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The European Union and Serbia

A comparative case study of the Kosovo-conflict's impact on the relationship between Serbia and the European Union

Bachelor's thesis in Europastudier med fordypning i statvitenskap

Supervisor: Tobias Schumacher

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Kunnskap for en bedre verden

Abstract

This thesis aims to investigate the relationship between Serbia and the EU with special focus on the conflict between Serbia and Kosovo and the Europeanization of Serbia. Therefore, it is a comparative analysis of the development between Serbia and the EU. As a result, the research question this thesis aims to answer is: *What is the consequence of Serbia's non recognition of Kosovo on its future in the European Union?* This thesis focuses on events and change in Serbia connected to integration and development, at the same time as the EU's perspective on Serbia's gives insight into the relationship between them in the years between 1999 and 2008. Additionally, this thesis explores how the EU has strengthened Serbia's path to integration, despite Serbia's issue with Kosovo, that remains a conflict yet to be solved. The thesis concludes that the actions and initiatives of the EU have effected Serbia into a road towards the EU's standards.

Sammendrag

Denne oppgaven har som mål å undersøke relasjonen mellom Serbia og EU, med bakgrunn i en komparativ analyse av utviklingen mellom Serbia og EU fra 1999 til 2008, med fokus på konflikten mellom Serbia og Kosovo og av Europeiseringen av Serbia. Problemstillingen til denne oppgaven er: *Hvilke konsekvenser har Serbias mangel på anerkjennelse av Kosovo for Serbias potensielle fremtid i EU?* Oppgaven ser på betydelige hendelser og endringer i Serbia i tråd med integrasjon og utvikling, samtidig som EUs perspektiv for Serbia gir et overblikk på EUs relasjon til Serbia gjennom de to siste tiårene. Oppgaven utforsker hvordan EU har bidratt i år styrke Serbias integrasjonsprosess, til tross for at konflikten mellom Serbia og Kosovo forblir en problemstilling uten noen umiddelbar løsning. Oppgaven konkluderer med at handlingene og initiativene fra EUs side har hatt en effekt på Serbias vei i retning EU og at Serbia viser interesse for videre integrasjon.

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Abbreviations

EU – the European Union

ICTY – International Criminal Court for the Former Yugoslavia

UN – United Nations

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

SAA – Stabilization and Accession Agreement

UNMIK – United Nations Mission in Kosovo

ICJ - The Court of Justice

1.0 Introduction

It has been stated by some, that Serbia has been one of the most resistant “Europeanizers” (Economides and Ker-Lindsay, 2015, p.1; Subotić, 2010). The relationship between the EU and Serbia has been shaped over years and has been influenced by Serbia’s approach to its neighbouring countries. Since 1999, the relationship has been affected by Kosovo’s declaration of independence in 2008 and the following conflict between Serbia and Kosovo (Economides and Ker-Lindsay, 2015). This conflict has taken up much focus in Serbia’s pre-accession phase, because of its importance in Serbia’s ability to adapt to the EU. Nevertheless, Serbia and the EU have developed a better relationship throughout the last two decades and Serbia is closer to a full membership in the Union now than ever before.

The research question for this thesis is: how has the relationship between Serbia and the EU changed over time and has the conflict between Serbia and Kosovo influenced this relationship? The hypothesis is as follows: Serbia’s relationship with the European Union has changed and its position as a potential member-state has been affected by the country’s conflict with Kosovo. The actions of the EU have affected Serbia’s relation to Kosovo. Given the above, the analysis aims to either confirm or refute that there is a correlation between changes in in the relationship between Serbia and the EU, caused by the Serbia-Kosovo conflict.

This analysis will compare two longer periods of time; 1999 until 2008 and 2008 until 2020. This is the given timeframe because the declaration of independence of Kosovo in 2008, marks an historic event and a very important turning-point for the domestic policy in Serbia, Serbia’s relationship to the EU and the state of security in the Western Balkan region. The confinement for the analysis is set to 2020 based on the literature on this topic.

This thesis is structured as follows: first, it explains the topic and the framework, as well as the hypothesis. It then presents a historical background, to give a broader understanding of the topic and to connect European integration to the relationship between Serbia and Kosovo. Then, it analyses the development in the relationship between the EU and Serbia and the EU’s approach to Serbia, regarding its conflict with Kosovo, along with Serbia’s position in the process of becoming a candidate-state. Lastly, it will discuss how the relationship has changed in the given time and how Europeanization is linked to the EU’s approach to Serbia.

2.0 Literature review

The research question is based on empirical data that conceptualizes Europeanization as a significant prospect and various ways to apply Europeanization to European Union enlargement. This thesis aims to contribute to the usage of Europeanization in terms of enlargement and conflict resolution.

The topic of this thesis is the European aspect on enlargement in the Western Balkans and the process of Serbian membership in the EU. There is empirical evidence on the scholarly field. The thesis draws upon both primary sources and secondary sources on the topic of Europeanization applied to the accession-process of Serbia. The sources discusses the background for the conflict between Serbia and Kosovo and its relevance to the membership-debate in Serbia.

The literature is based on primary sources that highlight the first impressions and perspective of the EU. The scholarly secondary sources debate the topic of Europeanization, the use of the term and how it is applicable to the Serbian membership discourse.

The literature on Kosovo and its history with Serbia is relevant because of the conflict between Serbia and Kosovo is important in Serbia's relationship to the EU.

3.0 Method

The methodological framework of the analysis will be a case study. The case study will be a within one-case analysis, using a bottom-up research design. By using a bottom-up research design, it's possible to look at similarities, differences and correlations through tracing important changes, events and turning points within the case (Exadaktylos and Radaelli, 2009). A bottom-up research design begins with an idea or a problem at a given time and this will be the variable of investigation. Then, process-tracing this factor over time, can identify critical turning points or changes, with the purpose of finding out if the change came from a domestic factor or if the change came from global or international variables (Exadaktylos and Radaelli, 2009). The case study will be EU-Serbia relations, and the comparison will be the periods of 1999-2008 and 2008-2020. The variable that will be investigated is the relationship between the EU and Serbia in 1999 until 2020. By examining different years from 1999 until 2020, it is possible to find out which factors that affected the relationship.

A top-down research approach is more frequently used in conceptualizing Europeanization, however, the bottom-up approach can in the case of this thesis give another perspective compared to the top-down research design. The results will prove if this approach was convenient.

3.1 Conceptual framework

Europeanization is applied in this article as the conceptual framework. For a fuller understanding of the term, this text will use Europeanization as a process of integration (Economides and Ker-Lindsay, 2015, p.3; Flockhart, 2006, p.86). The use of Europeanization is broad and new perspectives of Europeanization emerge following the development in European integration (Wach, 2015, p.11). Europeanization and the application of it in this text will be further described in a following paragraph.

3.2 Data

The thesis draws upon both primary and secondary sources. It relies primarily on public documents, which are used to show and clarify the actions of the participants. Secondary sources have been used to map out the broader empirical and theoretical background, and are otherwise used where primary sources were not available and for giving a broader perspective on the topic.

The primary data applied are conclusions and press-statements by the European Union's institutions: statements, conclusions and reports from the Council of the European Union's Foreign Affairs and External Relations council meetings, the Commissions annual progress

reports on Serbia and the European Council conclusions from the European Council meetings from 1999 until 2020. These conclusions contain more details with more specific focus on EU's foreign affairs and external relations in its entirety. Moreover, they can supplement the analysis with depth and can make the outcomes of the analysis stronger.

The conclusions are used where either the European Council or the Council of the European Union has made a statement on any development in the Western Balkans, specifically any progression in Serbia concerning European integration. The Commission's annual progress reports contain summaries of progress made by Serbia in terms of its Stabilization and Accession Agreements and its adaptation of the *aquis*. Also, other reports or press-statements made by other European institutions have been used to substantiate any perspective.

The European Council conclusions are relevant because the European Council sets the political agenda of the EU, therefore it can directly give insight into the EU's main focus of the years that are relevant for this analysis. The Council of the European Union is also relevant since its main area is the amendment of laws and policies, the Foreign Policy of the Union is therefore in the Council's agenda. The annual reports on Serbia by the Commission are also used to give a direct description of the EU's perspective on development in Serbia. The reports give a specific indication on what actions that have been completed, while the conclusions provide with the opinion of the EU's institution. Lastly, the remaining documents give details on specific events and thoughts.

3.3 Weakness in the literature

Some miscalculations that might have impacted the analysis, are the lack of attention brought on Serbia and Kosovo by the European Council and the Council of the European Union in some of the years in the analysis, hence there is not enough evidence of the EU's perspective on either the Serbia-Kosovo conflict or the candidate-state position. Also, the Commission did not access annual progress reports until 2002, and they were general for all the states in the Western Balkans, not Serbia in particular. However, with the numerous scholars actualizing the topic, perspectives on the topic are still presented and give a broader overview. The analysis does not contain conclusions or decisions from every year, only from the years this was in focus in a meeting.

4.0 Europeanization

Europeanization as a theory, can be defined in various ways, depending on the scholar and how it is applied (Flockhart, 2006, p.86). In the context of Economides and Ker-Lindsay (2015), Europeanization is about the adaptation of values. Europeanization is also understood as a process, a policy and a concept. Examples of Europeanization in relation to states can be transitioning national law to EU law, restructuring institutions or establishment and the change of political practices, such as economy and democracy (Subotić, 2010). Another broader definition is Europeanization as a process of political, cultural and organizational change based on European norms (Flockhart, 2006, p.86).

The adaptation of the *aquis Communautaire*, the European Union Law, is a criteria for states in the process of becoming an EU member. This adaptation is a part of a potential member state's accession process. Europeanization in reference to the EU could emerge from enlargement, where the purpose is European integration (Economides, 2015, p.4).

Europeanization can be understood as a two-way process, where the impact of the EU on a domestic level is one way and the influence of the member states on the EU, is the other (Flockhart, 2006, p.86). Another aspect of Europeanization can also apply to social and cultural factors of Europeanization, since member states has different responses to Europeanization (Börzel and Risse, 2009, p.58).

Europeanization has different impact on the domestic policies, polity and politics (Börzel and Risse, 2009, p.60). The level of Europeanization can be traced, though the level of Europeanization will change depending on the level of "necessity". This can mean that if the domestic policies, polities and politics in a country fit with Europeanization, it is less adaptational pressure. However, when the domestic policies, polities and politics do not comply with Europeanization, the level of adaptational pressure increases (Börzel and Risse, 2009, p.61). The purpose In the case of Serbia and Europeanization, the Serbian domestic ways have been less compatible with the standards of the EU, therefore, the adaptational pressure is higher.

Börzel and Risse (2009) divided the impact of Europeanization into three dimensions. The first is when a member state implements European policies or ideas into its own domestic structures, without changing their its own structures. This has a low level of change of domestic structures (Börzel and Risse, 2009, p.69). The second is when it adjusts to Europeanization by combining new policies into already existing ones and the level of change is moderate (Börzel and Risse, 2009, p.70). The last is transformation, when a member state fully adapts to Europeanization and replaces it's existing policies, institutions and processes or changes its existing ones totally in a way that way will fundamentally changes it's structures, which the level of domestic change is high (Börzel and Risse, 2009, p.70).

This is one approach to Europeanization on a domestic level. In the case of Serbia's adaption to Europeanization, all three levels of adaption could be difficult, due to a need for full fundamental change of their processes and policy towards Kosovo (Obradovic-Wochnik and Wochnik, 2012). When one is talking about Serbia and how the country has gone through a transformation, this does not necessarily mean the transformation mentioned above, since Serbia still has not Europeanize their Kosovo-policies. However, in other areas, the adoption of Europeanization is higher (Obradovic-Wochnik and Wochnik, 2012).

4.1 Serbia's pre-accession phase

Serbia and the EU have a complex relationship, mainly affected by Serbia's reaction to Kosovo declaring its independence in 2008 (Economides and Ker-Lindsay, 2015). Europeanization tends to focus on changes in Member states, but Europeanization can also occur in states that are in an accession-process (Economides and Ker-Lindsay, 2015). In Serbia, along with other Western Balkan states, the EU has taken use of strict conditionality, to substantiate that these states would not obtain easy process to a EU membership (Economides and Ker-Lindsay, 2015). The use of conditionality will be further explained in a following paragraph.

Serbia has a strong wish to become a member-state, which is fortunate for the EU, because that gives advantages for the EU in the mediation-process (Bergmann, 2018). Other

members-states also put pressure on the process, specifically Germany, stating that they would block Serbia out of the accession if they did not have any progression in their negotiating of agreements (Bergmann, 2018). On Serbia's side, the economic growth ensured by becoming a EU member, was a motivational factor (Bergmann, 2018). Therefore, they were able to proceed with agreements. The agreements gave for example Kosovo more rights as a region (Lehne, 2012, p.3).

4.2 The EU's tools

4.2.1 The use of conditionality

The purpose of conditionality is to keep a state committed (Flockhart, 2006, p.88). The relationship between the EU and Serbia can be described as dynamic, because of their consistency in cooperation, but also because of the conditionality and leverage used to keep Serbia committed to agreements (Economides and Ker-Lindsay, 2015). When the EU commits to assist a state in becoming more stabilized, it can use leverage to keep the states committed to adaption. With Serbia, the EU used strong leverage to keep Serbia committed to their pre-accession process. By doing so, the EU implements a relation where action are expected to be made, as a form of conditionality, for instance when the EU assists with financial aid (Flockhart, 2006, p.88). The EU assist a country with financial aid and political assistance, such as political dialogue. In return, the country receiving assistance, must commit to improvement and cooperation (Flockhart, 2006, p.88). This can be sufficient in the process of adaption and "downloading" of EU laws.

An example on the use of strict conditionality, was under the Central and Eastern Enlargement (Economides and Ker-Lindsay, 2015). The same strict conditionality was used with Serbia, but during the pre-accession period, to create encouragement in the Western Balkans (Economides and Ker-Lindsay, 2015). In the case of Serbia, strict conditionality were used with the purpose of accelerating the stabilization and accession process (Economides and Ker-Lindsay, 2015).

4.2.2 Mediation

The EU has also participated with mediation in the Western Balkan region, with the purpose of retaining peace and stability (Brandenburg, 2017). The purpose of mediation is: "to help those involved achieve a better outcome than they would be able to achieve by themselves" (Bergmann and Niemann, 2015; Bercovitch and Houston, 2009, p.342). In a briefing on Serbia-Kosovo relations from 2019, prepared for the staff of the European Parliament, it stressed that in 2011-2015 the EU led several mediation talks that did improve some of the communication between the state (European Parliament, 2019, p.2). EU-led mediation talks took place from 2011 between the EU and Serbia. The dialogue was meant to "promote cooperation, achieve progress on the path to the European Union and improve the lives of the people" (Bergmann and Niemann, 2015). In this way, the EU has taken action with the purpose of improving important aspects of integration (Bergmann and Niemann, 2018).

5.0 Why is Serbia refusing to recognize Kosovo?

In Kosovo, a majority of the people are ethnic Albanians (Obradovic-Wochnik and Wochnik, 2012). However, in some municipalities, the majority is ethnic Serbs (European Parliament, 2019, p.4). The relationship between Serbia and Kosovo is affected by not only political, but highly cultural, social and religious disagreements. The disagreements are connected to the division of ethnical groups in Kosovo. The Albanians called for independence from Serbia in 1980, this did not get accepted and Serbia's response was that Kosovo is a part of Serbia and that it would remain that way (Obradovic-Wochnik and Wochnik, 2012). It is therefore important to understand the background for why Serbia refuses to recognize Kosovo.

The former Republic of Yugoslavia included a federation consisting of six states (Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia). The autonomous province of Kosovo and Vojvodina were within Serbia (Sörensen, 2009, p.129). In the 1980s, the republic of Yugoslavia suffered from internal and structural issues, such as a large debt and economic crisis, due to serious inflation (Sörensen, 2009, p.137). In the 1990s the economic state of Yugoslavia was critical and the living standards were bad, so did the tension between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo (Sörensen, 2009, p.137). The combination of a social and economic crisis called for a change in political leadership. Domestically, the strength and identity of Yugoslavia weakened in line with European integration in the Western Europe. Albania had a higher influence in Kosovo, Serbia had little insight in the province's matters and the relationship between Belgrade and Pristina were destabilized (Sörensen, 2009, p.140).

After the call for political change in 2000 and the fall of Slobodan Milosevic, the political leadership in Serbia became more focused on Serbia's potential future in the EU. There was still rapid change in Prime ministers and political figures, however, with a new political environment, the EU were more accessible and Serbia's process of stabilization and accession became a reality. However, the relationship between Serbia and Kosovo was bad and influenced by the disagreements on Kosovo's wish for independence. What remains key in the conflict is what to do with the Northern parts of Kosovo, where both Serbians and Kosovo-Albanians live. This relation did affect the beginning of Serbia's and the EU's cooperation and entry into stabilization. → KILDE

6.0 Analysis: 1999-2008 and 2008-2020

The European Council conclusions from its four annual meetings from years where important events happened, will provide an insight into the EU's perspective on enlargement with the states in the Western Balkans. This provides an opportunity to look at all important aspects of development from 1999 until 2020. The EU has been following the development domestically in the country and how Serbia has reacted to certain events.

The EU is an international promotor of democratic and economic stability, therefore will actions of countries in Europe or European neighborhood, affect the EU's perspective on enlargement and which countries that have potential for enlargement. The level of Europeanization in Serbia, as a part of the Western Balkans, has been evaluated and influenced by the EU since the process of enlargement in this region begun. Therefore, the European Council conclusions are highly relevant in the analysis.

Conclusion by the Council of the European Union from several years are also included. For instance, the Thessaloniki Summit, which was a very influential in the beginning of Serbia's pre-accession phase. The Stabilization and Accession agreement between Serbia and the EU and its member states, provides the analysis with the specific agreement of adaptation in Serbia's SAA-process. The analysis also draws upon the annual Serbia Progress reports by the Commission. These reports are relevant because it gives a direct insight into every area of legislation that can show signs of development or Europeanization.

Serbia's domestic and external achievements from year to year can be compared to the Council conclusions, the European Union council conclusions and the Commissions annual report with the purpose of revealing signs of Europeanization. Comparing statements and perspectives can illustrate the connection between the EU's involvement, Serbia's action in the process of development and the EU's perception on the achievements. From 1999 until 2008, most of the report and statements focus on the common interests in enlargement, and the years 2008-2020 are following Serbia's process from their pre-accession to candidate-state.

6.1 1999 till 2008

1999

In the 1980s, the EU made their first cooperation-agreements with Yugoslavia. Already in 1997, the EU started taking notice of the attempts at improvements in Belgrade. At the European Council meeting in Tampere in 1999, the European Council did express their wish to participate in the stabilization-process of the countries in Western Balkan region (European Council, 1999b). In 1999, the conflict between Serbia and Kosovo ended with the NATO air strikes and the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) (Obradovic-Wochnik and Wochnik, 2012) The relationship between the EU and Yugoslavia until 1999, was impacted by attempting to initiate political dialogue, to assist Serbia into a stabilization and accession process (European Commission, 1999).

In a communication report by the European Commission to the Council on the stabilization and association process for the countries of former Yugoslavia, the Commission addressed that they stated their conditions for trade, financial assistance and economic cooperation (European Commission, 1999b). However, in this communication Serbia was not seen as qualified, due to continued failure in fulfilling these conditions (European Commission, 1999a, p.4):

«61. The Union is committed to rehabilitation and reconstruction in Kosovo. The European Council welcomes the Reconstruction and Recovery Programme for Kosovo and the Union's pledge of 500 million euros starting from year 2000 for reconstruction, in addition to the national contributions from the Member States.» (European Commission, 1999a, p.4)

This can show that from an early stage the EU had an interest in development that could take the Western Balkan countries in the direction of the EU. Regardless of the obstacles met in 1999, Serbia among other countries from former Yugoslavia was granted assistance from the EU, on the terms of improvement. The European Council conclusion does not

describe in detail any development or change in policies for Serbia. However, the relation between Serbia and the EU was influenced by a general sense of hope for progression towards the stabilization process. As for the years in the future were impacted by the EU's commitment in the stabilization of Serbia (Obradovic-Wochnik and Wochnik, 2012).

2003

From the EU's perspective, the Council's conclusions from the General Affairs Council's meeting in Luxembourg in June 2003, the agenda for the Thessaloniki summit were focus (European Council, 2003, p.11). These conclusions are from a meeting that focused mainly in the future progress and cooperation with the Western Balkans and the content if it was considered the agenda and commitment of the EU (European Council, 2003, p.2).

The European Council expressed:

"The Council welcomed the intention of Belgrade and Pristina to enter, shortly after the Thessaloniki Summit, into a direct dialogue on practical issues of mutual interest» (European Council, 2003, p.3).

This shows that the EU intended to contribute with political dialogue and attempts of creating an environment for stabilization between Serbia and Kosovo. At the given time, Serbia had not shown much interest in Europeanizing their policies in general. That can be connected to the at the time political focus in Serbia. After 2000, the Serbian political landscape had not changed much after the change of political leadership in 2000. It got worse after the former Serbian Prime Minister, Zoran Djindjic, who were seen as an optimist for Serbian European integration were assassinated (Economides and Ker-Lindsay, 2015). Because of NATO's air strikes in 1999, it was easier to persuade Serbs into viewing international actors as the enemy, including the EU and this did affect Serbia's aspirations with the EU (Economides and Ker-Lindsay, 2015; Obradovic-Wochnik and Wochnik, 2012).

The weakened relation between the EU and Serbia continued from 2003 to 2004. It addressed Serbia's lack of will to cooperation with the International Criminal Court for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), which in the case of Serbia continued on for several years and became an obstacle for the country's chance of further integration (Economides and Ker-Lindsay, 2015; Obradovic-Wochnik and Wochnik, 2012).

2004

In 2004, violence against Serbs broke out in Mitrovica, in northern Kosovo. This caused many deaths and wounded persons and the destroyed churches and homes (Obradovic-Wochnik and Wochnik, 2012) This led to increased ethnic tension between Serbia and Kosovo and Serbia's relation to international involvement worsened, since any attempt of involvement was taken as a provocation and violation of national integrity (Obradovic-Wochnik and Wochnik, 2012). This made it difficult for international actors to involve, also the EU.

The ethnical violence that broke out against Serbs in Mitrovica, which is a part of Kosovo where both Serbs and Kosovo-Albanians live, it did heighten the tension between Serbia and Kosovo. The European Council conclusions from 2004, include a statement that the European Community condemn and distances themselves from the ethnical motivated violence that took lives and destroyed religious and cultural heritages, that took place in

Kosovo (European Council, 2004, p.21). What can be extracted from this year is that the relationship between Serbia and Kosovo was so tense, that any cooperation between the states were difficult to achieve.

2007

The year of 2007, could be perceived as a year were the EU pulled Serbia into further integration, at least the EU stated that Serbia's future was in the hands of the EU (European Council, 2007, p.20). Serbia's progress towards a candidate status "can be accelerated" (European Council, 2007, p.20). However, this year the EU also welcomed Serbia, among three other countries in the Western Balkans into the Visa Facilitation and Readmission agreements (European Council, 2007, p.6). The purpose of these agreements was to:

"encourage these countries to implement the relevant reforms and reinforce their cooperation with the EU in areas such as strengthening the rule of law, fighting organized crime and illegal migration, and increasing the security of documents by introducing biometry" (European Council, 2007, p.6).

For Serbia, this could therefore be a small step closer to the EU, since some of the issues these agreements targeted to prevent, were issues Serbia had been dealing with in the past. Along with the Visa-agreement, the EU also initiated the Stabilization and Accession Agreement, it was development compared to previous years, when the EU called off the negotiations, due to Serbia's lack of cooperation with the ICTY (European Commission, 2021).

6.2 2008 till 2020

2008

The Council Conclusion from the Council of the European Union's meeting in Brussels in 2008 stated that:

«The European Council looks forward to a new Government in Belgrade with a clear European agenda to push forward with necessary reforms. Building on the recent signature of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU, Serbia can accelerate its progress towards the EU, including candidate status, as soon as all necessary conditions are met in accordance with the GAERC conclusions of 29 April 2008.»

Serbia signed its Stabilization and Accession in 2008. In the European Commission's Progress Report on Serbia from 2008, the Stabilization and Accession agreement (SAA) remains the framework for commitment for both parts. Ratification of the SAA was completed by Serbia and it also decided to implement the Interim Agreement (trade-agreement); which required full cooperation with the ICTY. This was seen as a sign of commitment to the European integration (European Commission, 2008, p.5). Considering Europeanization as a process, this can be seen as a sign of Europeanization, hence Serbia took several larger steps in the Europeanized direction in terms of commitment to several agreements.

In May, the Council also expressed its satisfaction with the Serbian election, that took place the same year. The election had a high level of democracy and the execution of the

election gave a signal that the new government welcomed a clearer European agenda, such as the engagement in the Stabilization and Accession-agreement (Council of the European Union, 2008, p.2).The Visa-liberation came into force after the readmission-agreement in 2008. This can be an example of implementation of EU-laws and Serbia, in terms of the SAA (European Commission, 2012, p.5). Also, for all further progress, the framework of the SAA remained central for Serbia, along with the other countries in the Western Balkans (Western Balkan Region Working Party, 2008, p.14). This could create a very steady direction for Serbia in terms of domestic and external approach becoming more Europeanized.

Another aspect to be aware of in this matter is that even though Serbia did make progress that satisfied the EU in terms of commitment to further integration, the declaration of independence of Kosovo, did have an impact on Serbia and EU relations (European Commission, 2008, p.5). The independence declaration did meet a lot of resistance. Unfortunately, in February 2008, demonstrations against it took place and attacks were made on foreign and EU-embassies (European Commission, 2008, p.5).

2010

In 2009, Serbia gave their official application for membership in the EU, after the SAA and the Interim agreement was signed and entered into force in 2010 (European Commission, 2010, p.5). The implementation of the framework on the rule of law was almost completed in 2010 (European Commission, 2010, p.7). The legal framework concerning human rights was in place, but still needed improvement (European Council, 2010, p.12). On the protection of minorities, the EU was satisfied with the progression made (European Council, 2010, p.12). All things considered, Serbia made good progress in 2010 and the years prior, showing that the Europeanization of legislation developed in a positive way.

Regarding Serbia's relationship with the EU, Serbia remained on their non-recognition of Kosovo. The Court of Justice (ICJ) declared that Kosovo's independence didn't violate international law, which resulted in the re-adoption of Serbia's non-recognition policies against Kosovo. However, the EU shows some gratification with the overall progress of Serbia;

“Regional cooperation has improved and Serbia made significant progress in its bilateral relations with other enlargement countries, particularly Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, while continuing to have good relations with neighboring EU member states. Regional cooperation was affected by a lack of agreement between Serbia and Kosovo on the latter's participation in regional meetings. An acceptable and sustainable solution for the participation of both Serbia and Kosovo in regional fora needs to be agreed as soon as possible. This is essential for inclusive and functioning regional cooperation.» (European Commission, 2010, p.21).

2012

In 2012 Serbia was granted its candidate-status. In the Council conclusion from 2004, the EU stated that one of its main policies was to continue enlargement because of its effect on peace, stability and democracy in Europe (Council of the European Union, 2012b, p.3). In the Commission Progress Report from 2012 states:

1.3. Relations between the EU and Serbia, the Commission states the improvement made by Serbia in attempt to complete further integration. The report states that

Serbia's constitution lines with the standards of the EU. Also, the EU emphasized that when conditions are met, the EU keeps its promise and the Serbia being granted with candidate-status is proof of that (Council of the European Union, 2012b, p.3).

Despite Kosovo still not being recognized by Serbia, the EU granted Serbia with candidate-status. This aspect illustrates that nevertheless, Serbia did develop enough in terms of criteria for the EU to let Serbia closer in their path to the EU. The accession process was estimated to a period of six years.

2014

In terms of implementation of the *acquis communautaire*, Serbia had progress (European Commission, 2014, p.1). The first accession negotiation was held in 2014, With the SAA agreement entering into force in 2013, which was important because it substantiates that the process of accession was beginning (European Commission, 2014, p.1). However, the call for a fight against corruption and organized crime was demanded by the Commission, as these remains key principles of the legislation and the rule of law. Also, the protection of minorities and vulnerable groups was requested, as this is strongly valued by the EU and an essential criteria in the European Union (European Commission, 2014, p.1). Corruption was a problem in Serbia, but there is also a strong will to fight corruption. This can tell something about the process of improvement, it happens over a period of time, even though it is fought actively, corruption and organized crime do not disappear immediately.

Therefore, the process of adapting the European values did move forward, with some issues that still need resolving. Nevertheless, the EU showed satisfaction with the development Serbia progressed with in 2014 (European Commission, 2014, p.2).

2015

However, minor actions of provocation were made and can be factors of a more tense relationship between Serbia and Kosovo (European Parliament, 2019, p.2). For example, Serbia and Kosovo increased Customs, that made export and import decidedly more difficult (European Parliament, 2019, p.2). These provocations and hindrances, do not contribute to an improved relationship between the states.

In the year of 2015, the Council of the European Union conclusion on Enlargement and Stabilization, stressed that Serbia made good progress, but the rule of law still needed improvement. Also areas such as corruption, freedom of speech and the protection of minorities were yet to be completed. These are very important and respected values of the EU, therefore understood as a key area in the Europeanization progress.

«The Council urges Serbia to swiftly implement in good faith its part of all past agreements and to engage constructively with Kosovo in formulating and implementing future agreements The Council will continue to monitor closely Serbia's continued engagement towards visible and sustainable progress in the normalisation of relations with Kosovo, so that Serbia and Kosovo can continue on their respective European paths, while avoiding that either can block the other in these efforts and with the prospect of both being able to fully exercise their rights

and fulfil their responsibilities» (General Secretariat of the Council, 2015, p.12, art. 29).

2018

In 2018, the fragile relationship between Serbia and Kosovo received another setback, when a border-swap was initiated, with the purpose of changing the geographic landscape in Serbia and Kosovo (Wittkowsky, 2019). The initiative was defended and argued for that the people living in the areas did not feel a close relation to the other country. This initiative was not receiving much support, and several political figures strongly disagreed with the idea (Dempsey, 2018). The main issue with this initiative was however, how it could affect the security situation in the Western Balkan region. The potential border swap could interfere with the current agreements on borders and inspire other countries in the region to do the same and by that threaten security in the region (Dempsey, 2018).

The EU was put to the side in 2018, and dialogue continued within the national governments, when dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo stopped (Morina, 2020). Transparency is a key principles in the EU's condition on democracy and political translucence. On the whole, this situation can be an example of why the EU's mediation and pre-accession support has been an important factor in Serbia's development, along with Kosovo. Mostly, because the level of transparency is ensured when the EU leads the negotiations (Morina, 2020).

In the General Affairs Council conclusions from June 2018, the Council addressed that Serbia must step up its reformation on rule of law and secure the independence of its Judicial system (General Affairs Council, 2018, p.9). Serbia was also encouraged to improve their policies on freedom of speech and the protection of minorities (General Affairs Council, 2018, p.9).

2020

2020 as many of previous years was impacted by the back-and-forth relationship with Kosovo, that affected Serbia's relationship with the EU. Serbia progressed and stayed committed to the SAA, but the progress were not high (European Commission, 2020). The Commission's annual progress report on Serbia from 2020, under the chapter on "Ability to assume the obligation of membership", the Commission states that Serbia were "moderately prepared" in most areas (European Commission, 2020, p.67-119). However, the Serbia showed positive signals towards the EU.

7.0 Comparison

Overall, what can be extracted from 1999 to 2008, is the buildup in encouragement from the EU to Serbia. There was general encouragement from the EU to all the countries in the Western Balkans for them to take action to improve on the areas that are important in EU. As for the relation between Serbia and Kosovo, these nine years were impacted by Kosovo attempting to create stable democratic institutions and better relations between Kosovo-Albanians and Serbs in the divided parts of Kosovo.

Overall, what can be extracted from 2008-2020, is the importance of the "Kosovo question". The issue regarding Kosovo's independence was not on the main political agenda in Serbia until 2008. However, Kosovo was not only an issue for Serbia, but in the

postwar times of 1999-2007, the issue of Kosovo also created difficulties for international relations (Sörensen, 2009, p.221). Regarding Serbia's policies towards Kosovo, the previous Prime ministers and political leaders of Serbia has had different approached to the "Kosovo question" (Obradovic-Wochnik and Wochnik, 2012). Since 1999, Kosovo has become a topic of domestic policies in Serbia, however, neighborly relations is support to be a part of a country's external policies (Obradovic-Woshnik and Woshnik, 2012).

When comparing the two periods of time, there is a change in attitude from the EU towards Serbia. This can be seen in the way the EU continues to support Serbia during their process. From the first period to the second, the main focus of Serbia's progression changes, due to how far Serbia is in the stabilization and accession process. Also, the focus changes, due to Serbia's candidate-status being granted in 2012. A change from the first to the second period, is also the EUs focus on the future of Serbia and how it lies in their own hands. What is remarkable in these reports and conclusions, is the EUs perspective on the countries in the Western Balkan and their progress. The achievements in terms of Europeanization. What can be seen is also the amount of involvement that changes after 2008.

From 2008, there have been fewer statements by the European Council including statements on Serbia's accession process, compared to the years 1999-2008. Only a few times are they mentioned in a conclusion that regarded Serbia's accession and negotiation of their candidate-status. One the hand, this can mean that Serbia's issues with Kosovo are not the main focus of the EU as a whole, and they are letting Serbia proceed on their road to the EU without any major objections. However, the process of European integration also continues in Kosovo. In 1999-2008, the EU did stress their opinion and view on the Western Balkans a various number of times, opening up for agreements and supporting measures. From 2008-2020, the issues between Serbia and Kosovo have been stressed more frequently in the Annual Serbia Progression reports.

Any strengthening or weakening in Serbia-Kosovo relations, can be related to the level of interference the EU has had in Kosovo. Before Kosovo had fully developed functioning institutions, the EU did have control over institutions such as the police and justice functions (European Parliament, 2019, p.2). Moreover, the EU has also been one of Kosovo's biggest financial aid-supporters, due to the EU supporting Kosovo's pre-accession process (European Parliament, 2019, p.2). The way the EU addresses Serbia along with Kosovo is also remarkable, as if they appear to be a unit. To some extent, the future of Serbia does also rely on Kosovo. Since 2016, talks and negotiations between the states has slowed and the communication is less welcoming than previously. When Serbia and Kosovo has been in a situation where, dialogue has stalled between the parts and this can directly affect the relationship between Serbia and the EU. These types of situations, where either Kosovo or Serbia are provoked by the other part, relations get weakened. The requirements from the EU to Serbia gets affected, since Serbia tends to stop the dialogue or sanction Kosovo, which violates its Commitment to its Stabilization and Accession and Association agreement on good neighborly relations (European Union, 2013, art.6).

7.1 Europeanization in Serbia

Has Serbia's position as a potential member-state changed, if so, what are the changes? What can be extracted from this comparison is that Serbia has become more democratic

and economically stable since the state was a part of Yugoslavia. Serbia has become closer to the EU. After Kosovo declared itself independent, the EU were very determined that Serbia had to recognize Kosovo as a sovereign state. Serbia refused, but still they were granted candidate-status. Kosovo declared its independency in 2008 and Serbia became a candidate-state in 2012, that is four years where Serbia did improve in many areas that are important values for the EU and its member-states. However, how could the EU accept Serbia into a closer relationship, when they gave no sign of getting closer to recognizing Kosovo?

Regardless of the EU granting Serbia with a candidate-status, Serbia's lack of recognition of Kosovo can be standing in their way of a further integration. Full membership is yet to be obtained for Serbia. However, the EU's attitude towards Serbia's accession process has been and remains leaning on Serbia's own actions regarding their recognition of Kosovo. Since Serbia first stressed their wish to become a member of the EU, they have come a long way in various areas, concerning democratic, economic and social aspects.

What signs of Europeanization can be seen in Serbia's development? If the goal of Europeanization is to become a member of the European Union, then the benefit of a membership would be greater than having to deal with the EU's conditions as a third country (Subotić, 2010). Many of the states in the Western Balkan region have been going through what can be seen as an transformation, with the purpose of benefiting from these conditions. Therefore can the internal changes in these countries provide many aspects of a transformation, that can be understood as Europeanization (Economides and Ker-Lindsay, 2015, p). However, the amount of formal agreements and adoption of EU legislation give a very clear picture of Serbia implementing European rule of law and can be related directly towards European integration. On the other hand, Europeanization, for example launches a process of change in values and can be implied as a process and does not imply European integration (Economides and Ker-Lindsay, 2015,).

In terms of Europeanization, Serbia is a country that despite of conflict with Kosovo, has developed a lot since 1999. However, it can be discussed if this development and integration is evidence of Europeanization or just a process of democratization and socialization that shares some aspects with Europeanization. However, that does not necessarily mean its Europeanization. Also, the debate on European Union membership has several motivational factors, set aside from being a part of a "Westernized" European Community.

In terms of domestic policy and the adaption EU laws on a domestic level, Serbia has shown progression in developing specific areas of legislation, such as the rule of law, democracy, freedom of speech and protection of minorities. However, the "Kosovo question" is one of the areas Serbia has failed in Europeanizing (Obradovic-Wochnik and Woshnik, 2012). The issue with Kosovo has been discussed as what can be understood as domestic matters, when the Serbia-Kosovo relation should be a matter of external relations. However, the Kosovo issue has gained status as a national matter and after 2000, it's been one of the main focuses of Serbian domestic policy (Obradovic-Wochnik and Wochnik, 2012). Kosovo as a sovereign state, will also face challenges such as membership in the UN, as a result of Russia's and China's support of Serbia's unrecognition of Kosovo. The development in Serbia-Kosovo relations have also been impacted by the general sense of mistrust between Belgrade and Pristina (Lehne, 2012, p.3).

7.2 The EUs development

Enlargement was an extensive topic of debate after the dissolution of Yugoslavia. The EU had great interest in expanding in Eastern Europe. The former Yugoslavian countries were also in need of stabilization and normalization of economy and democracy. The common interest in the countries and the EU were enough to begin the process. In the conclusions from 1999 until 2008, the EU's perspective on integration in Serbia and Serbia's potential as a member state, tends to provide the same message: the EU welcomes Serbia into the process of gaining membership, but on the terms of the EU.

This supports some of the claims on the EU's actions in the Western Balkans, on the basis of their approach towards Serbia; that they are responsible for their own integration and process towards the EU. However, the Europeanization of Serbia and Kosovo, basically depends on the countries' willingness and ability to implement EU law and norms and the EU remains insistent on this. The EU has used its tools in terms of using strict conditionality and by assisting Serbia in times of crisis, with mediation.

The relationship between Serbia and Kosovo is not the main focus in this analysis. Nevertheless, Kosovo do have a central role in Serbia's development. Since the fall of Yugoslavia, the relation between the states has been affected by the fact that a part of the people in Kosovo are ethnic Albanians and do not associate with Serbia. What complicated the conflict more, is that the conflict is not only political, but also a personal matter. The EU has also heavily involved itself in the development of Kosovo, with assistance and financial aid, with the purpose of achieve the same stabilization and accession process as the other countries in the Western Balkans.

Since 2008, the EU has involved heavily in Kosovo, through the EULEX, a European Union common security and defense policy mission (European Parliament, 2019, p.3). In this way, the EU has involved itself in several ways in both states . The involvement in the EU, includes Kosovo into the enlargement strategy of the EU and adds more complexity to the situation (Obradovic-Wochnik and Wochnik, 2012). When the EU is involved and is integrating Kosovo into the "European future", it has left Serbia with the impression that its either Kosovo or a future for Serbia within the EU, which can weaken the level of trust and faith in the relationship (Obradovic-Woshnik and Woshnik, 2012).

One of the few changes in the EU's attitude towards, is the candidate-status the EU granted Serbia in 2012, despite their lack of recognition of Kosovo (Lehne, 2012, p.5). However, the question of recognition will remain in the hands of Serbia, taking into consideration that the EU granted Serbia with their candidate-status even though one of the main issues the EU stressed concerning a membership, would depend on their recognition of Kosovo. Whether Serbia's current relation with Kosovo will continue to stay the way it is or if Serbia eventually will have to give in and give Kosovo recognition, is a topic that would be interesting to investigate and can be further discussed in future research.

8.0 Conclusion

This thesis has analysed and compared the development in the relationship between Serbia and the EU, with a focus on the impact of the conflict between Serbia and Kosovo. The purpose of the analysis was to find the main factors that had an impact on the conflict

on how Serbia's non-recognition of Kosovo has affected its process of integration and how the relationship between Serbia and Kosovo has evolved and been an obstacle in the relationship between Serbia and the EU. The thesis has also discussed how Europeanization has been a part of Serbian development into a closer relationship with the EU, despite its failed attempt at Europeanizing its relationship to Kosovo.

Serbia has membership in the EU as a top priority, regardless, they have not succeeded in improving their policies towards Kosovo. Because of that, they have not succeeded at bettering their neighbourly relations and this will remain an issue for further integration into the European Union. In the question regarding Serbia's current candidate-status, the process will perhaps continue regardless of Serbia's recognition of Kosovo, but either way the process of becoming a full member of the Union will be uncertain.

To conclude, Serbia and the EU's relationship has changed over time. From 1999-2020, the relationship between Serbia and the European Union has been impacted by a constant attempt on Europeanizing Serbian policies into the standards of the EU. The adoption and implementation of EU legislation has progressed and has Europeanized Serbia in many areas. However, in 2020, which is the last year studied in the analysis, Serbia did not recognize Kosovo as an independent state. Taking that into consideration, the relationship between Serbia and the EU has been affected by Serbia's non-recognition of Kosovo that can continue to be a hindrance to Serbia's integration and delay its position as a candidate-state.

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