subjects of a power that seeks to reform them. I focus on the forms of reason underwriting the practices of rule that are constitutive of accession. Therefore, the theoretical thrust of this chapter lays with governmentality studies; I leave practice-theory aside for now.

The “Transformational Agenda:” knowledge hierarchies and the construction of deficient statehood

While the EU launched the stabilization and association process (SAP) for the Western Balkans in 1999, the prospect of EU membership was not offered to the region until the Thessaloniki Summit in 2003. Drawing but also expanding on the Copenhagen criteria which requires that all EU member states have institutions guaranteeing democracy, a functioning market economy and the administrative and institutional capacity to effectively implement that *acquis communautaire*, the Summit delivered the *Thessaloniki Agenda for the Western Balkans: Moving towards European Integration*. That document formalized the necessary reforms and outlined the institutional mechanisms that were to guide the region towards eventual membership into the EU. The *Agenda* called on countries to consolidate peace, promote stability and democratic development, to promote human rights and ensure the rule of law, as well as to support initiatives

aimed at promoting ethnic and religious tolerance, multiculturalism and respect for gender equality and women's rights. Corruption was singled out as a grave concern, as were trafficking and illegal migration. In the area of economic reform, the *Agenda* called for international financial institutions (IFIs) to assist Western Balkan states to restructure their economies through privatization, liberalization and de-regulation. The public sector was to operate according to principles of transparency and accountability. "Sound management" of the public sector, to promote good governance and the creation of a business environment conducive to private enterprise and foreign investment, was to be ensured. Unlike previous accessions into the EU, the *Agenda* specifically sought to promote "good neighbourly relations" (European Council, 2003). In the aftermath of the civil war, countries of the region were called-on to cooperate across a wide range of policy areas, including border management, return of refugees, and the fight against organized crime.

Institutionally, the *Agenda* called for the creation of high-level forums for the promotion of political dialogue and cooperation in areas of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). *European Partnerships* for each state were to serve as checklists against which the EU would measure progress, provide guidance and financial assistance. "Enhanced" support for institutional development was provided through two initiatives. The EU's *Twinning Program* was to build capacity among Western Balkan countries for the transposition, implementation and enforcement of EU legislation into the domestic framework. The program was to bring together "public sector expertise from EU member states and beneficiary countries with the aim of achieving concrete mandatory operational results through peer-to-peer activities" (European Commission, 2016). The second initiative, *TAIEX*, supported public administrations (civil servants, judiciary and law enforcement representatives) with the approximation, application and

enforcement of EU legislation, as well as the sharing of EU best-practices (European Commission, 2016b). Several “enhanced” financial instruments have also been developed to support Western Balkan states as they transfer EU legislation into the domestic framework. These instruments provided Western Balkan states with financial assistance to pursue specific reforms in select issue areas: human resource development and rural development, regional development, cross-border cooperation, transition assistance and institution building.

The process that the *Agenda* formalized was to be implemented on a bilateral basis, through Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAA). These are legally binding contracts entered into between Western Balkan states and the EU. Once a country has concluded a SAA with the EU, and transitioned from being a “potential candidate” to a “candidate country,” it is said to move through successive stages of reform on the basis of its own merit. The process is overseen by the Stabilization and Association Council, which meets annually at the ministerial level. It is assisted by the Stabilisation and Association Committee, a technical body, and a Stabilization and Association Parliamentary Committee, which facilitates cooperation between Western Balkan parliaments and the European Parliament. Sub-committees are established under the Stabilization and Association Committee to coordinate reform in specific policy areas. The Sarajevo-based Regional Cooperation Council promotes regional cooperation within the SAP framework.

While the *Agenda* continues to function as an overarching direction for accession, the SAP has evolved. In 2016, a “fundamental first” approach was introduced, which prioritizes reforms in areas of rule of law (judiciary, corruption, and organized crime), fundamental rights (freedom of expression), economic criteria and public administration reform (EPRS, 2017). The streamlining has been accompanied with an increased focus on conditionality, which is reflected

“in the strengthened use of benchmarks, through the introduction of interim benchmarks” (EPRS, 2016: 2). The introduction of interim benchmarks was to “give candidates more time for making difficult, time-consuming reforms, adopting legislation and displaying a strong track record of implementation before their negotiations closed” (ibid.). An “equilibrium clause” was also developed to allow for the EU to suspend negotiations if progress on Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights) and Chapter 24 (Justice, Freedom and Security) stalled.

Underwriting the above practices is a power/knowledge hierarchy through which Western Balkan states were constituted as objects of reform. Foucault (1998, 2003) argued that all knowledge is an outcome of power and vice versa; that social life consists of normativizing categories that provide criteria for the standardization, comparison, hierarchization, homogenization and exclusion of what is considered abnormal (Foucault, 1998: Merlinger, 2007: 440). The *Thessaloniki Agenda* comprises standards Western Balkan states have been compared, judged and ordered against. These criteria have the status of norms – are considered the standards of what it means to be a normal state (cf. Behr, 2007). As with disciplinary forms of power, where that which does not measure up to the rule departs from it (Foucault, 1998:178), under the accession process, difference emerges as distance from normal statehood. Rather than being a different way to organize society, accession criteria assigns a normative category to difference. Failing to satisfy the criteria of membership becomes a matter of both deviant and deficient statehood – as Western Balkan states both departing from and falling short of the norm. The accession process classifies and orders this difference in terms of “member state,” “candidate country,” and “potential candidate.”²⁹ Given that it is in relation to the criteria for membership that Western Balkan states emerge as deficient, the criteria serve to justify the

²⁹ These classifications correspond to the status of countries within the accession process, their proximity to or distance from membership.

application of various measures intended to correct behaviour and impart the correct forms of statehood onto Western Balkan states.

The relationship that is established through accession is therefore a paternalistic one. The Twinning program and TAIEX, for example, have the EU and EU member states as the sources of expertise. EU know-how is considered “best practice.” Western Balkan knowledge, by extension, lacks authority. While a peer-to-peer relationship is imagined, the EU is the actor that unambiguously knows whereas Western Balkans states are the actors that must learn. The EU is the source of authority that determines the norm and evaluates whether or not “concrete mandatory results have been achieved.” The EU is in a position to invoke disciplinary measures, such as the suspension of negotiations, as well as to apply incentives in order to encourage reform. It both excludes Western Balkan states from functioning statehood and determines under what conditions admission can be granted.

Techniques of agency: imperatives towards self-government

While EU accession consists of normalizing judgements and corrective measures, it is administered neither by a restrictive hierarchy nor does it aim to produce docile subjects (Foucault, 1975), as is the case under disciplinary power. Rather, the accession process works through the agency of subjects to direct behaviour towards particular ends. Constituted through an ethos of contractualism (Yeatman, 1996) and technologies of involvement (Haahr and Walters, 2004: 123), accession relies on consent and participation to produce engaged subjects. Yet, as this subjectivity is channelled and regulated towards meeting the criteria of membership – specific standards of statehood that Western Balkan states have been evaluated as lacking – the

techniques of agency effectively mobilize and incorporate Western Balkan states in their own government.

Agency is produced through the “ethos of contractualism” (cf. Yeatman, 1996) that structures relations between Western Balkan states and the EU. Rather than paternalistic protection, accession is premised on the specifications of mutual obligations and expectations between the EU and each Western Balkan state. For example, the cornerstones of accession, the Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAAs), are legally binding documents that outline the terms of the relationship between the EU and each Western Balkan state. By signing the SAA, Western Balkan states become bound by the requirements of accession – it is this legal act that is the source of obligation. The EU, as the other party to the contract, agrees to provide Western Balkan states with financial and technical assistance towards the requirements of reform. One area within which mutual obligations are established is regional cooperation. Western Balkan states are expected to negotiate amongst each other conventions on various aspects of regional cooperation, including political dialogue, free trade, mutual concessions on the movement of workers, services and capital, justice and home affairs (Elbassani, 2008:301). In return, Western Balkan states can expect to receive trade concessions from the EU. Rather than objects of correct forms of training, this relationship enlisted Western Balkan states as consenting subjects to their own improvement. Western Balkan states were being constructed as agents, and that agency was the basis of relations between them and the EU.

Even in the absence of formal contracts, relations are constructed in terms of mutual commitments and expectations. As the SAP has evolved, an increasingly prominent emphasis has been placed on creating a “credible partnership” between Western Balkan states and the EU. Explaining what that entailed, the European Commission explained that candidate countries were

expected to deliver on the reforms they promised and “the EU needing to deliver when they do” (EC, 2020). Rather than one actor applying the means of correct training as a way to achieve conformity with a norm, we find reciprocal obligations between the teacher and the pupil. Western Balkan states have an obligation to carry out reforms, and the EU to respond accordingly. Each party to the accession process has an obligation towards the other by virtue of participating in the partnership, and was expected by the other to follow through on its commitments. Western Balkan states had the same right to expect that the EU would deliver on its promises, as did the EU to expect that the Western Balkans would deliver on the reforms. The ethos of contractualism functioned to construct states as the makers of their destiny rather than objects of paternalistic benevolence (cf. Abrahamsen, 2004: 1460).

Thus, the “directional force” (Yeatman, 1996: 41) of the accession process was to constitute Western Balkan states as “equal persons” relative to the EU. Whereas under disciplinary forms of power, the objects of reform are considered to lack sufficient faculties and must therefore submit to an external authority, the ethos of contractualism is premised on the idea that Western Balkan states are sufficiently developed to act autonomously. Thus, rather than protection, Western Balkan states are held responsible for their improvement, or lack thereof. This idea finds expression in the “merit-based prospect of EU membership,” which holds that EU membership is conditional on Western Balkan states establishing a credible track record of reforms (European Commission, 2018:1). The onus is on the Western Balkan states, as free and autonomous subjects, to undertake the necessary steps to achieve the necessary reforms. Thus, accession, while specifying the standards of statehood, does not suspend consent and agency but evokes them. The latter are governed not by submitting to the will of a benevolent authority, but by pursuing self-improvement. Consent mediates the position of the Western Balkans within the

hierarchy that upholds the EU as the actor that knows, and treats Western Balkan states as the actors that have a duty to learn.

Second, accession not only solicits Western Balkan consent to their improvement, but, through various avenues for participation, actively and on an ongoing basis involves them in their own government. Civil servants from Western Balkan states work alongside EU officials to develop annual action plans, allocate financial assistance, outline and update performance targets, and specify the means of verifying project outcomes. Candidate countries participate in screening each of the 35 policy fields that are the subject of legal-legislative harmonization, thus determining their own level of preparation for formal negotiations with the EU. In achieving the “fundamentals first,” for example, as part of the requirement to improve economic governance and competitiveness, Western Balkan states prepare Annual Economic Reform Strategies that outline their economic goals and priority areas of reform. In Serbia, the initial strategy is developed by the Ministry of Finance and the National Bank of Serbia in coordination with other relevant ministries such as the Ministry of Trade, the National Statistical office, etc. (Republic of Serbia, 2017: 213). The second part of the strategy, specifying priority reforms, is drafted by the Ministry of Finance and the national Secretariat for Public Policy. Civil society, professional associations and local governments participate in consultations (ibid., 123-4). Thus, the economic strategy is a product of national research, coordination and consultation. Alongside mutual obligations and expectations, the involvement of Western Balkan administrators, professional bodies and civil society organizations also works to construct accession into a project of shared visions, goals and objectives. Rather than a form of power that “makes individuals” – regarding them as both the objects and instruments of its exercise (Foucault, 1975: 170) – we find in the accession process the cultivation of “individual” ownership.

Moreover, not only does accession create avenues for specifying reform objectives, but it is operationalized through national governments. Taking the *South East Europe 2020: Jobs and Prosperity in a European Perspective* (Regional Cooperation Council, 2013)³⁰ as an example, we see that Western Balkan states participate not only in specifying the necessary reforms, but in the implementation and monitoring of their progress. The strategy, resting on five pillars – integrated growth, smart growth, sustainable growth, inclusive growth and governance for growth – aims to stimulate the development of local economies. While regional in scope, it is implemented at the national level. The strategy, along with its action plans, must be adopted by national governments and ratified by national parliaments. National governments oversee its implementation, by helping to “structure the right channels of communication and agreeing on the types of inputs to enable the regular monitoring and benchmarking of progress” (ibid., 41). Ratification by national parliaments is an act of national assent. National participation in specifying “inputs to enable regular monitoring” (ibid.,) means that Western Balkan states also participate in monitoring themselves.

Importantly, tendencies towards both self-improvement and self-monitoring extend beyond national administrators. For example, civil society is both the target of reform – its capacities must be built, its dispositions cultivated in the right direction – and its subject, as civil society is expected to play an active role in ensuring that reforms are successful. In the context of the political criteria of membership, national media are both the recipients of technical and financial assistance, and are expected to ensure that freedom of expression, a key political

³⁰ The Strategy was produced by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). The RCC was formed in 2008 to promote cooperation among South-East European governments on matters intended to promote the social and economic development of the region. Its members include the states of South-East Europe, EU Member States and institutions, such as the European Investment Bank and Council of Europe Development Bank, and international organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the World Bank. The RCC is the operational arm of the South East European Cooperation Process, a forum established in the aftermath of the Yugoslav civil war.

criterion of membership, is exercised and safeguarded. EU assistance is targeted towards training journalists and improving the governance structures of media outlets (European Commission, 2014). Media outlets, for their part, are expected to voluntarily adhere to principles of integrity, self-enforcement of ethical norms and professional standards, ensure the training of journalists in ethics, and to engage in regular dialogue with the media community, monitoring and evaluating their own work (ibid., 12). Therefore, as recipients of training, the media are objects of reform. However, in being expected to voluntarily adhere to and abide by ethical standards and professional codes of conduct, they are also charged with self-government. They are the subjects of reform as they are given the authority and responsibility to ensure the successful implementation of reform.

The absence of coercion does not mean an absence of domination, however. The practices outlined above are constituted through a productive power that seeks to create particular types of subjectivities: active, responsible and self-regulating. Power utilises consent and requires participation. Yet, the agency that is constructed is regulated. To go back to the National Economic Reform Strategies, while they are written by national actors, they are also preceded by meetings between National Economic Reform Program Coordinators and representatives of the European Commission, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and national EU delegations. These meetings serve to report on results, present guidelines for the development of reform programmes, and revise methodologies (Republic of Serbia, 2017: 123-4). Therefore, the strategies, while written by national institutions, are not developed independently from pre-established guidelines and methodologies. Agency and participation are expected to conform to the standards of “correct and appropriate behaviour” (Lowenheim, 2008) as set out by EU and related institutions.

An outcome of a freedom that is regulated is a form of participation that is technical. Outlining the role of civil society, the European Commission states that “[i]n some cases, a more supportive and enabling environment needs to be developed that improves the conditions for policy dialogue and non-partisan input into the decision making process, supported by good quality statistics provided by independent national and statistical bodies” (European Commission, 2015: 4). Participation of social actors is conceived in terms of “policy dialogue” and “non-partisan input” into the decision-making process. It is depoliticized in the process of being professionalized. The potentially disruptive agency of citizens is tamed (cf. Merlingen, 2007: 441) as valid and legitimate participation is reduced to an object that is exercised by professional civil society organizations and is contingent on expert knowledge, i.e., “good quality statistics provided by independent national and statistical bodies.” Thus, the “freedom” that is exercised is confined to conformity with established channels of participation. Participation within the accession process is a matter of complying with standards developed elsewhere. Progress within the accession process is determined by the extent to which one is effectively participating *within* the contractual arrangement – abiding and observing by commitments, obligations and expectations.

Technologies of performance: imperatives towards self-optimization

The interplay of governance through domination and governance through freedom is also found within a number of instruments that encourage Western Balkan states to optimize their performance towards meeting the criteria of EU membership. These instruments, such as annual progress reports and benchmarks, work by establishing a field of visibility over Western Balkan states, and aim to optimize efforts by incentivizing the conduct of free and responsible agents

towards reform. The governmentality informing these technologies seeks to construct states as flexible and entrepreneurial subjects of reform. However, given the increasingly provisional (Best, 2014) and experimental (Sabel and Zeitlin, 2011) nature of accession, these subjectivities are not constitutive of a creativity free from constraint. Rather, they are products of a governmental power that releases and enhances energies, only to harness them towards further self-improvement (cf. Haahr and Walters, 2004: 119).

The process and pace of accession is largely determined by the progress made by each Western Balkan state in meeting the conditions of membership outlined in the Copenhagen criteria and subsequently elaborated in the *Thessaloniki Agenda*. Progress is outlined in the Annual Progress Reports (APRs), which contain assessments of the overall performance being made towards implementing the required reforms. The reports evaluate each state against standardized criteria, and are produced annually by the EU's technical body, the European Commission (EC). Barring minor variations in emphasis since the first reports were produced in 2002, reports outline the progress made by each state on political criteria, regional cooperation, market reform and the ability of each state to meet the obligations of membership. The latter entails an assessment of the extent to which each state has harmonized domestic with EU legislation in 33 different policy areas, ranging from free movement of goods, services and workers, to food safety and veterinary policy.

These progress reports place the Western Balkans in a field of surveillance, establishing a visibility over them (Foucault, 1975: 189) so as to encourage improvement. A product of the EC's systematic monitoring and evaluation of the region, the reports work to make each Western Balkan state knowable in relation to the standards of statehood established by the EU. An understanding of the Western Balkans is produced in relation to the accession criteria, producing

a body of knowledge according to which it becomes possible to “see” the Western Balkans as comprising of states that lack features of “normal” statehood. The reports are therefore expressions of a “normalizing gaze” (ibid., 1984), that has been directed at the region, and on the basis of whose standards it becomes reasonable to employ corrective measures (see Merlingen and Ostrauskaite, 2005). As the reports participate in turning the Western Balkans into a “field of knowledge” through hierarchical observation and normalizing judgements (Foucault, 1975: 186), they are effects of a power that governs by making those on whom power bears visible in a particular light.

In line with disciplinary forms of rule, the reports induce pressure to conform on account of this visibility. However, they gain that directional force not through submission, but by encouraging the active mobilization of energies towards reform. The use of harmonized assessment scales to represent progress is an example of how establishing a field of visibility has sought to induce improvements not through docility but the production of an active subjectivity. According to the EU, the introduction of the scale in 2015 reflected the fact that the EU was now placing more emphasis on the track record of concrete results (EC, 2015). Two measures were introduced for that purpose. One evaluated the state of play in specific policy fields, the other, overall progress. Both were evaluated through a five-tier scale. The state of play assessed the level of preparation on individual indicators of reform, in terms of “early stage of preparation,” “some level of preparation,” “moderately prepared,” “good level of preparation” and “well-advanced.” An overall assessment was then provided in terms of “backsliding,” “no-progress,” “some progress,” “good progress” and “very good progress.”

In standardizing the representations of progress/preparedness, the scales facilitated comparisons. Comparison could more easily be made between policy areas and states. For

example, progress on rule of law could more readily be compared to progress on public administration reform. One could more easily draw conclusions on the state of reform in Montenegro vis-a-vis Macedonia. In other words, the move towards a quantitative scale made it easier to both represent/visualise/locate shortcomings within states and order different Western Balkan states in relation to each other. On the one hand, this meant that the disciplinary imperative towards a “perpetual comparison of each and all that made it possible both to measure and to judge” (Foucault, 2018: 186) had been intensified. However, in making it easier to measure one’s performance against that of others and against the final requirements of accession, the scale sought to inspire conformity through a self-optimizing subjectivity. By making it easier for each state to track their own progress in relation to that of others and the overall targets of reform, the harmonized scale sought to direct national efforts towards a more effective pursuit of reforms.

Thus, comparisons functioned as positive inducements for reforms on account of the competition they sought to generate both against oneself (one’s current performance) and others. As explained by the Regional Cooperation Council, “One of the key mechanisms by which a positive competition through regional cooperation leads to improvement in governance is peer pressure, which means that individual countries adopt best practices because of competitive pressure from their peers” (Regional Cooperation Council, 2013: 35). The imperative to improve was to come from within. Metaphors like “state of play,” which likened accession to a sports game, and were found alongside visual representations of progress that resembled a scoreboard (see European Parliamentary Research Service, 2016: 3-4) worked to impose competitive pressures on states by framing accession as a contest between states. By engaging Western Balkan states into a “positive competition,” the scale was informed by a rationality of

government that sought to transform the objects of government into performance-oriented subjects. Thus, while on the one hand objectifying the Western Balkans as in need of learning, the reports, combined with the contractual ethos, also constructed them as subjects that were both able and obligated to turn themselves into successful reformers (cf. Haahr and Walters, 2004: 128). Premised on the idea that states are active and autonomous subjects, the scales sought to inspire states towards improving their performance over and above those taken by their peers.

Similar to the governmentality informing the harmonized assessment scale, the proliferation of benchmarking has sought to encourage self-improvement through comparisons. Initially developed to encourage reforms in Bulgaria and Romania (Pridham, 2010), benchmarking has since become a key tool to mobilize energies of states towards reforms. Benchmarks are EU standards or “best practices” that states must satisfy in different policy areas. Benchmarks are action-oriented; they specify concrete activities and outputs that acceding states must satisfy. For example, meeting the benchmark on prohibiting discrimination requires that a state outline an anti-discriminatory strategy, devise an action plan and develop a mechanism to monitor its implementation (European Policy Centre, 2018: 21). Similarly, a merit-based system of judges requires that states establish a fair and transparent system of promotion, together with a periodical assessment of the judges’ performance (ibid., 22). Once set, these standards form the basis of comparison – a state understands its progress within the accession process in relation to the benchmarks outlined for it.

As the practice of benchmarking structures accession around states meeting verifiable targets established by external agencies (i.e., the EU Commission), it invites purposeful, outward-oriented actions. It directs states to concern themselves with their results, encouraging self-improvements. Thus, as with the harmonized assessment scale, the governmental rationality

of benchmarking seeks to activate a competitive spirit and inclination among states to achieve best practices and outperform their peers – to respond to shortcomings by exerting additional effort. Providing a reference point for state action, benchmarking asks states to improve their performance until targets have been met. Yet, whereas the most immediate reference point for comparison within the harmonized assessment scale were one’s peers, benchmarks invite Western Balkans states to more intimately connect themselves to the EU. It is EU experts that outline and verify targets specific to each state based on local circumstances. They therefore place each state in direct relation to EU norms of statehood, intimating them more closely with hierarchies of knowledge by which they are governed.

What is more, the proliferation of benchmarks constructs states as flexible and entrepreneurial subjects. Within the accession process, benchmarks are outlined prior to the formal initiation of membership negotiations. Hence, the practice of benchmarking is introduced into the accession process even before Western Balkan states formally begin the process of accession. Once negotiations commence, benchmarks are outlined for each of the 34 different policy areas requiring legal-legislative harmonization. These must be met before each chapter can be considered closed and the negotiations on it complete. As an example, over 80 benchmarks have been specified for the *Fundamental Rights and Justice* chapter as part of Montenegro’s accession negotiations. Two chapters, *Judiciary and Fundamental Rights* and *Justice, Freedom and Security* contain interim benchmarks in addition to the benchmarks covering the overall chapter. Furthermore, provisions have been developed which allow the Commission to propose an updated list of benchmarks in addition to those specified at the outset if problems arise during negotiations. Benchmarks are not only specified by the European Commission, but are also developed by national administrators themselves so that, for example,

in applying for funding from the EU, the former are required to specify benchmarks “at regular intervals which will be used to measure progress (European Commission, 2013: 58).

In addition to creating competitive subjects, benchmarking requires states to be responsive and agile towards meeting targets. It requires them to calibrate efforts and capacities as appropriate in response to results and with a view to achieving goals. Given the EU’s ability to specify additional benchmarks, states must be alert to the possibility that the activities required to satisfy the conditions of membership at any one time may change at another. The practice of benchmarking therefore constitutes states as transformative agencies (Fouquier, 2008: 319) with the ability to engage in ongoing processes of learning and reinvention (Larner and Heron, 2004). Benchmarking necessitates that states can keep up with the momentum of active comparisons as actors that can both continuously adopt and (re)mobilize the “will to self-improvement” (cf. Tsing 2007). Thus, here too, rather than passive recipients of training, benchmarking invites the production of dynamic subjectivities, which, as they have been released through technologies of agency, are now to be optimized through technologies of performance.

However, while encouraging the development of entrepreneurial and flexible dispositions, the increasingly provisional and experimental nature of accession has meant that rather than containing creative or emancipatory potential free from governmental constraints, these subjectivities are both a product of the technologies of government and the nature of government itself. Both Best (2014) and Sabel and Zeitlin, (2011) have noted that contemporary forms of governance are uncertain and timid – rather than bold visions and assured programmes, they are “characterized by provisional goal-setting and revision in response to the problems uncovered during performance reviews” (Zeitlin, 2012: 411). Reflecting that, the EU has developed a number of safeguards and corrective measures that allow it to exercise a greater

degree of discretion over accession. These measures and safeguards allow the EU to direct the pace and modify the targets of reform. As mentioned previously, the “overall balance clause” allows the European Commission to suspend negotiations on any chapter it is negotiating if progress on the *Judiciary and Fundamental Rights* chapter and *Justice, Freedom and Security* chapter are lagging behind (Pridham, 2010: 460). In addition to the EU’s ability to specify additional benchmarks as required, provisions exist that allow the European Commission to propose new and amended action plans “or other corrective measures, as appropriate” if problems arise during the accession process (ibid.). All chapters are only provisionally closed, meaning that even if a state has met all the benchmarks in a particular policy area at a particular point in time, it is within the EU’s purview to reopen that chapter and specify additional benchmarks later on.

Thus, the construction of entrepreneurial and self-optimizing subjectivities takes place through a government that can be said to display “elements of doubt as to both its assumptions and practices and treats solutions as incomplete and corrigible” (Sabel and Zeitlin, 2011: 4). The new and amended action plans and the possibility to reopen chapters for further negotiation are expressions of governance that is contingent. The ability to develop and necessitate additional benchmarks is an expression of a government that can be “revised after the fact” (Best, 2012: 4). The accession process changes in response to the performance of states and is therefore attune to how reform plays out – it is itself responsive and adapts to the actions and behaviours of its subjects. Constructing states as competitive, responsive, and self-optimizing is a product of a governmental strategy that is itself tentative and therefore requires vigilance from its subjects. Rather than portending a creativity that is freed from constraints, flexibility is a product of a provisional and experimental government. States are subject to open-ended and ongoing

requirements to meet additional benchmarks, satisfy new conditions and undergo further evaluation. In other words, the flexibility and entrepreneurialism are not only products of the technologies of government, but the way in which these technologies are applied, and thus the nature of government itself. These subjectivities are regulated by a governmental power that governs through entrepreneurialism and flexibility, releasing the energies of its subjects in order to harness them towards further self-improvements.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have sought to understand the mentalities of rule informing Western Balkan accession into the EU. Against binary readings of the EU's role in the Western Balkans as one of either coercion or consent, I argue that accession involves governance through an interplay of both freedom and domination. I examined the techniques of agency and technologies of performance to note the way in which they employ productive power that works not through submission, but to constitute states as active, responsible, entrepreneurial and flexible subjects. However, underwriting these techniques is a hierarchy of knowledge that constitutes the Western Balkans as deficient and in need of reform. The accession is premised on a discourse that naturalizes, normalizes and treats Western Balkan states as deviating from the norm and therefore as entities over whom direction and regulation are required.

Furthermore, while technologies of performance and techniques of agency are employed to activate Western Balkan states in the processes through which they are governed, the hierarchies of knowledge, regulated and technical forms of freedom, premised on the notion that Western Balkan states must be guided towards desirable forms of conduct, involve the suspension of Western Balkan agency and choice. Thus, elements of domination are contained in

the very processes that construct Western Balkan states as free and autonomous subjects. The interplays between these mentalities signify the paradoxical nature of the latter's integration into the international community: as entities that are both autonomous and responsible for their own behaviour, and at the same time, as ones that lack the conditions of normal statehood and therefore require the guidance of those more knowable.

3. Between East and West: The Geopolitical Habitus and the National Sense-making of Serbia's Global Engagements

Since the fall of the Milosevic regime, European Union (EU) integration has consumed national energies in Serbia. Yet, while the harmonization with the EU legal-legislative framework has come to be regarded as widely desirable, necessary and unavoidable, the process of integration has nonetheless remained political. This is largely due to the fact that the process of establishing closer political relations with the EU has raised questions concerning Serbia's national identity and (re)ignited symbolic struggles over national belonging. These struggles have increasingly been articulated with reference to oppositional civilizational identities: in terms of whether Serbia belongs with the East or the West.³¹

The lineages of these contested geographies have their roots in the region's history. Having been situated on the geographical edges of the Ottoman and Habsburg empires, Southeast Europe was "the principal battleground in the reluctant mutual courtship and perpetual contest between the two worlds" (Hozic, 2004: 36). 500 years of Ottoman rule, the resonance of pan-Slavism, the spiritual connection with the Byzantine Empire through Christian Orthodoxy, and the experience of state socialism following the Second World War, all of which have been sources of Serbia's "Easternness," coexist alongside what are regarded as the region's "Western" characteristics: a geographic situatedness within Europe, the experience of Austro-Hungarian

³¹ It should be acknowledged that while the East-West dichotomy has been a persistent feature in the understandings of the region, the geographical association and the meaning of "the East" and "the West" has varied. As noted by Green (2005: 143), the "East" has at times meant "the Orient" (specifically, Ottoman control), sometimes it was taken to mean "Byzantine" (Russia's involvement and the involvement of the Orthodox Church), while at other times it has referred to "Communist" (former USSR). The "West" has been associated with benevolent (occidental) imperialism, the Austro-Hungarian empire, modernity and the Enlightenment, economic and technological progress and liberal democracy (ibid.,). The "East" and the "West" have therefore been not only geographic, but also cultural and historical designations.

rule in the north of the country, as well as the fact that, as most of the mid-19th century Serbian political elite was educated in the Habsburg Empire, Central Europe provided the immediate model for post-Ottoman nation-building (Zivkovic, 2011:44). The legacies of these different cultural and political projects have meant that Serbia could neither be wholly situated nor completely expelled from either “world.” The continuity with which Serbia has simultaneously come to expand relations with both the East and the West, such as when in 2008 the Serbian parliament took the symbolically charged move to ratify both the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU and the sale of Serbia’s state-owned oil and gas company to Russia’s Gazprom on the very same day³², has reproduced the sense that Serbia is a state situated between the East and West.³³

In this chapter and against this historical setting, I explore the nature of Serbia’s political ties with China and Russia, both of which are associated with the East in the European symbolic geography. I argue that diplomatic practices are founded on the interplay of sovereign-reign and

³² The main sources of political polarization in Serbia following the fall of the Milosevic regime were Serbia’s relations with the EU, the nature of its relations with states outside the EU, principally Russia, and the response to Kosovo’s unilateral declaration of independence. The Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) and the energy cooperation agreement with Russia were controversial because of what they signalled about the direction of the country. As the SAA spelled out the contractual obligations and outlined the conditions of Serbia’s membership into the EU, ratifying the agreement signalled Serbia’s formal intention to pursue membership in the EU. The Serbia-Russian energy cooperation agreement outlined the terms of the sale of Serbia’s state-owned oil and gas company to Russia’s Gazprom, thus making Serbia dependent on Russia for its energy. It was widely believed that Serbia sold the state-owned firm below market value in exchange for Russian diplomatic support in blocking international recognition of Kosovo’s declaration of independence. The latter agreement was regarded as aligning Serbia with Russia, and was therefore opposed by pro-EU parties. The SAA was seen by anti-EU and nationalist-conservative parties as indirectly recognizing Kosovo’s independence and was therefore opposed by them. While both agreements were ratified on the same day, the SAA’s ratification saw the unprecedented situation in which the prime minister and “the people’s coalition” abstained from the vote.

³³ As with locating the “East” and the “West,” to be “in between the East and West” has likewise meant different things. The sense of “in-betweenness” has at times meant division, so that to be “in-between” was to be divided between the East and West. As described to me by a former minister and member of the conservative-nationalist “people’s coalition,” “Serbia lacks national consensus over the fundamentals. Historically, it has been divided between Byzantium and Rome, socialism and capitalism, the West and the East” (personal interview, November 3, 2015). At other times, “in-betweenness” has meant having elements of both the East and the West, so that it is compatible to hold the position that Serbia is simultaneously a part of Europe “because that is our surrounding and it is the civilization that we belong to. We are Europeans, we are Christians, we are part of that civilization. That is something that is foundational to our national identity” (Centre for International Public Policy, 2015), and that Serbia is a traditional ally of Russia’s, “as large segments of Serbian society felt historically, culturally and religiously connected to the Russian people” (*Tanjug*, 2014, September 08).

economic-governmental forms of power. The interplay involves concerns with managing the composition of the state's forces (Foucault 2004: 294) and "the introduction of economy into political practice" (ibid., 95) while also keeping in play concerns with the territory and the law. Guided by the *doxa* that Serbia is a small state situated between the East and West, the geopolitical habitus disposing professionals of politics towards the simultaneous pursuit of closer diplomatic relations with China and Russia and EU membership produces both the sense that Serbia is a reliant, dependent and an unequal actor on the world stage and one that has agency, exercises initiative and is an active participant. Situating national sense-making in the context of global engagements, this chapter conceptualizes the former as a product of practices facilitating the latter.

In order to develop my argument, this chapter will begin by drawing on Foucault (1975; 1976; 2003; 2007), Schmitt (2003) and Agamben (2011) to account for the sovereign forms and concerns constituting Serbia's diplomatic practice with China and Russia.³⁴ I draw out sovereign concerns with territory and the law, and, following that, the ceremonial and spectacular forms through which sovereign power is glorified. I then point to the governmental "mentalities of rule" (Dean, 2013: 24-28), arguing that bilateral relations constitute not only sovereign power through their concern with territory and the juridical apparatus of the international order, but that they also involve the proto-governmentality of *raison d'Etat* as they are concerned with the growth and the proper management of the state's forces (e.g., wealth, individuals, goods, etc.). In

³⁴ Foucault (2003: 35-36) saw sovereignty as superseded and displaced by governmentality. He argued that sovereignty was a form of power that emerged in feudal society. In the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, however, a distinct mechanism of power emerges "which had very specific procedures, completely new instruments, and very different equipment" from that of sovereignty and was "absolutely incompatible" with it. In this chapter, I challenge both the idea that sovereignty has been superseded by liberal forms of reason and that it is completely distinct from these. For example, I draw on ideas developed by Foucault himself, such as "the spectacle of the scaffold" (Foucault, 1975), to explain contemporary forms of power in Serbia's bilateral relationship with China and Russia. In other words, I use Foucault to challenge Foucault. I use his theorization of sovereignty to understand the contemporary forms of power manifest in Serbia's diplomatic relations with China and Russia.

both sections, I rely on Serbia's declarations of strategic partnership with China and Russia as entry points to the analysis of the diplomatic field more generally. Next, focusing on the everyday conduct of diplomacy (cf. Adler-Nissen, 2011; Adler-Nissen and Pouliot, 2014), I turn my attention to the geopolitical habitus generating the simultaneous pursuit of EU membership and expanding political ties with China and Russia. I note that, on the one hand, the geopolitical habitus generates the self-understanding that Serbia is a reliant, dependent and an unequal actor on the world stage, while in the context of the domestic political field, the practice of balancing "between the East and the West" generates a sense of agency, initiative and participation. In order to explain the production of this oppositional or conflictual self-understanding, I turn to Goddard's (2009) study of brokers in international politics. Goddard uses the concept of multivocality to explain how it is that the same ideas or concepts may be differently interpreted through different cultural, historical and cultural lenses.

Before proceeding, a word on the terminology. The geopolitical habitus refers to a posture for practice whose logic holds that geography determines foreign policy. According to its own claims, geopolitics is the "domain of hard truths, material realities and irrepressible natural facts," with geography seen as "separate from social, political and ideological dimensions" (O' Tuathail and Agnew, 1992:192). Geography, in other words, is regarded as a natural, objective and immutable driver of policy. Geopolitics spatializes relations in terms of borders and boundaries, spheres of influence, frontiers and dividing lines between coherent entities, whether spatial or cultural. National historical narratives, the way in which the past is imagined by state leaders, policy makers and publics, are inspired by the "geopolitical visions" (Dijkink, 1996) that orient foreign policy makers. Modern geopolitical visions conceive of global politics as taking place within an overarching global context in which territorially bound nation-states vie for

power and aim to gain control over others and their resources in a worldwide pursuit of global domination (Agnew, 2003:1). Thus, the geopolitical habitus operates under the assumption that world politics is insecure, conflictual and unstable, and especially so for small states.

Diplomatic Ties as Sovereign Power

Sovereign concerns: territorial integrity and the law

Sovereign power has territory as its main target and the law as its main instrument (Dean, 2010:124). It constitutes power “not exactly in accordance with the law, but in accordance with a certain basic legitimacy that is more basic than any law and can function as such” (Foucault, 2003: 44). As diplomatic relations with China and Russia foreground territorial integrity and make appeals to the juridical apparatus of the international order, the political power that these relationships are vested with is imbued with sovereign concerns.

The declarations of strategic partnership that Serbia has made with both China (2009, 2013, 2016)³⁵ and Russia (2012) are one avenue through which sovereign concerns are expressed – declarations that have, drawing on royal associations, been referred to as the “crown jewels” in Serbia’s bilateral relations with the two emerging economies (*Politika*, 2013a, May 24; *RTV*, 2019, April 25).³⁶ Both declarations articulate a joint commitment to sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of others as foundational to bilateral relations. The China-Serbia declaration expresses Serbia’s commitment to the one China policy “recognizing that there is but one China in the world, that the Government of the People’s Republic of China is the

³⁵ Serbia’s declaration of strategic partnership with China was signed by the two heads of state in the summer of 2009. It was confirmed in 2013. In 2016, it was upgraded into a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement.

³⁶ Foucault (2003:24) argues that sovereign power is royal power. He establishes the connection between royal power and the juridical framework of sovereignty when he observes that, “the juridical edifice of our societies was elaborated at the demand of royal power, as well as for its benefit, and in order to serve as its instrument or its justification.”

sole legal government representing the whole of China, and that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China.” China likewise affirmed its respect for Serbia’s chosen path of development “in accordance with its national conditions, and its respect for Serbian sovereignty and territorial integrity.” The Russia-Serbia declaration similarly states that relations between the two states are based on democratic values and “on the principles of sovereignty, equality, and territorial integrity of states, of non-interference into domestic affairs, and of the inseparability of international security, i.e., liability of states not to build up their own security at the expense of security of other states.”

Within the declarations, sovereignty and territorial integrity function as basic rights on the basis of which the strategic partnerships are built. Both declarations read as expressions of sovereign intent to develop political alliances on the basis of principles that have transcendental qualities. Moreover, both the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity draw on a form of power that Foucault (2003:36) described as being “exercised over land and the produce of the land, much more so than over bodies and what they do” (Foucault, 2003: 36). This is a form of power that in the context of interstate relations is extended and exercised *over* the physical surface area of the state, more so than being directed at shaping the conduct of people that reside within that state. The commitments made to uphold the territorial integrity of states, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, and, in the case of Serbia and Russia, the spatial commitment to “the indivisibility of state security from Vancouver to Vladivostok” (*Vreme*, 2009, August 21; Republic of Serbia, 2013) have as their foundation the idea that political power is bound up with land. They therefore express a *geopolitical* vision of world politics in which sovereignty founds and is exercised over territory.

Concerns with the land as the foundation of political authority appear in the measures taken to oppose Kosovo's declaration of independence. Both China and Russia have worked to prevent Kosovo's declaration from being recognized through practices such as vetoing Kosovo's 2015 application to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (AP, 2015, November, 9). Following Kosovo's declaration, the Serbian prime minister argued for an organic link between the Serbian nation and Kosovo, since Kosovo was the site on which "we, our state, our Church and all that we are, were born" (B92, February 26). Kosovo was the spiritual and political birthplace of the Serbian nation; therefore, Serbia had a claim to it. Kosovo was property over which Serbia had authority. Belgrade's claim *over* Kosovo, and Russian and Chinese support, exposed the relevance of Schmitt's position that the exercise of sovereign power "has as its ongoing necessary condition an appropriation of part of the Earth on which a community can be located, sustained and from which legal title can be established" (quoted in Dean, 2013: 131). Sovereign power was constituted through land-appropriation, which "as the ongoing founding event" (ibid., 132) serves to not only establish but maintain political community. As the declaration of independence challenged Serbia's control over land/territory, it was an injury to the ongoing condition founding political community.

And in order to redress the affront to an injured sovereignty, recourse was being made to the law. In order to overturn the declaration of independence, Serbia, China and Russia made appeals on the basis of "juridical lines prescribed by laws and traditions" (Foucault, 2007: 15). At an emergency United Nations Security Council (UNSC) meeting convened at the request of Serbia and supported by Russia, Vitaly Churkin laid out Russia's position:

The 17 February declaration by the local assembly of the Serbian province of Kosovo is a blatant breach of the norms and principles of international law — above all of the Charter of the United Nations — which undermines the foundation of the system of international relations. That illegal act is an open violation of the Republic of Serbia's sovereignty, the

high-level Contact Group accords, Kosovo's Constitutional Framework, Security Council resolution 1244³⁷ (1999) — which is the basic document for the Kosovo settlement — and other relevant decisions of the Security Council (United Nations Security Council, 2008, February 18: 6).

The Chinese Ambassador, Wang Guangya, similarly condemned the unilateral action arguing that sovereignty and territorial integrity were “the cardinal principles of contemporary international law” (ibid., 7-8). Furthermore, both China and Russia supported Serbia by submitting opinions to the International Court of Justice arguing for the unlawfulness of Kosovo's declaration. In a 43-page document, Russia argued that the declaration of independence contravened general international law and respective UN Security Council resolutions. In an 8-page statement, China voiced opposition to the declaration of independence on the grounds that “the principle of State sovereignty is a fundamental principle of international law upon which all other principles rest” (ICJ, 2009, April 16b). Framed as a violation of “original rights” (Foucault, 2007: 15), recourse to the ICJ was being grounded in notions of sovereign right and the obligation to obey.

Foucault (2003: 25) noted that beginning in the Middle Ages, a juridical edifice was constructed around the royal personage of the king at the behest as well as for the benefit of royal power in order to serve as its instrument. He argued that under sovereign forms of rule, “the

³⁷ In 1999, with a prospect of a Russian veto at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), NATO commenced a bombing campaign against Yugoslavia aimed at stopping Belgrade's program of ethnic cleansing in the province. The bombing campaign ended when Belgrade was persuaded by Russia to withdraw its forces from Kosovo and accept the Security Council-authorized Resolution 1244 (from which China abstained). The Resolution had three main components. First, Resolution 1244 required the cessation of Yugoslav authority over Kosovo, transferring it to the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which was to be responsible for all civilian administration and for establishing local institutions capable of taking over its functions. Second, security was to be provided by the Security Council-authorized Kosovo Force (KFOR). Third, the international administration of Kosovo was to be temporary, until local institutions were developed and negotiation of a long-term settlement was agreed upon. In its preamble, Resolution 1244 reaffirmed: “The commitment of all Member States to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the other States in the region, as set out in the Helsinki Final Act and Annex 2.” Annex 2 upholds the “territorial integrity and sovereignty” of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Following unsuccessful negotiations over Kosovo's status, Kosovo issued a unilateral declaration of independence in 2008 in which its authorities proclaimed the Republic of Kosovo an “independent and sovereign state.”

public good is essentially obedience to the law... What characterizes the end of sovereignty, this common or general good, is ultimately nothing other than submission to this law.” The end of sovereignty is the continuation of sovereignty itself, “so that the end of sovereignty is little more than a subject who obeys the laws, fulfills their expected tasks and respects the political order” (Dean, 2010: 124). Elements of this “circular” logic appear in the diplomatic work to oppose Kosovo’s declaration of independence. Articulating appeals to the law in terms of the obligation to obey, the Chinese and Russian positions invoke the ideal subject who obeys the law and fulfills their expected tasks. The good that is proposed is respect for an order organized around the personage of the sovereign state, and thus is the continuation of sovereignty itself. Appeals were being made to the law by sovereign power in order to safeguard it.

Sovereign forms: the glorification of sovereign power

Yet, sovereignty not only informs the concerns expressed through Serbia’s diplomatic encounters with China and Russia, but is also manifest in the forms assumed by these encounters. Serbia’s diplomatic relations with China and Russia involve practices whose spectacular (Foucault, 1975) and acclamatory (Agamben, 2011: xii) character glorifies sovereign power. For example, state visits involving heads of state, through their various ritual and ceremonial components, prominently venerate sovereignty. Reporting on Russian president Vladimir Putin’s fourth state visit to Serbia and the 14th meeting between the President of Serbia and his Russian counterpart, the *New York Times* (2019, January 17) observed:

The water in Belgrade’s central fountain was lit Russian red, ceremonial artillery blasts thundered at the palace, and tens of thousands of Serbs were bussed in from around the country to welcome President V. Putin of Russia on Thursday. If the tableau seemed more fitting for the days of kings than a typical state visit, these are no ordinary times for Serbia.

The state visit started with a wreath laying ceremony at the memorial commemorating Yugoslav Partisans and Soviet Red Army fighters who died during the 1944 liberation of Belgrade from Nazi occupation (*Blic*, 2019, January 17). During the visit, 21 inter-governmental agreements were ceremonially signed in areas ranging from the modernization of Serbia's energy infrastructure to space exploration. The Serbian president was decorated with Russia's highest state honour (the Order of Alexander Nevsky) during the visit. A large press conference was held with the two state leaders for which 700 news agencies were accredited (*NI*, 2019, January 17).

The visit concluded with the two heads of state attending a rally and a church service. The occasion symbolized both the spiritual connection between the Serbian and Russian people, and the material cooperation between the two states. The setting for the rally and the service was the monumental St. Sava Church, one of the largest Eastern Orthodox monuments in the world. Given its association with national reconciliation, unification and martyrdom in the name of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the nation, the church plays an important role in the Serbian nationalist imaginary (Aleksov, 2003). Along with the restoration of the "Russian cemetery" in Belgrade and the organization of the Bolshoi Festival in "the genuine Serbian village of Drvengrad," the Russian state-owned Gazprom Neft donated 4 million euros for the restoration of the church (*Gazprom Neft*, 2016, March 11). Following the service, the Serbian and Russian presidents greeted a crowd numbering in the tens of thousands, which had assembled in honour of the Russian president (*NI*, 2019 January 17). This rally was not out of the ordinary, since Putin's past visits have likewise involved public expressions of support in the form of crowds. In 2011, Putin visited Serbia's largest football stadium to watch a match (*Blic*, 2011, March 3). On the occasion, as the Russian president entered the stadium, a sea of Russian flags and

memorabilia appeared in the stands and the crowd erupted into synchronized chants of “Putine Srbine” [roughly translating to: Putin the Serb] (FC Red Star Belgrade, 2011, March 25).

Serbia’s diplomatic relationship with China is likewise marked by prominent public displays of ceremony, ritual and public assembly. During his 2016 state visit to Serbia, a rally of approximately 12,000 greeted China’s Xi Jinping in Smederevo, a former industrial heartland, to celebrate the sale of Serbia’s largest steel plant to China’s HBIS Group (Ruptly, 2016, June 19). The rally was preceded by an official welcoming ceremony in front of the Palace of Serbia. As was the case with its Russian counterpart, the visit involved highly symbolic practices of commemoration as wreaths were laid to honour the Chinese victims of NATO’s 1999 bombing and the two heads of state visited Kalemegdan, an ancient military fortress dating back to the Roman empire, which stands over the confluence of the Danube and Sava rivers (*Al Jazeera*, Balkans, 2016, June 17; Reuters, 2016, June 17). The Chinese President was awarded the Order of the Republic of Serbia on a Grand Collar, Serbia’s highest state honour.

Both state visits manifested the sacred qualities of sovereign power. Agamben’s (2011: xii) excavation of the political archeology of Glory identified sovereign power with the “rigid, cumbersome, and “glorious” form of ceremonies, acclamations and protocols.” Rather than an archaic form of power that has been superseded by liberal government, he argued that the legitimating functions and acclamations of Glory remained at the center of the modern political apparatus. Whether in the artillery blasts, commemorations, diplomatic protocols or visits to military fortresses, sovereignty was glorified through deference to ritual, solemnity and, where appropriate, displays of pomp. Orders of the state, resembling royal regalia, evoked the mystery and sanctity of the throne, from which royal power emanates. The rallies expressed praise and conferred approval through acts and gestures such as flag waving, chanting and applause. The

orchestration of the rallies – the erected podium prominently displaying symbols of the state, the assembled crowds oriented towards and looking up at the heads of state and their ministers, the delivery of public announcements – resembled ceremonies of religious worship. The media played its role in both administering and dispensing the glorification of sovereignty (cf. Agamben, 2011: 10) as it detailed all the pageantry.

Military parades are an example of another ceremony through which power is glorified. As spectacular displays of power, they evoke certain parallels with the public execution – a practice that Foucault treats as paradigmatic of sovereign power. In the fall of 2014, Serbia held its first military parade in 30 years, its first parade since becoming an independent republic. The military parade commemorated 70 years since the liberation of Belgrade from Nazi occupation through the joint efforts of the Yugoslav Partisans and the Soviet Red Army. Russia's president was the guest of honour at the parade. For the occasion, 4,500 Serbian military personnel participated in the parade and were joined by the Russian Air Force demonstrator team, the Swifts (*RTS*, 2014, October 16). More than 300 different types of military equipment and mobile weapons – motor and combat vehicles, tanks, artillery, anti-tank devices, and missile launchers – were paraded down one of Belgrade's main boulevards (*ibid.*). Along the Danube river, ships and special purpose vessels were on display. Every aspect of the parade, from the planning and road closures to the post-parade reactions, were detailed by the media.

Throughout 2015, and thus well into the following year, Serbia participated in military parades in Moscow and Beijing respectively. The Serbian National Guard participated in the 70th Victory Day Parade in Moscow. Speaking to the acclamatory nature of public assembly and the media's role in dispensing Glory, the event was broadcast live on Belgrade's main square. According to reports, those assembled came bearing Russian and Serbian flags and wore shirts

with the image of the Russian president (*Telegraf*, 2015, May 9). Ten motor bikes cloaked with Russian flags were parked next to the event's podium (*ibid.*). In 2015, members of the Serbian armed forces also participated in China's Victory Day Parade to mark 70 years since the liberation of China from Japan (*NI*, 2015, July 24). With the announcement that Serbia was intending to purchase 6 MiG aircraft from Russia, the Serbian president announced that the fighter jets were intended to protect Serbian skies, people and sovereignty (*Al Jazeera Balkans*, 2016, 19 December). His statement assumed the fusion between territory and political authority constitutive of sovereignty.

The military parades glorified sovereignty through the spectacularization of the military. Drawing on aspects of the juridico-political functions of public executions (Foucault, 1975: 48), the parades can be said to belong to those categories of public observance "in which power is eclipsed and restored" and force is "deployed before all eyes as an invincible force" (*ibid.*). The parades displayed, through an elaborate pageantry of military technology and personnel, the capabilities at the state's disposal to restore sovereignty in instances of injury. They foregrounded in the public imagination the sovereign's "right of rejoinder" (Foucault, 1976: 135) – the right of the sovereign to wage war and require his subjects to take part in his defence. The parades therefore evoked the characteristic privilege of sovereign right to make war on enemies, and decide life and death (*ibid.*). Similar to the function of the public execution "to bring into play, at its extreme point, the dissymmetry between the subject who has dared to violate the law and the all-powerful sovereign who displays his strength" (*ibid.*, 49), the splendid military simulations over land, in the air and at sea, displayed the dissymmetry in power between subject and the all-powerful sovereign. As with the state visits, the military parades provided an occasion for crowds to confer acclaim and the media to disseminate Glory. They constituted a form of

power that, alongside concerns with territory and the law, took on ceremonial and doxological forms in its manifestation.

Diplomatic Practice and Governmental Power

While diplomatic relations with China and Russia involve sovereign concerns and forms, they are also interspersed with a *raison d'Etat*, a precursor to governmental mentalities of rule. Therefore, while the declarations of strategic partnerships draw on sovereign concerns and forms, whose imperative is to unify political power (Foucault, 2007: 44), they also display a commitment to conducting international relations through an “open time and a multiple spatiality,” meaning to a system of independent, legally sovereign states “that have their law and end in themselves” (Foucault, 2007: 290). Foucault (*ibid.*, 291) argued that throughout the Middle Ages, the time period of sovereignty, the ultimate end of all states was empire, as states sought to merge into larger political units. Political power was and tended towards unity. With the Reformation this changes however, “as states in their politics, choices and alliances no longer had to band together” (*ibid.*, 291) in accordance with their religious adherence, and ideas of political autonomy, particularity and specificity come to structure relationships between them. With the change, the military-diplomatic apparatus, organized around war, international law and the balance of power, developed to guide relations between states. Under this new schema, political power, no longer concerned with territory, comes to revolve around “the problem of dynamics” or the “state’s forces” (*ibid.*, 294-5). Foucault defined these as problems with the ordering and management of the states’ wealth, natural resources, commercial possibilities, terms of trade, etc.

In Serbia's declarations of strategic partnership with China and Russia ideas of "open time and multiple spatiality" are expressed in concerns with both national particularity and maintaining difference. Principles of state sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, the inviolability of state borders, and the formal equality between states, while concerned with preserving sovereignty over territory, also assume that the international system is comprised of independent political units. Rejecting the imperial logic of universality and transcendent unity, adherence to these principles is meant to safeguard the independence and autonomy of states. Explicitly expressing a joint commitment to a multipolar world order in the Serbia-Russia strategic partnership (Republic of Serbia, 2013) and to respecting the diversity of civilizations and development models in the Serbia-China declaration (*Vreme*, 2009, August 21) express a commitment to a form of world politics that Foucault identified as "dealing with absolute units, as it were, with no subordination or dependence between them" (Foucault, 2007: 291). In other words, to a form of world politics that was organized around formal equality between sovereigns.

References to "the indivisibility of international security and the responsibility of states to not increase their own security at the expense of the security of others" (Republic of Serbia, 2013) in Serbia's strategic partnership with Russia draws on the governmental problematic of how to increase the states' forces without bringing about the ruin of others (Foucault, 2007: 300). China's support for Serbia's development path in line with internal conditions and the more general commitment towards treating and respecting "each country equally, because each country has its own specific advantage and culture, as well as an approach with which it aims to contribute to the common development of human civilization" draw on ideas of international harmony that are rooted not in the amalgamation of distinct territorial units in line with sovereignty, but are premised on maintaining "a difference between the big and the small"

(Foucault, 2007: 298). Thus, both partnerships articulate a form of power that is concerned with sustaining a system of states whose external autonomy is matched by exclusive internal sovereignty.

Moreover, the strategic nature of the partnerships speaks of governmental concerns with forging proper alliances for the purpose of “introducing economy into political practice” (Foucault, 2007:94-5). For Foucault, a defining logic of governmental power is the introduction, into the political domain, of concerns with the wise management of the state’s forces. Thus, whereas sovereignty involved a deductive power that was founded and sustained through land-appropriation, governmental power involves coordination, administration, synchronization, and the separation of the “good from the bad.” Serbia’s strategic partnership with Russia declares that there is considerable room to increase the levels of trade between the two states, as well as to improve cooperation between business, professional and industry associations (Republic of Serbia, 2013). This is to be done for the purpose of creating improvements in the standards of living (ibid.), or, in the language of Foucault (2007:101), with regards to improving the material well being of the population. The declaration identifies drug trafficking, terrorism, organized crime, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as problems that bilateral cooperation was committed to addressing. It distinguishes these from “the good circulations” (Foucault, 2007:18) that bilateral initiatives were meant to engender, such as investments flows, professional networks, cultural exchanges and people-to-people contacts.

Similarly, Serbia’s strategic partnership with China cites improving terms of trade, enhancing the volume of trade in goods and services and encouraging investments (*Vreme*, 2009, April 29) as the objectives of bilateral cooperation. The commitment to infrastructure development and furthering cooperation in areas such as telecommunications, energy, industrial

production and the food industry (ibid.) speak of rationalities whose attention is directed toward the proper arrangement of the state's capacities. The declaration expressed the joint hope that the international community would, among other things, further deepen coordination around macroeconomic policy, confront trade protectionism, strengthen the global economic recovery, and collectively respond to the challenge (ibid.). It therefore expressed the joint hope for the improved international *management* of the global economy.

Taken together, bilateral relations with Russia and China display two purportedly distinct and contradictory modalities and concerns. First, at the same time that bilateral cooperation with China and Russia identifies territory as the problem of government and appeals to the law as an instrument, it is also concerned with the management of processes and capacities internal to the state. There is a concern with national economic growth and development, investment flows, cooperation between business and industry associations, facilitating people-to-people contacts and cultural exchange. Attention is also paid to the identification of dangers that might undermine these processes. Thus, we see concerns expressed with the management of the global economy, drug trafficking and organized crime. Rather than maximize territory, as is the case with sovereignty, the object of power's concern here is the well being of national populations. Second, while power assumes the rigid, cumbersome and glorious form of state visits and military parades, it is also preoccupied with the comparatively more humble and delicate task of fostering networks, engendering connections and encouraging flows. In order to do so, it assumes the form of coordinating and arranging. Power is therefore both spectacular and ordinary, sacred and mundane. It displays both a deductive logic in its preoccupation with territory and the productive imperative to maximize and to grow.

Forging political alliances for “win-win cooperation”

During a state visit that saw Serbia’s strategic partnership with China officially elevated to that of a *comprehensive* strategic partnership agreement, the Chinese president delivered a speech to a crowd in front of the now Chinese-owned Smederevo steel mill, once a state-owned giant of Yugoslavia’s post-war industrialization:

Today, Chinese and Serbian businesses join hands for cooperation, opening a new chapter in the bilateral cooperation in production capacity. This has not only carried forward the traditional friendship between the two countries, but also demonstrated the determination of both countries to deepen reform and achieve mutual benefit and win-win results. Chinese enterprises will show sincerity in collaboration with their Serbian partners. I believe that with close cooperation between the two sides, the Smederevo Steel Mill is bound to be revitalized and play a positive role in increasing local employment, improving people's living standard and promoting the economic development of Serbia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 2016, June 20).

An interplay of sovereign and proto-governmental forms and concerns informed the event. Power was displayed through ceremony. Yet, a multiple spatiality and open temporality underwrote the discourse of two sovereign nations “joining hands” in cooperation to achieve “mutual benefits” and “win-win cooperation.” Political power, embodied in the head of state, was not concerned with exercising control over territory, but with maximizing the state’s forces in the form of production capacity. The subjects of interstate cooperation were enterprises – they were expected to carry forward the cooperation made possible by states. Hierarchy, the constitutive feature of empire, was disavowed through a language of collaboration between two distinct nations. As the goal of the latter was an improvement in the standard of living and local job creation, the goal was the governmental concern with perfecting and maximizing the processes which government directs (Foucault, 2004: 99).

Articulated in terms of national interests, diplomatic relations with China and Russia reflect relations forged on the basis of a “provisional combination of interests,” rather than

dynastic loyalties as was the case under sovereignty (Foucault, 2007: 294). As noted above, it is with a view to win-win cooperation and mutual interests that bilateral ties were being sustained and developed. The repeated claim that Serbia has concluded more agreements and is the recipient of more Chinese investments than any other country in the region (RTV, 2018, July 7) revealed the competitive games informing Serbia's political alliances. These were games which Foucault associated with the "most fundamental mutations in both the form of Western political life and the form of Western history" – the transformation from the rivalry of princes to the competition of states (Foucault, 2007: 294). Thus, it is the simultaneous concern with maintaining political authority over territory, and attention to processes and dynamics in the context of competitive games that inform Serbia's growing political ties with China and Russia.

The geopolitical habitus and the *doxa* of the diplomatic field: Serbia as a small state situated between the East and West

Linking Serbia's foreign policy to its size and location, natural resources and history, relations with China and Russia are a product of and reproduce the geopolitical habitus. The latter is defined as a posture for practice whose logic holds that geography determines a country's foreign policy. In Serbia's case, the geopolitical habitus is a system of models for the production of practices disposing policy makers towards simultaneously cultivating diplomatic relations with Russia and China and the pursuit of EU membership. As it forms "a system of models of perception and appreciation" (Bourdieu, 1990: 131), it is also a worldview according to which "balancing" between the East and West" is a common-sense response given what are perceived to be objective circumstances.

In the public discourse, Serbia's foreign policy is frequently explained with references to its physical environment. Serbia's size features frequently in discussions of its diplomatic

relations with China and Russia.³⁸ Giving a statement at a press conference in Moscow in 2013 on the heels of the newly declared strategic partnership with Russia, Serbia's then minister of defence and now president, Aleksandar Vucic, stated:

Serbia is a small country, she must preserve her territory. She must try to have good relations with everyone. We want to, first of all, preserve what belongs to us. The Russian Federation is a good friend and I am thankful for their political support in preserving our territorial integrity... That which concerns us is that we develop our relationship rationally and pragmatically, and improve it economically, politically and in all other areas. I think that is very important for both countries, but most of all for Serbia as the much smaller country (*Politika*, 2013, May 23).

Similarly, during the Chinese president Hu Jintao's visit to Belgrade in 2016, Vucic referred to Serbia as "a small house that must have its eyes to the world" (*Telegraf*, 2016, June 18).

Smallness is a factor that is understood to be influencing both the range and nature of foreign policy choices available to Serbia. In explaining Serbia's foreign policy to me, a former government minister and member of the conservative-nationalist coalition government at the time of Kosovo's declaration of independence, prefaced our conversation by "laying out some preliminaries... You know, Serbia is very small. There is only so much we could do." A senior civil servant working at the European Integration Office (EIO) at a time of escalating tensions between the EU and Russia over the latter's annexation of Crimea, justified Serbia's strong diplomatic ties with Russia by stating that:

Our politics and policy is 100% aimed and in alignment with EU membership. That policy direction is rational, not based on some sort of traditional or cultural ties... However, we are dependent on them for energy. We are a small country, vulnerable and alone. We are vulnerable to great powers, so we do not want to jeopardize our national interests (Personal Interview, May 11, 2015).

³⁸ It should be noted that foregrounding "smallness" is neither specific to Serbia's diplomatic relationship with China or Russia or, as shown by Subotic and Vucetic (2019) in their discussion of Yugoslav foreign policy, a recent phenomenon.

Thus, both the scope for action and the direction of Serbia's foreign policy were explained in terms of Serbia's physical geography. Being a small country determined both what Serbia could accomplish and with whom it needed to maintain good diplomatic relations.

Uniting these differently positioned actors, both pro-EU and EU sceptic, was the way the perception of smallness functioned as a natural reality. By considering size in geographical terms, the sense of smallness gained the status of a natural fact that was beyond dispute. During my interviews, when my interlocutors invoked smallness, they did so not to initiate a discussion, but to settle it. Given its purported obviousness and taken-for-granted status, smallness worked to prevent disagreement and debate from emerging in the first place. Therefore, as smallness gained the status of an objective truth, it constituted the *doxa* of the diplomatic field. It operated as a sort-of rule, which, as implied by the official from the EIO, policy makers had to obey if they wanted to protect the national interest. Serbia's policy towards Russia, it was being suggested, was not shaped by subjective considerations such as culture, but natural realities such as its energy supply, and was therefore a common-sense response determined by objective circumstances.

References to Serbia's location similarly work to explain policy choices on account of purportedly natural and immutable characteristics. Explanations of Serbia's foreign policy choices with reference to both its geographic situatedness and history are premised on the idea that policy follows geography. In the context of Serbia's diplomatic engagements with China and Russia, Serbia is often described as a small state that is situated between the East and West or as one that is situated where the East and West meet. During the military parade commemorating 70 years since the liberation of Belgrade from Nazi occupation, the Serbian president proudly noted that Serbs had settled the most beautiful place at the crossroads of civilizations, religions,

cultures, economic and military routes. Yet, it was “an unenviable geostrategic location,” (*Tanjug*, 2015c), one that he would go on to describe in light of US Secretary of State John Kerry’s statement that Serbia was located on Moscow’s “firing line,” as situated at the *vetrometini* between the East and West – at a point experiencing strong winds from opposing directions (*RTS*, March 9, 2016). As a result, Serbian policy has always been to cooperate with both the East and the West (*ibid.*). That was a policy, he stated, of being committed to both the EU and to a friendship with Russia (*ibid.*). A vision was therefore being articulated of a state whose geographic location made it vulnerable. It was an orientation that was formed in relation to opposing civilizations – specific policy initiatives (i.e., EU membership, bilateral relations with Russia) were being elevated and explained in terms of civilizational politics. As with smallness, the sense of in-betweenness was being produced through “geographical knowledge” (*Kuus*, 2007:5) – it was the “knowledge” that Serbia’s was located on particular terrain which gave it the quality of being situated between the East and West.

Responding to my question concerning whether Serbia could simultaneously be working to pursue EU membership while abstaining from the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy on Russia, the former government minister (quoted above) explained:

You see, Serbia is located on the crossroads between East and West. And somewhere there is our place. As the Greeks would say, that is our *topos*. It is as though God decided on that place. You don’t ask: ‘why are we here’? The origin of that is something old. Given that we are at the crossroads... you know, all the great wars have reverberated and crossed the Balkans – from the wars of Constantine the Great to today. The border of the Roman Empire was located around here and the schism between Catholicism and Orthodoxy crosses here...and see, for you as a border nation, it is difficult to choose between one side or another [between the East and West], because any choice will leave you weak strategically. No matter which side you choose, you will be exposed; because to that other side, whoever that other side may be, you are the borderline of the opposing side. Generally speaking, we must maintain some sort of balancing. That type of politics has always brought good results and I tend to think that whenever that was our approach, whenever we have

tried to balance between the East and West, Serbia has done better than when it was forced to choose (Personal Interview, November 3, 2015).

Serbia was located at the frontier. The knowledge that Serbia's *topos* – its natural place – was at the crossroads of opposing entities was as product of history. The sense of geographic betweenness emerged from the experience of military conflicts and contacts that came with occupying that particular place. Since it stretched as far back as the Roman Empire, it had ancient origins. Projecting Serbia's present-day sense of in-betweenness onto an ancient past worked to naturalize it as an eternal condition. It followed that as Serbia was located between the East and West geographically, it was in the national interest to pursue a policy of balancing. Not only was Serbia's smallness disposing it towards pursuing "good relations with everyone," but its geographic location made it a necessity.

Thus, the sense that Serbia was a small state situated between the East and West inclined actors towards pursuing those policies, such as EU accession and abstaining from applying economic sanctions against Russia, that contributed to good diplomatic relations with both. Geography both determined and drove the national interest. The historical experience of being under the rule of different empires, of military conflict, of different religions coming into contact with one another and the associated instability produced the sense that geography left Serbia exposed and vulnerable. It was not the case that Serbia was choosing a policy of balancing for its own sake. Rather, the practice of balancing was a common-sense, instinctual response in light of both the unstable nature of global politics and the vulnerabilities associated with Serbia's location and size.

The Geopolitical Habitus and National-Sense Making: Serbia as dependent/reliant/unequal and active/involved/independent actor on the world stage

As the geopolitical habitus disposes political actors towards “balancing between the East and West,” it produces a conflicted self-understanding. On the one hand, the idea that geography determines policy is associated with a sense of reliance, dependence and inferiority. In the context in which Serbia’s growing relations with China and Russia need to be explained, and therefore directed at the Western audience, balancing is associated with constraints and vulnerabilities. On the other hand, in the domestic political field, the geopolitical habitus embodies agency, initiative and active participation. Against the backdrop of EU accession, balancing between the East and West is both a strategy and a source of symbolic and political capital, as it generates the sense that Serbia is an independent actor on the world stage.

In order to explain the production of this conflicted self-understanding, I draw on Goddard (2009). Examining networks and entrepreneurs in international politics, Goddard (*ibid.*, 266) points towards multivocality as a strategy employed by brokers to bridge cultural fragmentation between networks. Brokers within networks, she argues, can use language in a way that will be interpreted differently by differently positioned listeners. “Ideas and symbols can have different meanings depending on who is listening... Because listeners occupy different structural positions, they interpret a broker’s ideas through divergent cultural lenses and histories. As a result, any symbol, word, or event can be read with contradictory, even mutually exclusive meanings.” (*ibid.*). If one thinks of Serbian professionals of politics as brokers between the EU/Western and non-EU/Eastern networks, the production of the conflicted self-understanding can be explained with reference to the listeners and field in question. Given that in the national historical and cultural narratives being “between the East and West” is associated with perseverance, martyrdom, and distinctiveness, to balance between the two generates the

sense that Serbia has agency, initiative and is an active participant on the world stage.

The geopolitical habitus and the sense of dependence, reliance and inequality

Before demonstrating the link between balancing and a sense of agency, initiative and active participation, it ought to be noted that among the policy makers quoted above, the geopolitical habitus is involved in the reproduction of a self-understanding of Serbia as reliant, dependent and unequal. Being small and in-between was in all instances considered to be an unfavourable circumstance, a restraint and a source of insecurity. Whether speaking about energy supplies or Serbia's strategic partnership with Russia, relations were understood to be unfolding from the perceived position of the weak seeking the good will of the strong, or the sense of dependence that the small have on the great. Furthermore, Serbia's orientation to the world was being formed not in relation to neighbouring states, but in relation to oppositional "civilizations." That worked to increase the sense of vulnerability and urgency among policy makers and practitioners of politics as it magnified the perceived smallness and in-betweenness. In that context, it was not simply that Serbia was exposed, but that its room to manoeuvre was limited. A helpless inability to act in a way other than to engage in balancing comes through when the EIO official candidly describes Serbia as "a small country, vulnerable and alone."

For the policy makers and professionals of politics surveyed, the simultaneous pursuit of EU membership and expanding relations with China and Russia were therefore a defensive posture meant to protect the national interest. Balancing between the East and West emerges as a necessity imminent to the nature of global politics. Insecurities caused by size and location meant that balancing was being regarded as a matter of national survival. For a small state situated on the frontier of opposing sides, not having good relations with established and

emerging powers was seen as an existential threat. Balancing was a response to the pressures of global politics, i.e., the logic of the game (Bourdieu, 1987: 64) given natural realities.

The sense of dependence, reliance and inequality is specifically related to Serbia's relationship with the East. In statements delivered at the press conference alongside the Chinese president, that "Serbia is a small house that must have her eyes to the world," or alongside the Russian president, that "Serbia is a small country, she must preserve her territory. She must try to have good relations with everyone," the subjects of explanation are Serbia's relations with China and Russia. The "everyone" and the "world" specifically refer to countries, such as China and Russia, that are outside the EU/West. Thus, directed at the Western audience, geographical claims about size and location function to suggest that Serbia could not be acting in any other way – that its decisions are not a product of politics, but forces and constraints beyond its control.

The practice of balancing and the sense of agency, independence and initiative

Yet, while the self-understanding of Serbia as an unequal, dependent and a reliant actor are a product of sense-making associated with explaining its relationship with the East, the simultaneous pursuit of EU accession and expanding ties with China and Russia are also bound up with a sense of agency, independence and initiative. First, as good diplomatic ties with China and Russia are a strategy of balancing between the East and West, their development is associated with the successful management of a difficult geopolitical environment. As implied by the former minister's statement above, conceiving of Serbia's position as insecure and global politics as conflictual, good diplomatic relations with China and Russia are a means towards generating a sense of security in an unstable and unpredictable environment. Within the domestic political field, the practice of balancing generates the sense that political decisions correspond to

natural and historical realities, and are therefore read as competent acts displaying a good feel for the game. Good diplomatic relations with China and Russia are seen as successfully harnessing Serbia's position at the point where East and West meet to then generate opportunities in light of difficult circumstances.

Second, balancing is a source of political and symbolic capital. The practice of balancing has meant that while Serbia's "politics and policy were 100% aimed and in alignment with EU membership" (Personal Interview, May 11, 2015) Serbia was the first country in Southeast Europe to sign a strategic partnership agreement with China, which was subsequently upgraded to a *comprehensive* strategic partnership. As noted by the Serbian prime minister, Serbia had signed more agreements with "the great power China" than any of its neighbours. During a single state visit by President Hu Jintao to Serbia in 2016, 22 agreements were signed, the value of which, as often repeated by Serbian policy makers, was higher than the value of cooperation agreements China had signed with any other Central and Eastern European state. Announcing the visit, the Serbian prime minister noted, "More than 20 agreements and contracts will be signed with China; for a small country such as Serbia, that is a great result" (RTV, 2015, June 18).

Similarly, during President Putin's "historic visit" (NI, 2019, January 16) to Serbia in 2019, more than 20 agreements and memorandums of understanding were signed. Commentators expected that the agreements would in a relatively short period of time accomplish a series of national objectives, including to enhance Serbia's energy security, speed up the modernization of its railways, improve its trade balance and the position of Serbian goods on the common Russian, Belarus and Kazak markets (Danas, 2019, January 17). In addition, Serbia was the only European state and EU candidate-country not to align itself with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy on Russia and apply economic sanctions against the latter. Rumours of the

pressure Serbia was facing to comply (*RTS*, 2015, October 27; *Telegraf*, 2016, October 21) were used by the Minister of Foreign Affairs as an opportunity to emphasize that “Serbia today is an independent country. Serbia is on the European path, no one can order Serbia to jeopardize its relationship with the Russian Federation. Serbia had shown that it is a country that must be respected” (*RTV*, 2014, October 3).

Therefore, in the domestic political field, balancing is associated with a sense of initiative and defiance. Against the backdrop of EU accession, in the domestic political field relations with China and Russia projected the sense that Serbia was an active player on the world stage and one that could persevere. Serbia was seeking EU membership, but it was still able to pursue an independent course of action. Not aligning with the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy on Russia was an act of resistance. Abstaining from EU-sponsored sanctions was a demonstration that while “on the European path” and pursuing accession-related reforms, Serbia would deviate from EU policy when it interfered with its national interest. When compared to other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, it outperformed them. It was more successful at forging closer diplomatic relations with “the great power China,” at realizing more and higher value projects. In other words, Serbia was more successful than its neighbours and remained steadfast when it came to traditional alliances. While geography constrained Serbia and left it exposed, balancing in the context of the domestic political field generated a sense of national pride and esteem. It was therefore a source of symbolic capital. It was also a source of political capital, as relations with China and Russia were a way to demonstrate that decision makers were acting independently on the world stage – protecting the national interest and doing so in a way that was better than their competitors. Thus, whereas the geopolitical habitus produces a sense of restraint in the context in which Serbia’s relations with the East need to be explained, in the

context of domestic politics, Serbia's smallness and in-betweenness were associated with initiative.

Dovetailing with the geopolitical habitus, the likelihood of relations with China and Russia generating political and symbolic capital was maximized through geographic claims. Relations with China and Russia emerge as a powerful resource when Serbia's "smallness" is situated alongside the latter's "greatness." For example, decision makers commonly note that "the great" China is a true friend of the "small" Serbia (*Telegraf*, 2015, 23 November) and that "the great China" has chosen the "small Serbia" as its strategic partner (*Vecernje Novosti*, 2019, March 20). Prior to his state visit to China, Serbia's prime minister boasted about China's large foreign exchange reserves and the opportunities they presented for "small Serbia" (*Telegraf*, 2105, November 23). Similarly with respect to Russia, Serbia's now President Vucic noted that, "As a representative of a small but proud and dignified nation, I would like to tell the Russian people that Serbia values Russia's friendship highly. Serbia is a small country, numerically and territorially, but we are one of the few nations that has acted honorably and fairly towards our Russian friends" (*RTS*, 2017, December 17). Serbia was small, but proud since it was able to forge partnerships with great powers. Counterposed against the "greatness" of China and Russia, Serbia's smallness was a source of self-respect.

While geographical claims about size led to self-aggrandisement, balancing could generate capital when Serbia's sense of in-betweenness was offered as a potentially useful position between the two (cf. Savic, 2012: 214). Serbia was in a vulnerable location, but its location also meant that it had the ability to act as a broker. As noted by President Nikolic during an interview, Serbia's strategic goal was membership in the EU, but that had not undermined it from closely cooperating with Russia on projects where shared interests existed, such as the

South Stream natural gas pipeline (*B92*, 2012, November 8). “My idea has always been that Serbia has all the requirements to become a bridge between East and West. It would be wrong not to take advantage of such a favourable position” (*ibid.*). Thus, at the same time that the geopolitical habitus was founded on a sense of geographic constraint, the experience of balancing domestically produced a sense of agency.

And this sense of agency inclined those balancing between the East and West to associate Serbia’s location with uniqueness. Challenging claims that its simultaneous pursuit of EU membership and its relationship with China and Russia was both incompatible and unsustainable, professionals of politics reappropriated the popular trope that Serbia was “sitting on two chairs at once” to argue that Serbia was in fact, sitting on its own “Serbian chair.” Serbia’s priority was EU membership, but owing to its traditionally friendly relations with Russia, Serbia would continue to maintain good diplomatic relations with it (*Blic*, 2015, March 31). In other words, owing to Serbia’s history, a unique path towards EU membership, one that allowed it to deviate from common positions when they challenged tradition and the national interest, was necessary. Being between the East and the West meant that Serbia, as an exceptional case, was also an exceptional state.

CONCLUSION

Foucault (2003: 35-36) argued that, starting in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, sovereignty began to be superseded by liberal forms of reason, whose procedures, mechanisms, and equipment were “absolutely incompatible” with sovereignty. For Foucault, sovereign power was largely confined to the past. However, examining Serbia’s diplomatic relations with China and Russia unsettles both the claim that one has displaced the other and that the two are so

distinct as to be incompatible. In Serbia's diplomatic encounters with China and Russia, I identify the quintessentially sovereign concerns with territory and the law alongside governmental concerns with managing the state's wealth, natural resources, commercial opportunities, etc. Working alongside the ceremonial, spectacular and acclamatory manifestations of sovereign power, I find forms of power that are mundane and ordinary. The latter operate not by acting directly upon the objects of concern, as is the case with sovereign imperatives to control, expand and unify territory, but by seeking to foster (professional and cultural) networks, encourage (investment) flows and coordinate (people-to-people) exchanges, while also guarding against disruption to these processes by nefarious occurrences such as economic crises, terrorism, organized crime, etc.

Turning to the everyday practice of diplomacy as a way to demonstrate that Serbia's national sense-making is a product of its global engagements, relations with China and Russia are a product of and reproduce the geopolitical habitus – a posture for practice whose logic holds that geography determines a country's foreign policy. The geopolitical habitus disposes policy makers towards cultivating diplomatic relations with Russia and China alongside the pursuit of EU membership and cultivates a worldview according to which balancing between the East and West is a common-sense response given objective circumstances. The geopolitical habitus produces a conflicted self-understanding. On the one hand, the idea that geography determines policy is associated with a sense of reliance, dependence and inequality. On the other hand, the geopolitical habitus embodies agency, initiative and active participation in the domestic political field. Given that in the national historical and cultural narratives being between the East and West is associated with perseverance, martyrdom, and distinctiveness, to balance between the two generates the sense that Serbia is an active participant on the world stage. Against the

backdrop of EU accession, diplomatic relations with China and Russia emerge as both a strategy to manage difficult circumstances and a source of symbolic and political capital.

4. Constructing the Global Balkans: Transnational Roads and Rails through State Developmentalist Reason

Just as the geopolitical habitus has its origins in Serbia's experience of being located at the geographical edges of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires, so Serbia's rich and storied history of being imbricated within trans-regional military, trade and population migration routes, has generated the sense that Serbia is a crossroad or a bridge connecting discrete regions and political units. Once traversed by the *Via Militaris*, the ancient Roman road built to support Roman military operations,³⁹ during the Ottoman Empire Serbia was a site of thriving commercial activity capturing trade flows between Central Europe, Russia and Constantinople.⁴⁰

Writing about the Mediterranean of which the Western Balkans and Serbia are a part, Fernand Braudel (2000: 247) noted:

The Mediterranean has no unity but that created by the movements of men, the relationships that they imply, and the routes they follow. Lucien Febvre wrote, 'The Mediterranean is the sum of its routes,' land routes and sea routes, routes along the rivers and routes along the coasts, an immense network of regular and casual connections, the life-giving bloodstream of the Mediterranean region... The whole Mediterranean consists of movement in space. Anything entering it – wars, shadows of war, fashions, techniques, epidemics, merchandise light or heavy, precious or commonplace – may be caught up in the flow of its life blood, ferried over great distances, washed ashore to be taken up again and passed on endlessly, maybe even carried beyond its shores.

³⁹ Roman roads stretched throughout the Balkans The *Via Militaris* stretched from present day Istanbul, to Plovdiv (Bulgaria), Sofia, Nis (Serbia), Belgrade, and Sremska Mitrovica (Kosovo), where it was connected to the comprehensive Italian road networks of the *Via Pannonia* running through Sisak (Croatia), all the way to Aquileia (Italy). From there, the *Via Flavia* ran along the Croatian coastline down the Adriatic connecting Pula, Rijeka, Zadar, Split, to Durres (Albania) (Holzer, 2014).

⁴⁰ Some of this commercial activity was a matter of capturing the trade in foodstuff and luxury items that crossed the Western Balkans, but not all. As noted by Hozic (2006), the Ottoman Empire itself was dependent on the provision of grain, salt, cattle and wool from the region. Balkan peasants came to trade with the Europeans directly in the 18th century, as the wars in Europe increased demand for grain from the region.

In the aftermath of the Yugoslav civil war, fledgling pro-market reforms, the Eurozone crisis, a strict austerity programme and the scaling back of the European Union’s financial assistance to the region⁴¹ (Horvat and Stiks, 2015; Bartlett and Prica, 2016), addressing the region’s “infrastructure gaps” (IMF, 2018: 5) became a priority for national governments and international financial institutions (IFI) as a way to stimulate local economies. Seeking to resuscitate the routes, movements and circulations that once crossed the region, calls were made for improvements to the region’s infrastructure network as a way to enhance competitiveness, attract foreign investors, connect consumers and producers to global and regional markets, boost production capacity and improve the dissemination of information and knowledge (ibid., 1-2).

To that effect, investments into Serbia’s road, rail and maritime transportation network have sought to capitalize on Serbia’s “natural position” as a bridge between the East and West (Republic of Serbia, 2018). Two EU-designated pan-European transport corridors run through Serbia. Substantial sections of Corridor X, stretching from Thessaloniki in Greece to Salzburg in Austria, run along Serbia’s north-south axis, as does pan-European Corridor VII, the River Danube, Europe’s second longest river – of the 91 commercial ports on the Danube, 11 are located in Serbia (Matkovic, 2014). Serbia is also building the Belgrade-South Adriatic Highway as a way to better connect the north-east and south-west of the country. Stretching from the Romanian border, the highway will facilitate access to the port city of Bar in neighbouring Montenegro and, over the Adriatic, connect Serbia with the Italian port city of Bari. And while Corridor X has been built along the ancient Roman *Via Militaris*, Serbia’s participation in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) initiative draws on another ancient project, that of China’s Silk

⁴¹ Besides a decline in official EU financial assistance, the region has also experienced a decline in foreign direct investment (FDI) from Europe. Looking at Serbia, investment from the EU to Serbia has been falling since 2011. Although the EU remains Serbia’s main trading partner and a source of FDI, greenfield FDI from the bloc has fallen by 73% of Serbia’s total between 2005 and 2014, to roughly 55% in the years since (FT, 2020, February 7).

Road. Motivated in large part by the desire to facilitate Chinese access to the European market, the BRI integrates Serbia into a global network of roads and maritime routes linking over 70 countries across Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe. Along with the region, Serbia is therefore being integrated into burgeoning, imperially-inspired global networks of commercial exchange. Promoting Serbia on account of its location and transportation infrastructure, the Serbian investment promotion agency proudly advertised that “a shipment from Serbia can reach even the most remote part of Europe in less than 72 hours” (Serbian Investment and Export Promotion Agency, 2011: 16).

Significant efforts have been made by the Serbian government in recent years to be able to back-up that claim. According to the Minister of Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure, as of 2019, the value of current and completed infrastructure projects in Serbia stood at \$14 billion euros; the value of projects completed between 2016 and 2019 alone accounted for a third of that amount, \$6 billion euros (*Blic*, 2019, July 14). Both China and Russia have become important players in the construction of strategic transportation routes throughout Serbia as they have provided the largest sources of credit, materials, equipment, and labour. In this chapter, I map the politico-legal arrangements through which Chinese and Russian-sponsored infrastructure projects are realized and the mentalities of government that they instantiate. I argue that these projects, ones that aim to connect the ostensibly peripheral Western Balkans with Central Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, are articulated through the blending of a geopolitically deployed state developmentalism with a (neo)liberal/biopolitical concern with augmenting circulation and enhancing competition. Given the role of infrastructure in the construction and connectivity of a Balkan, European and global economy, infrastructure projects aim to construct the global Balkans in a material sense.

In developing this argument, I begin by outlining the politico-legal arrangements through which Chinese and Russian infrastructure projects are realized in Serbia. I draw out the dominant role played by states in infrastructure development, before going on to explore the tensions that this state developmentalist governmentality has generated. Affirming that Balkan-style infrastructure is “a site of multiple, overlapping or nested forms of sovereignty, where domestic, foreign and transnational jurisdictions collide” (Easterling, 2014:22), this section will demonstrate how infrastructure development has embedded Serbia within new relations of both autonomy and dependence. In the following section, I note the intention of the latter projects, to improve the speed and capacity of Serbia’s externally-oriented trade infrastructure. I attribute these intentions to (neo)liberal/biopolitical aims to engender and augment circulation. In the third section, I explain the presence of both the aim to enhance the ease and efficiency with which goods and people move through Serbia and the state developmentalist modalities through which those aims are to be achieved as an instance of ordoliberal rationalities of rule. I show, as argued by Dean (2013: 230), that “liberalism in both its classical and more recent forms operates along both axes of power [of sovereign-reign and economic-government] to employ state power to institute what it presents as a natural or quasi natural order.” In the fourth and final section of the chapter, employing a Bourdieusian analysis, I argue that infrastructure development is motivated by a competitive ethos and nationalist affect, which generates an interest, or *illusio* (Bourdieu, 1992: 98), in the modernization of Serbia’s transnational roads and rails.

The contribution of this chapter to the literature is two-fold and interrelated. The first is related to discussions of the state’s role in and relationship to the market economy. In noting the role of states, I foreground how state intervention in the economy is not only concerned with creating the appropriate institutional framework to address market failure, that, following but

also extending Lemke (2001:197), public bodies are not only necessary to assume the task of creating “market-shaped systems of actions for individuals, groups and institutions,” but that they also play an important role in creating the material foundations necessary for transnational market activity to unfold. In other words, states and public bodies not only play an important role with respect to designing institutions and cultivating market dispositions, as has been advocated by ordoliberalists, they are also integral to building the very material foundations of the global economy. These material foundations may have an efficacy independent of any institutional design which may have created them. Which brings me to the second contribution of this chapter. In making the latter point, I build on the literature that looks at the role of materials in political life (Aradau, 2010; Barry, 2012; Barry 2013; Squire, 2014). The latter, often referred to as “new materialism,” criticizes the idea that materials are passive, inactive and unitary and argues instead for the extension of the concept of agency and power to non-human nature (Lemke, 2014: 4). Yet, whereas seminal works of new materialism, such as those by Barry (2012), examine the role of materials in the way political struggles are played out, I draw specifically on governmentality studies to illuminate the relationship between materials and political forms of reason. I therefore contribute to the new materialism literature by paying attention to the role of material systems in governmental practices.

The geopolitically deployed state developmentalism of Chinese and Russian-financed infrastructure development

Chinese BRI investments to central and Eastern Europe, in 99 per cent of cases, specifically target projects where the state is the end user (*FT, February 7, 2020*).

While referring to Chinese-sponsored transportation infrastructure projects in Serbia, the above quote is telling of the imperatives and logics driving infrastructure development more generally.

State actors and public bodies design, determine priorities, finance, provide technical expertise, construct, and supply labour and machinery on projects. Chinese and Russian participation has generated both new opportunities and demands. On the one hand, though the provision of financing, China and Russia have enabled Serbia to come closer towards becoming a regional logistics hub and an “unavoidable transit destination” in the global flows of commercial exchange. The availability of Chinese and Russian capital has also provided Serbia with autonomy from the conditionalities accompanying EU/IFI financing. As explained by a local politician, “Terms and procedures set by the EU and their financial instruments are highly demanding. EU strategies sometimes do not recognize the importance of certain corridors vital for Serbia. Then comes Beijing with a more direct approach and sufficient assets at its disposal, filling in for all the shortcomings of the EU” (AA, 2019, November 10). However, on the other hand, Chinese and Russian involvement has imbricated Serbia within new hierarchies, subordinating Serbia within new forms of creditor-debtor relations. Moreover, at the same time that cooperation has given Serbia autonomy from EU/IFI conditionality, the modality of cooperation – the geopolitically deployed *raison d’Etat* – is often in tension with, if not in legal violation of, Serbia’s legal obligations and commitments to the EU. That has served to position Serbia as standing at odds with EU directives, standards and norms.

Infrastructure as a modality of state reason

States and public bodies have played a primary role in determining, financing, and executing the construction and modernization of Serbia’s transportation infrastructure network. In the case of both China and Russia, infrastructure-related cooperation has been initiated through diplomatic channels. Cooperation with Russia was initiated in 2008 following an agreement on energy cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Serbia. The energy agreement

outlined Serbia's participation in Russia's then 2,380 km South Stream pipeline project, one that was supposed to transport Russian natural gas through the Black Sea, across Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Slovenia, and Austria. On an official state-visit to Moscow in 2013, during which Serbia's President Nikolic and Russia's President Medvedev signed a declaration of strategic partnership between the two states, a direct \$1.3 billion loan arrangement was also finalized (RTS, 2013, January 11). \$800 million of the \$1.3 billion took the form of a state export credit to the Serbian Ministry of Finance for the modernization of Serbia's railway infrastructure. One part of the credit was earmarked for track modernization, new signalling and telecommunication on Serbian railways, while the other for the purchase of 27 new diesel trains from the Russian firm *Metrowagonmash*.

Following Serbia's declaration of strategic partnership with China, Serbia and China concluded the Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation in the Area of Infrastructure. The agreement governs all commercial contracts between investors, creditors and contractors. As with Russia, projects have been financed through state-to-state credit arrangements. In addition to China's export-import bank providing loans on a bilateral basis, the Serbian Ministry of Finance has also drawn on two state-owned investment cooperation funds for the construction of the Belgrade-Budapest High-speed Railway, the South Adriatic Highway and the second phase of the reconstruction and enlargement of the Kostolac power plant and Drmno coal mine (Bastian, 2017). These projects are valued at \$2.9 billion, \$1 billion and \$750 million respectively. Both investment funds are part of the multilateral 17+1 China-Central and Eastern Europe cooperation framework. The first, established in 2012 and valued at \$500 million, was set up by the Import-Export Bank of China and its Hungarian counterpart; the second, set up in

2016 and valued at \$11 billion, has China's largest state bank, the Industrial and Commerce Bank of China, as its main contributor.

Chinese and Russian state-owned firms are the main contractors on all Russian and Chinese-financed infrastructure projects. Russian-financed railway reconstruction of Pan-European Corridor X, for example, is carried out by Russian RZD International LLC, a subsidiary of Russian Railways. Similarly, China's state-owned enterprises, China Communications and Construction Company, the China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) and the China Machinery Engineering Company are the contractors on all Chinese-financed road and railway construction projects.⁴² In contrast to provincial state-owned companies, the latter are under the direct control of the central government's State Council's Asset Supervision and Administration Commission, and are thus directly managed by the Chinese central government (Kwan Lee, 2014: 34). Chinese and Russian labour, materials and machinery are used on projects on which they are the primary financiers. As an example, following a commercial contract between the China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC), the Serbian Ministry of National Investment Planning and the City of Belgrade, CRBC began construction work on the Mihajlo Pupin bridge over the Danube. The contract had as one of its clauses a requirement that 55 percent of the construction material for the project originate from China, and mandated the use of Chinese workers on the project (City of Belgrade, 2009, October 23).

Finally, the projects have also created opportunities for public bodies and state-owned firms to cooperate beyond the commercial contracts. For example, the 2015 memorandum of understanding between the Serbian and Russian national railway firms outlined an agreement for the construction of a new dispatch centre in Belgrade. As part of the knowledge-exchange

⁴² On most Chinese-financed infrastructure projects, China provides 75% of the financing for the project. The Serbian government contributes the remaining 25%.

program, arrangements were made for the workers of Serbian Railways to be trained at Russian educational institutions (Law Affirming the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Russian Federation in the Area of Railway Transport Cooperation, 2013). The memorandum also outlined provisions for the creation of a joint commission to monitor the implementation of railway-related cooperation. The memorandum therefore created opportunities for knowledge-exchange programs between national experts and for the creation of a new inter-governmental body. As the modernization of road and railway networks deepened existing diplomatic relations and created new financial and institutional mechanisms for ministries, national banks, state-owned firms and technical bodies to work together, infrastructure development involved a process which Foucault (2008: 44) identified with the state growing from within. Rather than limiting the size and role of the state in economic activity, infrastructure development expanded them.

The construction and modernization of Serbian roads and railways therefore contains elements of a state developmentalist *raison d'Etat*. Given the role played by states, state-owned firms and public bodies in selecting projects – the Belgrade-Budapest high-speed railway, for example, is a project that was conceived and initiated by China in line with the needs of its BRI initiative (RTV, 2013, 21 February) – outlining the terms, financing, and constructing the projects, the state is the driver in all stages of a project's life cycle. The projects are guided by an imperative that seeks to employ the apparatus of the state for the purpose of organizing national development – governments, public bodies and state-owned enterprises select, finance and execute those projects that are expected to generate economic growth. This state developmentalist ethic contains a logic which intends to augment the state. The creation of new mandates for inter-state cooperation and means for material accumulation, by, for example,

supplying state-owned firms with new contracts, or, in the case of Chinese and Russian state banks and ministries of finance, interest on export loans, creates opportunities to enhance both the machinery and wealth of the state. *Pace* Foucault (ibid., 4), it is informed by an imperative to make the state both sturdy and wealthy.

Writing about economic restructuring, Jessop (1997) argued that the de-statization of political regimes is a key feature of advanced capitalism. He identified a trend of moving away from the state in securing economic and political projects and an emphasis on partnership between governmental, para-governmental and non-governmental organizations, where the state is no more than one among equals (ibid). In the case of Chinese and Russian-financed infrastructure development in Serbia, a “re-statization” of political regimes can be identified. Whereas global trends on infrastructure development are characterized by foreign investors determining public priorities for investment, the private ownership and financing of projects, and the prevalence of public-private partnerships as mechanisms to plan and govern development (Cowen, 2014: 60), Chinese and Russian-financed infrastructure development in Serbia is an example of the reverse: of “moving towards” the state. The state plays a primary role in both securing the conditions and realizing the projects as a means towards stimulating national economic growth.

Infrastructure as site of hierarchies and relations of dependence

While a language of partnership, mutual benefit and harmony, as is the case with China’s usage of the phrase “win-win cooperation,” animates the discourse surrounding the above initiatives, and the representations of the projects draw strongly on the symbols of sovereign equality,⁴³ the

⁴³ A Gazprom advertisement that is prominently displayed throughout Belgrade features the Russian and Serbian flags symmetrically fused together through a knot, representing a sturdy partnership between equals.

politico-legal arrangements nonetheless generate tensions and are constituted through asymmetries. Thus, while on the one hand, these partnerships create new opportunities for states to cooperate and involve processes that augment the state, cooperation takes place under unequal terms. For one, infrastructure-related cooperation is characterized by the power asymmetries inherent to creditor-debtor relations. As previously mentioned, according to the interstate agreement on infrastructure cooperation, Russia's state-owned RZD International is the contractor on all reconstruction work financed through Russia's export credit. Russian goods and services used on construction work in Serbia are exempt from Serbian taxes and duties (Law Affirming the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Russian Federation in the Area of Railway Transport Cooperation, 2013). Moreover, while the terms, timelines and the costing of each project is officially determined through negotiations, it is the Russian Ministry of Finance that grants final approval for each tranche of railway reconstruction for which funding is being sought (*ibid.*). The onus is on Serbia to demonstrate the feasibility of each project and its preparedness to carry out the necessary work to the Russian ministry.

Similarly, Chinese-financed construction projects require that the Serbian government purchase goods, technologies and services used on Chinese-financed projects from China, and that these be exempt from Serbian duties and its value added tax. As with Russia, each project financed by China is negotiated directly with the Chinese government, meaning that no competitive bidding on any aspect of the project takes place. The Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation has evolved to explicitly shield the projects from tender obligations, and thus market competition. Annex No. 2, Article 5 of the Agreement states that agreements, contracts, programs and projects concluded under the framework of the agreement shall not be subject to the obligation to invite a public tender, unless explicitly stated otherwise. As Serbian

sub-contractors are also agreed to during interstate negotiations, they are likewise exempt from competitive bidding (Institute for European Policy, 2017).

Moreover, infrastructure development has introduced another legal order into Serbia. The commercial contracts stipulate that agreements as well as the rights and obligations of the parties shall be governed and constructed in accordance with the laws of China (see Preferential Buyer Credit Loan Agreement, 2016). Disputes are to be submitted to the China International Economic and Trade Arbitration Commission for resolution. Serbia is required to waive any immunity “on the grounds of its sovereignty or otherwise for itself or its property in connection with any arbitration” (Preferential Buyer Credit Loan Agreement, 2016). Chinese labour employed on the construction projects in Serbia is exempt from Serbian labour laws and standards. Thus, while the projects are constructed to meet EU technical standards (*Xinua*, 2017, March 22), the rights and obligations surrounding construction bypasses local laws and are governed by the laws of China.

The logics and dynamics guiding the politico-legal arrangements of Chinese and Russian-financed infrastructure projects differ in important respects from those guiding EU-financed infrastructure development. Whereas Chinese and Russian commercial contracts include special provisions shielding their projects from tender obligations, EU/IFI-financed infrastructure projects require competitive bidding on goods, works and consulting services (as an example see Loan Agreement [Corridor X Highway Project] between Republic of Serbia and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2009). Given the absence of competitive bidding, Chinese and Russian-financed projects are not only distorting the market’s role as the site of “veridiction” (Foucault, 2008: 32) – its role in determining whether government is excessive –

but are in certain cases an explicit violation of Serbia's obligation to abide by EU law.⁴⁴ For example, the European Commission launched an official investigation as to whether the loan that the Serbian government took on behalf of the public utility company *Elektroprivreda Srbije* (EPS) from China's Exim Bank to modernize the Kostolac power plant constituted "state aid," thus contravening Serbia's obligations under the EU's Energy Community Treaty to which Serbia is a signatory (Bankwatch Network, 2017). Relatedly, projects funded through the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, require that public utility companies bidding on projects establish that "they are legally and financially autonomous, operate under commercial law and are not a dependent agency of the contracting authority" (i.e. the Serbian state). Thus, the state developmentalist *raison d'état* guiding Chinese and Russian infrastructure development is in legal tension with the conditionalities and directives Serbia must abide by in order to accede into the EU.

Further to that, the various environmental and social requirements that Serbia is contractually required to meet in order to be granted financing through the EU/IFIs contrasts with the lack of such contractually obligated requirements from China and Russia. For example, EU involvement in road construction on Corridor X comes with a number of environmental conditions that Serbia is required to meet as part of the loan arrangement. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development requires that all work be carried out in accordance with the respective Environmental Impact Assessment and the Resettlement Policy Framework (as an example see Loan Agreement [Corridor X Highway Project] between Republic of Serbia and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2009). For each section of road under construction Serbia must submit to the Bank a resettlement action plan, including social

⁴⁴ The Belgrade-Budapest high-speed railway, the first railway to be built by China in Europe is under investigation by the European Commission. The investigation centers on whether Hungary violated the EU's procurement rules in approving the project.

assessments, and ensure that these are adequately integrated in the proposed commercial contracts. The EU and the IFIs have raised reservations about funding highway construction in Serbia given the adverse environmental impacts of traffic congestion and have preferred to fund railway reconstruction instead (*Al Jazeera Balkans*, 2016, September 6; World Bank, 2018). Chinese credit, by contrast, has been used towards the modernization of existing and creation of a new cross-country highway. Civil society groups have likewise voiced concerns about China's role in the reconstruction and expansion of Serbia's coal power plants. They have argued that the expansion of the Kostolac power plant will make it difficult for Serbia to switch to a low carbon economy and meet its environmental obligations under the EU accession process (Bankwatch Network, 2017). Thus, here too, Chinese and Russian infrastructure development has involved contradictions. It has provided Serbia with the ability to access financing free from the conditions and directives that accompany EU-sponsored infrastructure development. As noted by the local politician quoted at the beginning of this section, EU conditions are considered excessive and are not responsive to local needs. Yet by diverging from them, Serbia's infrastructure projects have been positioned as being at odds with its obligations under the EU accession process.

(Neo)Liberal/Biopolitical Logics of Circulation and Transnational Market Integration

At the same time that Chinese and Russian-sponsored infrastructure development projects have expanded the state's forces from within, thus displaying a self-maximizing logic, the construction of roads and railways simultaneously draws on the "self-limiting" logics of liberal government. The latter involves "governmental action limiting itself by reference to the nature of what it does and on of that on which it is brought to bear" (Foucault, 2007:17). Infrastructure

development in Serbia is informed by a rationality that seeks to stimulate economic activity not by intervening directly through state planning, but by “arranging the complex of men and things so as to guide conduct” (Foucault, 2008:13). Chinese and Russian-financed roads and railways are the material component within this “complex of men and things.” Their modernization seeks to enhance the quantity and quality of circulation – to improve its agility, speed and volume. As investments are being made in order to create material conditions in favour of engendering cross-border flows of goods and people, they are being arranged with a view to facilitating Serbia’s global market integration.

Infrastructure as the material arrangement of things towards global market integration

Owing to its position on the geographic borderline between the East and West, Serbia is often referred to as a gateway of Europe. Two important European corridors, VII – the River Danube – and Corridor X, the international highway and railroad, intersect on Serbian territory, providing excellent connections with Western Europe and the Middle East. Serbia is thus a perfect place for a company to locate its operations if it wants to closely and most efficiently serve its EU, SEE or Middle Eastern customers. Bordering the EU, Serbia still offers a possibility of enjoying all benefits of working outside the EU while being able to provide services and transport goods in projected and flexible time frames (Development Agency of Serbia, 2019).

A characteristic feature of Chinese and Russian-sponsored infrastructure projects is that the latter’s finances, labour and equipment are overwhelmingly being employed on projects to construct and upgrade transnational transit routes. Russia’s \$800 million export credit has financed the construction and electrification of a track on the railway line leading to the Romanian border, the reconstruction of the existing and the construction of a new track on the rail line extending to the Hungarian border, and the reconstruction of the Serbian section of the Belgrade-Bar rail line to Montenegro, whose end is the port city of Bar. The credit has been used to upgrade six railroad sections of Pan-European Corridor X. The corridor stretches from

Thessaloniki, Greece (home to the largest port in the northern Aegean) to Salzburg, Austria, travelling through Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia in the process. The Corridor is referred to as “the spine of Serbia” (Danas, 2013, March 25) and is considered by industry experts to be Serbia’s “most significant rail network” (Bojovic and Partners, 2017: 11). A portion of the Russian credit is also being used to finance the reconstruction of one out of three sections of the Belgrade-Budapest high-speed railway line. That project, China’s first infrastructure project in Europe to cross state borders, will create Serbia’s first high-speed railway. The project involves the construction and modernization of the existing railway and the construction of a new track to provide double-track railway for passengers and freight traffic of purported speeds of up to 200 km/h.

Chinese-sponsored construction work on the new Belgrade-South Adriatic Highway is similarly transnational in scope, linking a vast network of roads, rail and maritime routes across South-eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. Complementing the adjacent railway line being reconstructed by Russia, the 259 km highway connects Romania, Serbia, Montenegro and Italy. The international highway will form part of a route extending from Belgrade to the capital city of Montenegro, and then travel further south to the Montenegrin port city of Bar. By sea, the route of the Belgrade-South Adriatic Highway travels across the Adriatic, connecting Bar with the Italian port of Bari. In addition to the work on the Belgrade-South Adriatic highway and Serbia’s first high-speed railway, a \$400 million euro contract was also signed for the construction of the Fruska Gora Corridor (*RTS*, 2017 May 14). The Corridor will connect the capital city of Vojvodina province, Novi Sad, with the Belgrade-Zagreb (Croatia) highway and pan-European Corridor X. The CRBC is also working to construct a bypass just outside the Serbian capital, which will relieve traffic congestion from the city center, ease the connection

between pan-European Corridor X and the Belgrade-South Adriatic Highway, and provide easy access to and from Serbia's largest international airport. In 2019, the Serbian government also signed an agreement to upgrade the railway system on its border with North Macedonia and to establish a Serbian-Chinese industrial park adjacent to the Mihajlo Pupin bridge, which CRBC constructed over the Danube.

While state-sponsored infrastructure projects of this size have historically been associated with nation-building (Baker, 2005, Dalakoglu, 2012; Pozharliev, 2016), the concern displayed here is not with extending sovereign power over land or creating a sense of territorialized cohesiveness as such, but with the connectivity of the Balkan, European, and global economy. Physically facilitating cross-border mobility, the transnational, externally-orientated nature of these projects is indicative of a liberal governmentality that is "indexed to the problem of the market on the scale of the world" (Foucault, 2008: 56). The case for Corridor X was being made on the grounds that it would be an opportunity to facilitate the movement of goods and people, encourage the creation of new logistical routes and facilitate access to new markets (*RTS*, 2015, November 24). Improvements to the transportation network sought to lower transportation costs as a way to attract more freight and passenger traffic to Serbia. As advertised by the Serbian Development Agency, Serbia is a "perfect place" for investors to locate their operations if they want to efficiently serve clients in adjacent markets. It is Serbia's connection with and connectivity to adjacent markets that is important. Thus, the object on which governmental power bears and which it effectively enables and constructs is not territory, but the transnational economy, physically inserting the Balkans into wider European and international circuits of production and exchange.

Just as Foucault (2007: 17) noted that the spatial arrangement of things was a key consideration informing incipient biopolitical concerns, that, “for the town to be a perfect agent of circulation it had to have the form of a heart that ensures the circulation of blood,” we see in the plans for infrastructure development a concern with form. Strategic steps were being taken by Serbia, China and Russia to improve those roads and rails that would encourage transnational circulation. Attention to the spatial arrangement of transportation infrastructure sought to bring roads and rails into that sort of spatial relation that was conducive to Serbia’s improved global market integration.

The subjects of government: enhancing the volume, agility and speed of circulation

The above points to liberal/biopolitical subjects of governance, transnational flows of goods, people, investment and capital, and the desire of governmental power to nurture and intensify them. The construction of the Serbia-Russia railway dispatch centre is an example of that. The dispatch centre is intended to provide Serbia with an improved means of managing regional freight and passenger traffic. While concluding the agreement on the joint venture, the First Vice President of Russian Railways conveyed its importance in terms of its role in coordinating “all types of traffic, for greater efficiency, lower costs and higher speed... That would mean a lot... because it would introduce a new way to plan and manage transportation and manage the transportation of goods” (*Politika*, 2016, September 19). His concern was with traffic – with the movement of people and things. By improving the ability of officials to plan and coordinate transportation, the dispatch centre was meant to make the mobility of goods faster, more efficient, and less costly. The dispatch centre’s utility in introducing a new way “to plan and manage” the transportation of goods gestures towards the importance accorded under a liberal

governmentality to the knowledge of processes and their internal dynamics (Foucault, 2007: 101) as a prerequisite towards maximizing them.

Alongside the above-cited concerns with harmonizing flows, improvements to Serbia's transportation infrastructure were also meant to augment the intensity of circulation. The problem that the purchase of 27 trains from Russia was meant to address was the low volume of passenger and cargo traffic on Serbian railroads (*Tanjug*, 2016, December 13). An increase to the speed and a reduction in travel time was also sought. The Chinese initiated and financed high-speed railway is supposed to increase the speed on route to Hungary from the current 35-40 km/h up to 200 km/h. Work on the Russian-financed railway reconstruction is supposed make it possible for trains to travel from the current 30-50 km/h to 100-120 km/h. The Minister of Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure, in speaking of upgrades being made noted that even on the most "curvatus" parts of the route, trains would now be able to travel at 90 km/h. Another official noted the route would be enclosed, "there will be no crossing over the railway line, there will be underpasses and overpasses so that trains can travel smoothly at their speed" (Radovic, 2018, January 8).

Therefore, infrastructure development was not simply about creating transnational routes and international connections, but about enhancing the speed and removing the obstacles to circulation. The aim was to both allow for transnational circulation to take place and to "ensure that things are always in motion, constantly moving around" (Dean, 2013: 71). In other words, to attract the flows of goods and people, and to ensure that the barriers to mobility were minimized. As communication networks are pervasive, yet do not possess a centre, and as they increase the density of contacts within a society without any unnecessary interventions by the state, Barry (1996: 124) argued that the development of communications networks had come to provide the

perfect material base for liberal government. With its spatial extension and aim to enhance connectivity by improving the speed, volume and agility of circulation, the same could be said of Serbia's infrastructure improvements. While made possible by state developmentalist *raison d'Etat*, infrastructure development sought to integrate Serbia into global markets, removing obstacles to cross-border circulation. By improving the speed, volume and density of circulation, the construction of transnational roads and railways sought to maximize the density of contacts. It did so through engineering improvements to railway tracks so that they could carry heavier loads more quickly, not by government intervening to plan economic activity directly. Thus, while state-led, infrastructure development had an efficacy independent of the conditions that made it possible – it provided the physical foundation not for a planned economy but for liberal government.

Planning to compete: infrastructure development and ordoliberal mentalities of rule

Encouraging cross-border flows, augmenting the speed and volume of traffic, is a government priority in Serbia. Just three paragraphs into the *Plan for the Development of Rail, Road, Maritime and Air Transport 2015-2020*, a warning is issued: surrounding corridors are being built rapidly, especially those in neighbouring states. The *Plan* names Corridor IV as the direct competitor to Serbia's Corridor X. Its completion prior to Corridor X, it is noted, could result in a decline in the volume of transit travelling through Corridor X. "That would have negative consequences for the Serbian economy. The prize of the 'market game' between the two corridors will be won by that corridor which is able to provide higher quality and more complete services" (Republic of Serbia, 2015: 1-2). In the *Roads of Serbia* (2016) newsletter it is similarly

noted that “quality transport is also important to tourists. If Serbia doesn’t ensure quality, they will use alternative routes.”

Infrastructure development is conceived as a competitive game. States are engaged in a contest to create corridors that are superior – provide higher quality and more complete services – to that which is provided by their neighbours. Rather than having citizens as subjects, infrastructure development was client-centered, thus the language of service delivery. This game is informed by an underlying anxiety that, should Serbia’s corridors fail to be competitive, Serbia will lose out in the transnational circulation of goods and people to neighbouring states. Infrastructure development was not simply about building a corridor that would accommodate and attract transnational flows, but a matter of building a corridor that was better than the alternatives. Thus, the spatial arrangement on which governmental power bears was guided by a competitive ethos, with a view to creating conditions for engendering transnational flows that were superior to those of neighbouring states.

The desire to be connected through infrastructure in order to facilitate the cross-border movement of goods and people and the anxieties associated with not being integrated, are not in and of themselves new. In 1856, and while still nominally a vassal of the Sublime Porte, the Council to Improve Trade in Serbia stated that, “our government must do everything in its power so that a railway system does not bypass Serbia, and in particular that the Skadar rail line runs through Bosnia to Belgrade, as this railway is essential to our fatherland” (Jacolin, 2013: 78). Being integrated via rail link was seen as existential to the survival of the Serbian nation. The concern at the time, however, was not with losing out to one’s competitors, but with asserting the independence of the Serbian nation vis-à-vis surrounding empires (May, 1952). Rather than concerns with the national economy, infrastructure development was concerned with the

integrity of the Serbian nation. The contemporary cross-border network of transportation infrastructure, by contrast, was not motivated by the desire to secure national independence, but for Serbia to become better positioned within global circuits of exchange. Rather than seeking to assert its autonomy, Serbia was seeking more favourable terms of integration within the global economy. Instead of an objective of internal cohesiveness, contemporary infrastructure development was primarily concerned with outward connectivity.

Infrastructure development and the “signature of power”

Writing with reference to West Germany’s post-World War II economic recovery, Foucault noted that for the ordoliberal, intervention into the economy was not directed against the market but at producing the historical and social conditions of possibility for the market economy to function (Lemke, 2001: 195). Intervention was seen “as the condition enabling the formal mechanism of competition to function” so that “the competitive market can take place correctly without the negative effects that the absence of competition would produce” (Foucault, 2008: 160). In the context of infrastructure development in Serbia, state developmentalist *raison d’Etat* intervenes to create the conditions for global market integration. Yet, it intervenes not to safeguard against market failure as such or to produce the appropriate social frameworks necessary for markets, but in order to create the necessary material conditions for transnational markets and market logics to function. State intervention in the economy was aimed at constructing the physical foundation and appropriate spatial organization necessary for competition to play out.

In tracing the nature of Chinese and Russian-sponsored infrastructure development in Serbia, one notes that state involvement is directed at supporting transnational market activity.

Transnational circulation is the subject of intervention; governmental power acts on material foundations, arranging them in such a way as to enhance their volume, speed and agility. States initiate, plan, direct and in large part execute infrastructure projects, but public bodies do so not with the view to moderating or limiting the market, but to producing the material conditions that will enable transnational commercial exchange to take place. International competitiveness is not simply a matter of appropriate institutional arrangements and behavioural dispositions, but is dependent on the construction of appropriate physical forms. Infrastructure development may be state-driven, but it is market-oriented. Moreover, in contrast to, for example, Import Substitution Industrialization, a form of state developmentalism that preceded decolonization in the Global South, state intervention in the context of Chinese and Russian-sponsored infrastructure development was not motivated by the desire to insulate the national economy from the global market, but to improve performance within it. The end towards which state involvement was being directed was neither an assertion of national independence or nation-building, both of which are considered the traditional concerns of a self-referential state, but global market integration.

Following Dean (2013), the interplay between state developmentalist *raison d'Etat* and liberal/biopolitical concerns with engendering transnational circulation reveal the “signature of power” constitutive of infrastructure development. *Raison d'Etat*/state developmentalism serves as the condition of possibility for (neo)liberal/biopolitical logics to unfold. Rather than a form of power that is distinct from and precedes (neo)liberal/biopolitical governmental reason, state developmentalism/*raison d'Etat* enables it. Public bodies intervene to select, finance and build those roads and railways that have been judged to be conducive to transnational economic circulation. State power in this case constructs the global economy, putting in place, through the

strategic selection of routes, the material basis for Serbia's global market integration. The state intervenes not with a view to stifling the market or shielding the national economy from international competition, but with a view to enabling market mechanisms, such as competition, to function. Thus, in the case of infrastructure development, we see how "liberalism in both its classical and more recent forms, operates along both axes of power to employ state power to institute what it presents as a natural or quasi-natural economic order" (Dean, 2013: 230).

Playing the infrastructure game: competitive logics and the nationalist *illusio*

As with the diplomatic field, the modernization of Serbia's transnational road and railway system is guided by the sense that action is determined by geography. Yet, whereas the guiding *doxa* in the diplomatic field is one of Serbia as a small state located between the East and West, the *doxa* guiding infrastructure development is one of Serbia as a crossroad or a bridge. The rules of the "infrastructure game" require states to compete with each other, in order to attract global flows of goods and people. Ensuring greater, faster, and more comfortable mobility to that of neighbouring states is the goal. A sense of interest, or *illusio*, in the game is mobilized through nationalist affect.

Along with the Chinese Ambassador to Serbia and a team of ministers and directors from various state-owned companies engaged on the project, the then Prime Minister of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic, visited a construction site along the route of the Belgrade-South Adriatic Highway. Visiting workers at one of the construction sites, he made the following statement to the press:

For the first time in many years, we are opening a road that is as long as this one. There have been many challenges, but we said that we would do it, and we have done it. I want to thank the hard working Serbian construction workers who have worked day and night, and who have shown that Serbia can build and that it can improve itself...Besides these

26.4 km, 24 bridges and 10 overpasses, we have constructed another 19.6 km of local roads and 10 bridges. In this area alone, we have built 35 bridges. In total, over the last year and a half, we have built 316 small and large bridges – from the smallest bridge in [the village of] Druzetici to the Mihajlo Pupin, or Chinese bridge, in Belgrade. Our plan is to build more than 500 bridges by the end of 2016. Some may say that improvements are not noticeable. But in the end, when you look at something like this [the 26.4 km of roads], those that want the best for their country will notice it. Serbia is victorious! Serbia is going forward! Long-live Serbia (Corridors of Serbia, 2016, June 4)

The construction of highways, roads and bridges was being equated with national strength and progress. Construction involved overcoming adversity and perseverance in the face of challenges. It was Serbian workers who were being celebrated and Serbia that was changing in the process. Construction was about making the impossible, possible, and doing so collectively, as a nation. Building was winning. Acknowledging progress was a matter of national loyalty.

Infrastructure development is filled with associations to national battle, independence, and perseverance. Completed sections of highways were being named after national heroes, military men who led uprisings against the Ottoman Empire. “We have a road and we have freedom, because one cannot go without the other,” noted the Serbian president during a ceremony to commemorate a newly completed section of the Belgrade-South Adriatic Highway. The section was named after Prince Milos Obrenovic, colloquially renamed for the occasion as *Milos the Great*. Such commemoration ceremonies have become commonplace. Bringing together not only Serbia’s highest state officials but representatives of the Serbian community from neighbouring states, such as Milorad Dodik, the Serb member of the presidency of Bosnia and Hercegovina, and Andrija Mandic, president of the largest Serb party in Montenegro, they have become occasions that glorify the nation. Much like with the opening ceremony of the Olympic games or other large sporting events, the opening ceremony of the *Milos Veliki* Highway was televised live on national television. During the three hour broadcast, the audience

saw images of the highway adorned with Serbian flags. A parade of cars, draped with the Serbian flag, drove down the highway to inaugurate its use. Celebrations were even held in the town of Obrenovac, the start of the highway section. Young men could be seen waving nationalist memorabilia from their car windows and displaying the ‘three-finger salute’ – a gesture that raises the three fingers used during oath taking in the Serbian Orthodox Church to indicate belonging and pride in the Serb nation.

Nationalist affect is therefore a strong component of infrastructure development. As it generates a sense that the nation has a stake in the modernization of Serbia’s infrastructure system, it motivates participation in “the infrastructure game.” To have highways and high-speed railways is to have national freedom. To be able to attract the flow of goods and people away from competing corridors is a source of national pride. In an environment in which states are understood to be engaging in a competition with one another to attract finite flows of goods and people, constructing an externally-oriented, well-connected and trafficked transportation network is of vital importance and a “win” for the nation. To lose “the game” is to suffer a potentially existential loss. Associating infrastructure development with liberation generates a sense of national investment in infrastructure development – the sense that the nation has a stake in its construction.

Infrastructure development involves the state using its capacities and resources for the purpose of transforming its territory into a desirable transit route in the global circulation of goods and people. Guided by the belief that “Serbia has from ancient to modern times been a bridge between the West and the East, the shortest and most comfortable route between Europe and Asia” (Republic of Serbia, 2017:5), improvements to Serbia’s road and rail infrastructure systems were a strategic intervention that aimed to capitalize on Serbia’s “natural” position

(ibid.). “The Government of Serbia recognizes the importance of securing efficiency in connectivity on the national level and its obligation to the international community that this natural bridge persists and develops further for the benefit of generations to come,” read a statement from the Minister of Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure. Playing the game – making its infrastructure system more efficiently integrated with neighbouring states and adjacent markets – was therefore a matter of national survival, as well as a national obligation. The sense of responsibility to the international community made the modernization of Serbia’s transportation network common-sense. Thus, as was the case with the geopolitical habitus, Serbia’s sense of self was constructed through its international relationships and engagements. Nationalist affect functioned not to suppress these, but to realize them materially.

CONCLUSION

China and Russia have emerged as important actors assisting Serbia to realize its national objective of improved global market integration. Through a series of state-initiated, financed and constructed initiatives, China and Russia are providing the credits, labour and equipment on a number of infrastructure projects that aim to improve Serbia’s connectivity with the region, and by way of that, the global market. These projects effectively enable and physically construct a transnational economy, inserting the Balkans into wider European and transnational circuits of production and exchange. The object on which power bears is not territory, but the global economy. Constructed on top of routes that have moved people, goods and military supplies through the region since as far back as the Roman Empire, Chinese and Russian-financed infrastructure projects play an important role in (re)creating the “global Balkans” in a material (and historically informed) sense.

In this chapter, I argued that the above infrastructure projects are constituted through an interplay between a geopolitically deployed *raison d'Etat* and (neo)liberal/biopolitical concern with engendering circulation. Whereas the former sees the state intervening to select, secure and construct economic projects through new avenues and financial mechanisms for cooperation, and thus involves the state apparatus growing from within, the latter is founded on the self-limiting logic of liberal government. (Neo)liberal/biopolitical concerns seek to enhance circulation not through direct intervention, but by acting on those conditions – such as transnational road and railway routes – that would enhance it. I then proposed that we think through this interplay in terms of Dean's (2013) "signature of power," and thus as an instance of state power creating the conditions necessary for the global market economy to function. Not only does state power play a role in constructing the institutional conditions for market mechanisms to function, as was advocated by ordoliberalists following the Second World War. But, as the case of Chinese and Russian-financed infrastructure development demonstrates, state power also plays a role in creating the physical conditions necessary for markets to function.

5. Power and Politics at the “Margins”

The “emergence” of new groupings on the global stage, such as the BRICS countries, whose actions have at times brought them in confrontation with established centres of power, has shed light on the participation and embeddedness of the Western Balkans within multiple political, economic, and cultural processes that make up world politics. In Serbia’s case, some of these connections have been developed through institutional membership in multilateral arrangements such as the Chinese-led Belt One Road Initiative or Serbia’s participation in the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union. Others have been forged through bilateral relationships and involve arrangements such as joint-police patrols with Chinese police officers in Serbian cities with significant levels of Chinese investments, or the use of Huawei’s urban surveillance technologies as part of its Safe City project (Vuksanovic, 2019, October 14). To these one can add the various formal non-governmental and informal connections that have been developed around cultural and religious formations. The Russian Centre at the University of Belgrade, funded by the Ruski Mir Foundation, to promote the Russian language in Serbia, or the Russian diaspora association that uses office space at the *Ruski Dom* (the Russian Center for Science and Culture), an institution funded by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, are just some examples. Thus, while when measured against EU associations, the region may be seen as falling short, the multiplicity of the region’s inter- and transnational connections suggest a more “global Balkans” than is usually perceived.

In this dissertation, I have argued that Serbia’s global encounters have been constituted through a series of interplays between forms of power that are assumed to be distinct and

opposites. The process of EU accession combines governance through freedom with a governance through domination. Various techniques of agency and technologies of performance, such as annual progress reports and benchmarks, while constructing the Western Balkans as free and autonomous subjects, also involve hierarchies of knowledge and regulated forms of freedom that involve the suspension of agency and choice. With regard to Serbia's diplomatic relationships with China and Russia, sovereign concerns with constructing territory and the law sit alongside a proto-governmentality of *raison d'Etat* that deals with managing the composition of the state's forces. Infrastructure development brings into play a geopolitically deployed state developmentalism alongside a (neo)liberal/biopolitical concern with the transnational circulation of goods and people. The Balkan-style signature of power, a term I use to name this interplay, therefore involves simultaneous concessions and augmentations of state sovereignty alongside a (neo)liberal governmentality.

The Balkan-style signature of power is "glorified" through a nationalist praxeology. With respect to both diplomacy and infrastructure development, I have shown how national-sense making is a product of Serbia's imbrications within networks that include but also traverse the nation-state. With respect to diplomacy, guided by the *doxa* that Serbia is a small state located between the East and West, the geopolitical habitus disposing professionals of politics towards the simultaneous pursuit of EU membership and good diplomatic relations with China and Russia produces the sense that Serbia is both a reliant, dependent and an unequal actor on the world stage and one that has agency, exercises initiative and is proactive. Infrastructure development unfolds though the sense that Serbia is a natural bridge or crossroad in the global circuits of exchange. Both diplomatic practice and infrastructure development employ the "rigid, cumbersome and glorious form of ceremonies, acclamations and protocols" (Agamben, 2011:

xii), glorifying sovereign power and the state. Infrastructure development is motivated by nationalist affect, which equates infrastructure development with the national interest.

Emerging effects: centering the periphery

What does the rise of new global powers on the international stage mean for those considered peripheral within the international order? How does the emergence of new players play out in spaces considered outside the “mainstream” (Siani-Davies, 2003)? By focusing on the mentalities and practices of rule in the Serbia-China and Serbia-Russia encounters, my dissertation provides some answers to these questions. On the issue of both territorial integrity and infrastructure development, Serbia has received diplomatic and financial assistance from China and Russia to pursue policies that are seen as being in the national interest. That has led some to argue that the rise of China and Russia has provided Serbia with certain courses of action that would otherwise be unavailable to it. For example, it has been argued that China, by financing Serbia’s infrastructure modernization, has aided Serbia’s move towards authoritarianism by providing another source of domestic legitimacy for the political elite, thus freeing it from EU pressure to democratize (Vuksanovic, 2019). The idea here is that Serbia’s position vis-à-vis established centres of power has been strengthened, since the rise of China has provided Serbia with a measure of autonomy from the EU. I note something similar in Chapter 4 in my discussion of infrastructure development and conditionality.

Bilateral relations with China and Russia have increased Serbia’s salience in global politics. US Secretary of State John Kerry described Serbia’s position as one of being “in the line of fire” between the West and Russia (*B92*, 2015, February 25), while EU Enlargement Commissioner Johannes Hahn warned that China could turn the countries of the region into

Trojan horses that would one day be members of the EU (Politico, 2018, July 27). Serbia has become a link in the articulation of Russian and Chinese emergence on the global stage. It is through diplomatic and economic relations with Serbia that China and Russia project political and economic power in the form of vetoes, technical expertise, financing, military equipment, etc. that are in turn perceived as a threats to the established order. Rather than sitting on the sidelines, they are a part of Chinese and Russian global ambitions, and are therefore constitutive of the changing dynamics of world politics.

Moreover, the way that I have sought to account for China and Russia's presence in Serbia has challenged conventional accounts that see great powers as unilaterally imposing their will on the small. Both the US Secretary of State and the EU Enlargement Commissioner assume that the region lacks agency and is more or less a passive recipient of nefarious influences. Instead, I have sought to challenge perceptions of the region as simply a space where great power politics are played out. As Green (2005:144) notes, the Balkans have tended to be seen "as what was left over after Great Powers resolved whatever disputes they had among themselves." With reference to the governmentality analytic, I have shown how Serbia actively participates in the articulation of forms of power with global ambitions. Through practice-theory, I demonstrate the way in which the "the national" has been both shaped and emboldened through intergovernmental contacts and agreements. Moreover, in terms of everyday politics playing out at the local level, cooperation with the two emerging economies is unfolding in a strategic and calculated way. As explained by Milovan Drecun, a member of the ruling party and the chair of the Serbian Assembly's Committee on Kosovo and Metohija, "We need Russia to strengthen us with the Americans, because when Russia puts its weight behind us, the Americans know that no solution can pass without its consent" (*Beta*, 2019, January 8).

“Re-nationalizing” the state

As noted above, Serbia’s integration into global network formations takes place through a signature of power that brings into play concessions and augmentations of sovereignty alongside (neo)liberal governmentality and glorifies both of these in a national(ist) praxeology. As shown in both Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, this national(ist) praxeology is a key modality instantiating Serbia’s global integration. This finding challenges both the conventional distinction that is assumed to exist between different scales of power and the trend of de-nationalization that has been said to characterize contemporary political economy. With respect to the former, political science maintains a strict separation of scales, so that the national, international and global are conceived as different sites of power. Within international relations, the international is often posited as different from the national, and, in the inside/outside (Walker, 1993) inward-nationalist/outward-internationalist binary (Hurrell, 2018), as its opposite. With respect to the latter, much has been made of the structural “hollowing out of the state” under neoliberal globalization with “old and new state capacities being reorganized territorially and functionally on subnational, national, supra-national and trans-local levels” (Jessop, 1997: 13; 2004).

The account that I present outlines the co-constitutive nature of different scales of power. As has been noted by some economic sociologists (Sassen, 2006), my account has shown how national institutions and public bodies – national export banks, ministries of finance, diplomatic officials, state-owned enterprises, national technical bodies, research institutes, and labour forces etc. – realize global political and economic projects. In the case of Serbia, national professionals of politics are important drivers of these processes. “The global” is not formed independently of national institutions, officials and processes, but ought to be thought of as an effect of specific practices and rationalities, some of which play out at “the national” level.

Moreover, contrary to the argument that the state has been “hollowed out,” “the national” is a key site “powering” global market integration and the competitive games that continue to characterize global politics. And what is more, this is not a unidirectional relationship. It is not simply that “the national” is a condition of possibility for “the global,” but that international relations and global engagements are key to constructing “the national.” The Balkan-style signature of power demonstrates how political and economic ties with emerging economies and established centres of power construct national dispositions. For example, as shown in Chapter 3, it is through Serbia’s simultaneous pursuit of EU membership and good diplomatic relations with China and Russia that the sense that Serbia is a small state situated between the East and West is produced.

It should also be noted that with respect to China and Russia, my dissertation has identified something akin to an emerging economy-style ordoliberalism. China and Russia rely on both material and intergovernmental frameworks, in the form of inter-state agreements, and mobilize distinctive forms of international solidarity to create an “international community” in support of new markets and games of competition. With respect to Russia, an international solidarity is mobilized around a shared sense of pan-Slavic and Orthodox identities, while in the Serbia-China relationship an appeal to modernizing-developmental solidarities is made. In the case of both, a spirit of national community is mobilized to realize global ambitions.

Methodological limitations and theoretical contributions

While the limitations and contributions of my research project have already been outlined in the introductory chapter, here I want to reflect more specifically on the methodological limitations related to the generalizability of my findings, as well as to highlight my contribution to

governmentality and praxeology studies. I have singled out generalizability because it is the criticism most often levelled against the single case study method. However, before proceeding with the acknowledgement, I want to note that my theoretical frameworks and their post-positivist foundations have as their starting point the idea that theories are not inert abstractions to be tested against a presumably external reality, but rather sensitizing devices that evolve along with their subject matter. The signature of power that I identify emerged through a process of mapping the specificities of Serbia's relations with the EU, China and Russia. The Balkan-style signature of power is time-specific and contingent on the context in question, and is therefore inherently difficult to generalize. Hence, while I acknowledge the limitations related to generalizability below, I am also weary of the idea of "generalizability" in the first place, since it conflicts with the epistemological foundations of my theoretical frameworks.

Nevertheless, there are three main limitations related to generalizability. First, my findings cannot speak to the emerging economy-local dynamics that are generated outside the Western Balkans. Western Balkan integration into world politics has been shaped by the formal nature of the latter's relationship with the EU, which has been forged through the Stabilization and Association Process, the experience of being a part of the Non-Aligned Movement, being ruled by the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires, the international political economy of the civil war that led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and the resurgence of pan-Slavism and neo-Ottomanism. The legacies of these experiences have provided the region with a specific political, cultural and economic foundation on which relations with emerging economies are being forged. For example, NATO's 1999 bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade was a key moment in the strengthening of Chinese-Serbian relations (Hays Gries, 2001; Shen, 2004). The sense that

Russia's positions at the United Nations Security Council during the Yugoslav civil war were pro-Serbian (Bowker, 1998) generated Serbian good will towards Russia.

Second, my conclusions cannot be easily generalized to EU member states such as Hungary, Bulgaria and Greece, which, while forging close political and economic contacts with China and Russia, are members of the EU. While being a contracting party to the EU's Energy Community has been an obstacle to forging closer energy cooperation with Russia and the expectation exists that Serbia will harmonize its policies with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, not being a formal member of the EU has nonetheless provided Serbia with a certain "policy space" to forge contacts with countries outside the EU. Bulgaria, on the other hand, cancelled its commercial contract with Gazprom to construct the South-Stream pipeline because it violated its treaty obligations with the EU; the European Commission launched an investigation into Hungary's role in the construction of the Chinese-financed Belgrade-Budapest high-speed railway on the grounds that it too violated EU law. Therefore, the nature of relations with emerging economies that countries like Bulgaria and Hungary will be able to forge, and therefore the contours of their "signature of power", will differ to that of Serbia, which is not bound by the same legal-legislative instruments as the former.

Finally, a question can be raised about whether Serbia's experience of emerging-economy engagements can be generalized onto the Western Balkans as a whole, as well as whether China and Russia are representative of other emerging economies. While the Western Balkans as a region have been regarded as ambiguously situated vis-à-vis Europe/the West, have a history of shared statehood under the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and are subject to the same EU accession process, Serbia's relationship with both China and Russia draws on its specific history of relations with the two states. For example, Christian Orthodoxy combined

with pan-Slavism has been a strong basis for social solidarity in Serbia's diplomatic relationship with Russia. The same does not have the potential to be mobilized in Russia's relationship with Croatia, for example. Issues of state sovereignty and non-interference have been a key point of convergence between China and Serbia, yet these issues are not as salient for other countries in the region. Likewise, a question can be raised concerning whether the concerns and logics identified in Serbia's encounter with China and Russia can be generalized to hypothetical relationships with other emerging economies. In fact, the continuing relevance of the "emerging economies" concept has been questioned given the latter's economic decline (see Pant, 2013).

Acknowledging these limitations, two preliminary points should be made. First, while emerging economies may be experiencing an economic slowdown, it is not so much their economic weight, but what the latter represented politically (i.e., in terms of political rationalities and practices) in the putative "peripheries" that animated my initial interest in the im-bRiC-ation of Serbia within emerging economy networks. While the economic clout of Russia and China may be in relative decline, in places like the Western Balkans, these states continue to represent a different pole of power to that of the EU. It is the disruptive potential of emerging economies – both perceived and actual – to the status quo that was behind my initial interest in the research topic. Similarly, on the question of whether Russia and China are representative of other emerging economies, in my analysis of the encounters, I selected the latter in part because of what they continue to represent in a place like Serbia: a previously excluded group of states – now rising powers – seeking a more inclusive international order. Second, with respect to the representativeness of Serbia vis-à-vis other Western Balkan countries, it should be recalled that it was precisely Serbia's specificity/uniqueness that motivated the choice of it as my case study. It is because Serbia is both a *critical* and a *paradigmatic* case that is able to "activate more actors

and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied” (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 229) than is the case with the other countries in the region that it was selected for this research project.

Further research will ultimately need to be conducted into the mentalities and practices of rule through which emerging economy engagements are constituted in the purported peripheries in order to build a thicker account of emerging economy engagements in places considered outside “the mainstream.” Hungary, an EU member state that has pursued joint energy and infrastructure-related cooperation with Russia and China respectively, could be an instructive case through which to examine potential differences in the articulation of the signature of power between EU and non-EU Member States. Examining Turkey’s engagements in the region, for example, would also allow one to expand on the study of emerging-economy cases beyond China and Russia. Given the latter’s mobilization of pan-Slavism and Christian Orthodoxy and the former’s mobilization of neo-Ottomanism and Islam, looking into Turkey’s encounters in the Western Balkans would be insightful in terms of studying the role of social and cultural solidarities in contemporary global politics.

Theoretical contributions

With respect to governmentality and practice theory, my research contributes to the study of practices and mentalities as these develop within less formal settings. A growing body of literature now exists that applies and develops both theoretical frameworks to the study of international organizations, transnational associations and their professionals (Lippert, 1996; Bigo, 2002; Walter, 2012; Salter, 2006; Cohen and Vauchez, 2007; Pouliot, 2008; Adler-Nissen, 2011; Adler-Nissen and Pouliot, 2014; Kuus, 2014). For the most part, these studies examine mentalities and practices within well-established bureaucratic structures, ones that are characterized by standardized procedures, clearly defined membership criteria, and rational-legal

sources of authority. By contrast, I examine the formation of mentalities and practices in milieus that are less formally organized. My argument about the Balkan-style signature of power and emerging economy ordoliberalism emerges through an analysis of fields that are less defined by formal mechanisms and shared forms of expertise.

With respect to practice-theory, I identify elements of “transnational guilds” without formalized transnational fields (Bigo, 2016). I identify elements of social solidarity that Bigo (ibid., 398) saw as developing out of daily work, artisanal craft or specific knowledge, and which transcends differences in national culture. In the context of my research however, social solidarity is constructed around shared cultural/religious identities and modernizing-developmental programmes in the absence of an institutional framework that facilitates “daily work.” Moreover, my research has explored how a national disposition is constructed through global engagements. In formulating those connections, I drew on the methodological and substantive insights of works such as those by Sluga (2006). Sluga examines the history of the nation, and in tracing the intellectual and political networks developed across national borders in the construction of the latter, points to the transnational links that were critical to the elaboration of “the national” and nationalism. Yet, in my account, rather than being mediated by psychology, it is different instantiations of governmentality, and rather than activists and intellectuals, it is the professionals of politics that carry out the work of constructing the nation.

With respect to my contribution to governmentality studies, working with Dean’s (2013) signature of power allows me to disrupt both the periodization of different forms of power and the distinction that is often assumed to exist between them. With respect to my discussion of diplomacy, I show that rather than sovereign concerns and forms being confined to the past, they are a constitutive part of contemporary interstate relations. I show how state power is

instrumental in creating the physical foundation for transnational markets to function. With respect to EU accession, I identify elements of domination or “unfreedom” imbricated within efforts to produce Western Balkan states as free, active and responsible subjects. Thus, I show how forms of power that are assumed to be incompatible are, in practice, intertwined. Rather than “older” forms of power being displaced by “newer” ones, my research points to the persistence and connections between them.

Moreover, my research highlights the persistent, although rearticulated, *geopolitical* dimension of international *governmentality*. It speaks to the continued relevance of a form of power that has land as its concern and works to construct territory. Carl Schmitt (2003 [1955]), for instance, considered the appropriation, division and cultivation of the earth, as fundamental to both the Westphalian and any hypothetical future world order. Dean (2004; 2013), attempting to bring governmentality into conversation with Schmitt, has argued that liberalism has always been concerned to seize land and establish title (Dean, 2013: 230), thus paralleling Schmitt’s claim that land-appropriation is the ongoing foundation of international and domestic power. By highlighting the concern with territorially-instantiated sovereignty in Serbia’s relations with both China and Russia, my research points to the persistent and ongoing consideration that is given to land and territory in world politics. International governmentality studies have tended to sideline, if not entirely ignore, the earth and territoriality, seeing the most recent articulation of inter-/transnational power as concerned with an often spatially underspecified way of conducting conduct “at a distance” (Rose and Miller, 1992). Yet, in the encounters that I detail, territoriality and space are salient features in the exercise of political power.

However, contra Schmitt, the interplays between various power logics that I detail point to power’s less totalizing and elemental concern with the earth. The interspersions of sovereign

concerns with *raison d'Etat*, state developmentalist with (neo)liberal/biopolitical logics, speaks to the immanent nature of government contained within transcendent forms of rule (cf. Dean, 2013). Power, while concerned with the territorial boundaries of political community, is not fused with the land to the exclusion of other logics and concerns. While infrastructure development, for example, does involve land-appropriation for the purpose of road and rail construction, it also seeks to augment transnational circulation, and thus involves elements of de-territorialisation. The transition from the “traditional stuff of geopolitics” (Sparke, 2000), such as alliances, to “strategic partnerships,” in the present moment speaks to the way in which “the traditional stuff of geopolitics” has been interspersed with a form of managerialism that seeks to model relations between states after those of business. Sovereignty, in the latter case, has been inflected by a managerial rationality.

Global Balkans?

The Western Balkans are most often associated with “balkanization,” a process that involves the disintegration of a unit into smaller and smaller fragments. As a result, the Western Balkans are thought of as disconnected, or lacking. The idea of the “global Balkans” – juxtaposing “global” alongside “Balkan” – was meant to deliberately problematize those associations. My intention behind using the term was two-fold. First, rather than thinking of the two as each other’s opposites, I tried to show empirically that the region, while politically fragmented in one sense, is connected in another. The Western Balkans are a constitutive site of both global encounters – in a material sense constructing the global economy – and global politics – as they participate in forging forms of power, such as the emerging economy-style ordoliberalism, that makes claims on the scale of the world. Moreover, they are a constitutive part of various global ambitions,

whether Chinese and Russian, or those belonging to the European Union, which seeks to transform the outer borders of Europe into “stable, self-sufficient democracies, at peace with themselves and each other, with market economies and the rule of law” (Independent Task Force, 2002: 28).

Second, and moreover, rather than the intention to prove empirically that Southeast Europe is “in fact” connected globally, I employ the concept strategically (cf. Moulin and Nyers, 2007). Rather than simply a classification, the concept, with its jarring juxtaposition, is intended to unsettle, and trigger questions about that what is taken as natural – in this case, the spatialization of global politics. The concept is meant to interrogate what counts as connectedness, where are the centre(s) and where the peripheries, who is in the category of the included/excluded from world politics and how do these designations shape the possibility for political action and agency.

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