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List of Abbreviations

AfD – Alternative for Germany

BiH – Bosnia and Herzegovina

CDU – Christian Democratic Union

CEAS – Center for Euro – Atlantic Studies

CEEC – Central and East European Countries

CEXIM – The Export Import Bank of China

COREPER - Committee of the Permanent Representatives of the Governments of the Member States to the European Union

CSU – Christian Social Union

DPA – Dayton Peace Agreement

EC – European Community

EEC – European Economic Community

EU – European Union

EUFOR – European Union Force in BiH

FN – Front National

FPÖ – Austrian Freedom Party

FRY – Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

HDZ – Croatian Democratic Union

HNS – Croatian People's Party

HR – High Representative

ICTY – International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia

ICC – International Criminal Court

ICJ – International Court of Justice

IMF – International Monetary Fund

IPA – Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance

IR – International Relations

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

OBOR – One Belt One Road

OHR – Office of the High Representative

PVV – Dutch Freedom Party

PRRP – Populist Radical Right Parties

RS – Republic of Srpska

SDA – Party of Democratic Action

SEE – South East Europe

SFOR – Stabilisation Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina

SNSD – Alliance of Independent Social Democrats

SPD – Social Democratic Party of Germany

UAE – United Arab Emirates

UK – United Kingdom

UN – United Nations

UNSC – United Nations Security Council

USA – United States of America

WB – Western Balkans

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German Abstract

Diese Arbeit geht der Frage nach, inwiefern sich Finanz-, Wirtschafts- und die Krisen der Eurozone auf die EU Erweiterungspolitik gegenüber Bosnien-Herzegowina ausgewirkt haben. Es wird argumentiert, dass die Krisen einen Politikwechsel verursacht haben und die Erweiterungspolitik an das Ende der Prioritätenliste gelandet ist. Die Faktoren die zu diesem Politikwechsel geführt haben sind das Krisenmanagement, die rechten euroskeptischen Parteien, die niedrige Zustimmung der Bevölkerung so eine Politik weiterzuführen und die betroffene Gruppendynamik, die schon nach der Erweiterung in 2004 sichtbar war. Die Erweiterungspolitik hat wieder an Wichtigkeit in 2017 gewonnen, als die EU Offiziellen offener für die Bereitschaft neue Mitgliedsstaaten einzunehmen geworben haben. Diese Politik wurde in 2018 fortgeführt als die Europäische Kommission eine neue Erweiterungsstrategie vorgestellt hat, die auch der Europäische Rat bestätigte. Der Politikwechsel wurde, einerseits, durch eine erhöhte Präsenz Russlands und China auf dem Westlichen Balkan verursacht, obwohl die EU Erweiterungspolitik durch die internen Krisen weiterhin eingeschränkt war. Die Europäische Union und die Mitgliedstaaten nehmen diese zwei Länder als Konkurrenz war, die die Interessen der EU gefährden und Auswirkungen auf die EU haben könnten. Zweitens haben die Krisen auf dem Balkan zu einer aktiveren EU Politik geführt. Außerdem untersucht die Arbeit die Rollen Deutschlands, der Vereinigten Königreichs (UK) und Frankreichs in der EU Erweiterungspolitik bezüglich Bosnien-Herzegowina. Deutschland und UK halten eine Pro-Erweiterungsposition während Frankreich als ein Erweiterungs-skeptiker handelt. Überdies wird analysiert wie sich das Verlassen der EU seitens UK auf die EU Erweiterungspolitik auswirken wird. Zudem wird die Rolle der USA, die als traditioneller Partner der EU gilt, untersucht. Den theoretischen

Rahmen für die Arbeit bildet Liberal Intergovernmentalism. Als methodischer Ansatz wird die Prozessanalyse benutzt.

Abstract

This work asks to what extent the financial, economic, and Eurozone crises within the European Union have affected the EU enlargement policy regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is argued that the crises have caused a policy re-order that moved the enlargement policy at the bottom of the priority list. The factors that contributed to the policy re-order are the crisis management, the right-wing Eurosceptic parties, low support among citizens to pursue such policy, and the affected group dynamics that already existed after the 2004 enlargement. The importance of the enlargement policy in the EU official agenda has increased again in 2017 when the readiness of the EU to include new member states has been advocated more openly by EU officials. That policy has continued also in 2018 when the European Commission presented a new Enlargement Strategy, which has been confirmed by the European Council as well. The policy change, on the one hand, has been affected by the increased presence of Russia and China in the region of Western Balkans, although the EU enlargement policy was still constrained by the internal crises. The European Union and the Member States perceive these two countries as competitors whose impact could threaten the European interests and affect the EU. On the other hand, the crises in the Balkans have affected the EU to pursue a more active policy. Furthermore, this work examines the roles of Germany, the United Kingdom and France in the enlargement policy regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina. Germany and the UK hold a pro-enlargement position, while France acts as an enlargement sceptic. Moreover, it is analysed how the departure of the UK from the EU affects the enlargement policy. Additionally, the role of the USA, a traditional EU partner, will be examined. The theoretical framework for the thesis is Liberal Intergovernmentalism. This work uses process tracing as the methodology of the work.

1 Introduction

Most of the academic work regarding the issues of enlarging the European Union in the Western Balkans relates to the ability of the potential member States to fulfil the necessary conditions to become members of the Union. Rarely has the willingness of the EU expansion policy towards Balkans been questioned, as long those willing to accede commit to conform to rules set by the EU. The question of the success of the EU as a transformative power has been rather raised in more recent period (e.g. Džankić, Keil, and Kmezić 2019). This work looks at the EU and its ability to conform to its own promises during times of crisis. As a Bosnian citizen, I have chosen to examine the EU enlargement policy regarding the country I come from, but because Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is closely interconnected to other States in the Balkans, this work will often relate to the Balkans as a region. Moreover, I am aware that my citizenship might lead to bias of the work. However, I would like to emphasize that any bias is unintentional.

The enlargement of the European Union is seen as one of the most important achievements of EU foreign policy. The argument used to explain the success is that the membership helped the new States to transform former communist political systems into functioning democracies and to establish market economies in these new countries (Vachudova 2005). From an economic point of view, the argument is that it is a win-win situation for both the old and the new member States (Busch et al. 2014; European Commission 2014). However, after the big enlargement round in 2004, signs of Euroscepticism became visible within the old member States, while optimism was spread among the new member States. There were basically two concerns. To what extent the new enlarged Union, including former communist States, will be able to function as liberal democracies, which was a concern of the political elites in the old

member States. The second concern was one of the citizens and was related to possible implications on the job market. The first concern became clear in some countries a decade after the enlargement, as Polish and Hungarian political practices seemed to move away from democratic principles. On the other hand, however, some studies suggest that the new member States are more consistent while implementing the EU laws (Börzel, Dimitrova, and Schimmelfennig 2017) and that the enlarged EU did not affect the number of laws adopted at the level of the Union (Toshkov 2017).

The membership perspective was also given to the Western Balkan States by the European Council in 2000 and confirmed in 2003 at the Thessaloniki European Council Summit (European Council 2003). Since then the EU has grown from 15 to 28 member States (since the end of January 2020 the number is 27), including the latest enlargement of Croatia that has joined the Union in 2013, as the only Western Balkan State.

Yet, this picture of the EU enlargement success blurred by crises that occurred within the EU. The crises started in 2008 with the global financial one that spread around the globe, continued by the economic crisis, the Eurozone crisis, migration crisis, and with the Brexit crisis. Vachudova EU (2019: 71) calls these crises as the “dark decade” of the EU. These crises have revealed the weaknesses of the Union, but also different understandings of what the EU should be, although the question about the nature of the EU was raised also after the 2004 expansion (Hüttmann 2008: 18). When the crises started the Eurosceptic voices became louder, and the existing crises became a perfect arena to spread the message about the EU as a problem maker, rather than a problem solver (Hobolt and de Vries 2016a; Copeland and Copsey 2017). The result was the rise of the populist Eurosceptic political parties, which are more responsive to popular demands compared to traditional parties. Because of the salience of EU-

related topics in the public, these parties were able mobilise people to give them support due to their critique of traditional parties (Grabow and Hartleb 2013: 15). The right-wing populist parties emerged as the new explanatory factor during the crises that used the concerns of the citizens to spread their message. Thus, public opinion gained more importance as the right-wing populist parties have responded rhetorically to popular opinions. Some authors connect public opinion with enlargement, as they claim that unfavourable public opinion is one of the reasons for the reduced credibility of the EU (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2019: 11–12). Public opinion is in this work assumed as a constraint on political actors. As the EU policies have become unpopular among citizens, the significance of public opinion has increased. The importance of public opinion is mainly related to the right-wing populist parties, as these parties use strategically the public opinion as an agenda-setter for their own policies, but then also use the increased visibility to be the agenda setter for the citizens. Also, the question of public opinion is of greater relevance in France, as we identify it as one of the main factors affecting France's enlargement policy towards the Balkans. An additional factor that has contributed to the rise of the right-wing political parties is also the fact these parties use topics that are traditionally "owned" by both the political right and the left, which has increased the number of potential voters.

The success of the populist parties was mainly achieved by blaming the government, and as a result, the support for the governing parties decreased (Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese 2017: 382). This development has contributed to the rise of right-wing Eurosceptic parties, who have used the anti-EU agenda to gain support during elections. The consequence of this was close to one-third of Eurosceptic members of the European Parliament in 2014 from 23 out of 28 member States, including the right

and left, and soft and hard Eurosceptic parties. In the 2009 elections, the Eurosceptic parties had less than 20 percent of support (Treib 2014: 1542–43).

Prior to the crisis, the EU was, for many citizens, rather distant (Follesdal and Hix 2006: 536), which is reflected by the low turnout for the EU elections, because people care more about national politics than about EU politics (Reif and Schmitt 1980). One outcome of the crises was the rising interest of the EU citizens about the EU and EU politics. The increased interest, however, is a positive feature of the crises, because it could lead to more legitimacy in the EU policy-making, even it means that decisions will take longer to be adopted.

There is an impression that, prior to the crises, that EU membership appeared almost as a given to Bosnia, and other Western Balkan States, as long as the States fulfil the necessary criteria set by the Union. The willingness of the EU and its member States to expand never came into question. Yet, the crises and its outcomes have become constraints for EU enlargement politics and the credibility of the EU was questioned. Prior to crises the focus was rather on the ability of Bosnia and Herzegovina to fulfil the necessary conditions set by the EU. This ability proved to be a difficult task after the bloody war in the 1990s because of different understandings among the dominant ethnic groups how the political system should be built. These varying understandings have become more pronounced after the international actors decided to hand over more responsibility to domestic political actors in 2006. Hence, the aim of the work is to focus on EU policies under the constraints of the crises.

The subject matter of this work is to examine how the financial, economic and Eurozone crises have affected the EU enlargement policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. The time frame this work observes is between 2008 and 2018. However, the aim is not to look from year to year, but rather analyse the major developments in

this period that affected the enlargement policy of the European Union. It is argued that the crises have slowed down the enlargement process because of changing the priorities on the official agenda. The group dynamics within the EU after the 2004 enlargement has been affected by the lack of a suitable institutional setup to manage an increased number of member States which was foreseen by the proposed European Constitution, but the document was rejected in the referendums in France and the Netherlands in 2005. Furthermore, there have been some cracks observable after the 2004 enlargement between the old and the new member States. The crises have further affected the group dynamics, as the member States have followed a more of a national and less of an EU agenda, and agreeing seemed to be more difficult.

The crises have caused a decline of public support for further accession of the new member States. According to the Standard Eurobarometer, there is broad disapproval among EU citizens to accept the new member States; even the official policy is to expand. A clear trend of the decline of the support for further enlargement was observable. After the 2004 enlargement round, the EU suffered from enlargement fatigue that was deepened during and after the crises. In short, the crises that the EU coped with deepened the existing Euroscepticism. This was reflected in the fact that the widening process was stalling during the crises. Formally, the policy of the EU in that period was to expand, however, the clear commitments were missing. The non-existent topic of the enlargement on the European Council agenda in the period between 2014 and 2017 (Elena 2019) illustrates this well. It also took 15 years for the EU Council to devote a summit to Western Balkans, as it was in 2018 during the Bulgaria EU Presidency (European Council 2018a).

The focus of the EU member States was “crisis management” within its own borders. This was also the case related to other policy areas (Holzhacker and Luif 2014: 2). At

the same time, the enlargement process was carried out rather on a technical level. During its absence from the region of Western Balkans, some other countries have gained more influence in the region, most notably Russia and China. The appearance of new powers in the region the EU and its member States perceive as threat to European interests. Russia is seen by Germany as a “challenge to security” (German Federal Government 2016: 32), while for the British House of Lords “Russia’s influence in the region is a factor of particular concern” (House of Lords 2017: 51). This concern was also reiterated by high EU officials and in official documents. The former Head of the European Commission Jean Claude Juncker addressed in his State of the Union speech that the absence of the EU in the region will be filled by other actors (Juncker 2017), while the former Head of the European Council Donald Tusk also spoke about the challenges such as China, Russia, and the USA due to its distancing from the EU (European Council 2018b). The 2018 EU Enlargement Strategy defined the accession of the Western Balkan States as their “very own, political, security, and economic interest. It is a geostrategic investment in a stable, strong and united Europe based on common values” (European Commission 2018a: 1). Although the European Commission in the same document emphasizes the need to strengthen the Union before accepting any new members, the more engaged Union is a result of the pressure to increase its visibility in the region because of other competitors. Thus, geopolitics has become an issue in the Balkans in which the EU has become one of the players.

However, the group dynamics within the EU affects decision-making, and the EU increasingly appears to be indecisive regarding enlargement. A possible explanation of this development is that the lack of common understanding among the member States about the importance of widening. The political elites in Bosnia and Herzegovina

are aware of this fact. As a result, the country, as well as other countries in the region, have become a fertile ground for other actors, even if the EU membership is the declared goal of the State. In other words, EU membership is the first, and possibly the only, choice of Bosnia and Herzegovina, despite the roles of non-Western actors, which is also legitimized by the citizens as data from some reports indicate (Čaršimamović Vukotić et al. 2017: 16–18). The fertile ground includes not only the lack of EU engagement but also the responsiveness of the domestic political elites towards the activities of the non-EU actors. Hence, the greater the responsiveness of the domestic political elites, the greater the impact of non - EU actors. The impact of the non – EU actors can be perceived by the incorporation of the non-EU actors' policies in the official documents of Bosnia and Herzegovina, or by the representation of the political attitudes in the policies of Bosnian political elites of non-EU actors, which undermine the EU rule and interests. In other words, the impact of external actors is the adaption of specific positions by the political elites and changing of attitudes of citizens towards negative regarding the EU. In the long-term, this could pose a constraint for the domestic political actors in the EU integration process. The fact that the States in the region are not only objects of external actors can also explain the presence of other actors, but subjects at the international level, who create their own decisions (Keil and Stahl 2014: 3). Another factor related to the fertility of the region for the engagement of the non-Western actors is the lack of United States engagement. Until 2004, the role of the USA was the main actor in the region, and it was the US-led initiative that ended the war in Bosnia in 1995 after several failed EU and UN-led policies. Yet, the priorities of the USA have shifted towards tackling terrorism and later the Asia-Pacific region (Clinton 2011). However, the increased presence of Russia in the Balkans has also alarmed US officials as well. The US Congress adopted in 2018

a bill that foresees to “execute enhanced military-to-military engagement between the United States and the militaries of the countries of the Western Balkans to promote interoperability with NATO” and “develop and implement a comprehensive security cooperation strategy that integrates support for allies and partners in Europe, especially the allies and partners most directly threatened by Russian aggression and malign influence” (US Congress 2018). The bill was adopted after the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives issued a report in which they warned about the Russian efforts to impact the Western Balkan States and the information campaign (Committee on Armed Services 2018).

There are three channels through which Russia exerts its impact. The first channel is economic, the second political, and the third is propaganda. By supporting policies of certain political actors that the EU perceives as contrary to the European Union rules, Russia undermines the efforts of the EU to transform the country into a functioning democracy. On the other hand, internal disputes in respective countries represent a fertile ground for a foreign impact.

The economic channel is the least developed, and therefore the one with the least potential to exert influence. The propaganda is a cheap approach and is closely connected to the political one. Russia invests in propaganda with the goal to change the perception of citizens about the Western-dominated organizations such as NATO and the EU, while backing those political leaders who support their policies.

China targets the basics of the economy, transportation infrastructural projects and electricity production. With Bosnia, the issue related to Chinese presence is the planned coal plant in Tuzla. A Chinese bank provides the loan for the plant, but the conditions under which they provide the loan violates the already agreed policies about State aid between the EU and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Thus, the agreement between

Bosnia and China represents a topic of dispute between the EU and Bosnia. The outcome of the dispute remains to be seen.

Secondly, the Western Balkan region is unstable because of unresolved issues after the bloody wars in the 1990s. The former EU Commissioner for European Neighbouring Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn compared the region with a pan filled with oil in which a match is enough to set a fire. Furthermore, he said that *“either we export stability or import instability”* (Zeit Online 2017). Statements about instability in the region were also made by high officials from Germany and the EU such as the former Member of Bundestag Marieluise Beck (Deutscher Bundestag 2017), and the German Chancellor Merkel (Zeit Online 2015), and most recently by Jean Claude Juncker who said that “we might see later — and probably even sooner — what we saw in Balkans in the 1990s“ if the picture of the EU as an indecisive actor regarding the enlargement process appears (Euractiv 2018). The concerns expressed by the member States and the EU officials show also the changing position of the EU, compared with 2014 when the newly elected Head of Commission Juncker Stated that “... the Union and our citizens now need to digest the addition of 13 Member States in the past ten years. The EU needs to take a break from enlargement so that we can consolidate what has been achieved among the 28” (Juncker 2014: 12). Furthermore, he stated that there will be no enlargements during his term, but that the accession negotiations should continue. His statement from 2014 shows the reluctance of the EU to discuss these policies in the public, but also to pursue the enlargement politics in the period. It did put the enlargement policy “on hold.”

Yet, as the possible instabilities in the Balkans, and the appearance of new actors in the region, threatened to become an issue for the EU, the EU changed its politics and

highlighted the importance of the region for the EU. The EU did it, however, after the initiatives of the member States. The topic of the enlargement has become more present in the public, despite the low support of the public opinion for such a policy, and the rising support for the Eurosceptic right-wing parties who question the existence of Europe. More concretely, the EU has adopted a new Enlargement Strategy in February 2018 in which the six flagship projects were introduced to enhance the cooperation among the Western Balkans States. They confirmed the projects introduced in the Strategy during the Sofia Western Balkans Summit in May 2018.

This is because they perceive the not entering the EU of the Western Balkans States as a bigger threat for the EU, than the low support of citizens and the rising of the Eurosceptic and right-wing populist parties.

The case of Bosnia and Herzegovina is specific. Its constitution is a part of the Dayton peace agreement that stopped the bloody war in 1995. With its asymmetric political system and, along ethnic lines, divided country, BiH represents a complex case. Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of two entities – of which one is divided into ten cantons, and the other is highly centralized – and a district. In total, BiH has 13 constitutions, and a population of slightly over 3.5 million, which is comparable to the size of the population of a larger European city. The State, each of the entities, the cantons, and the district, has its own constitution (in case of the district there is a statute), parliament, government, police, and the judicial system. Furthermore, there are 180 ministers, 760 lawmakers, 1.200 judges and prosecutors, and four levels of government (Ashdown 2002). Besides the complex constitutional setup, the political system is created with numerous blocking mechanisms in order to ensure that the three constituent people participate in decision-making.

Besides the constituent people, there are also ethnic minorities who do not have the same rights as the Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats. In particular, those not belonging to the constituent people cannot be elected as members of the Presidency or to be elected in the House of People in the Parliament of BiH. On the other hand, Bosniaks and Croats, who reside in the Republic of Srpska cannot be elected in the Presidency, because it is reserved exclusively for Serbs from RS, while the Serbs from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot be elected in the Presidency because the constitutional provisions which provide the passive right to Croats and Bosniaks. There are several judgements from the European Court of Human Rights against BiH that have determined discrimination, but since the first one from 2009 in the case of Sejdić/Finci, several initiatives to change the Constitution in order to ensure the equality of all citizens of Bosnia have failed so far. The judgements are based on the European Convention of Human Rights, which, according to the Constitution, has primacy over domestic law. For a certain period, the Sejdić/Finci case has been the basic condition for further the continuation of the EU integration process, but it was changed after the German and British initiative (Steinmeier and Hammond 2014). Additionally, the country has weak institutions and lacks progress. It is specific that the country has the Office of the High Representative (OHR), a person in charge of implementation and interpretation of the civic part of the Dayton Peace Agreement. The High Representative (HR) has the so-called Bonn Powers, which is the mandate to impose laws and bylaws or to remove and ban political actors to engage in official political work and to hold office. Different High Representatives used these powers nearly 750 times prior to 2006. Yet, since 2006 due to lack of international support, the role of the High Representative has remained a passive one.

Furthermore, relations with neighbouring Serbia and Croatia remain problematic. These two countries have a significant impact on the politics of Bosnia and Herzegovina through the Serb and Croat ethnic party political leaders, while at the same time there is no agreement within BiH how to build the relations the neighbouring States.

Thus, two issues regarding the enlargement of Bosnia and Herzegovina are identified. The first one is the crises within the EU that have caused mistrust among member States. There is a growing scepticism whether the EU is able to accept new member States, because of the reluctance of some member States and the affected group dynamics that appeared after the largest enlargement round in 2004. The most vocal opponent is France, whose President Emmanuel Macron rejects further enlargement until the EU is reformed (Politico 2018b). The crises have revealed some weaknesses of the EU – the difficulty to agree during a crisis. The EU has faced several crises during a short period. Another revelation is the democratic deficit in some new member States, which has become clear during these crises. This puts a question mark on the EU as a transformative power, as it was highlighted among public officials and scholars. The result of the crisis is the lack of trust and support of citizens for the EU. Prior to the crisis, the interest of citizens in the EU affairs was not emphasized. However, when the crises started, the interest in EU politics among citizens increased. Secondly, Bosnia and Herzegovina is a complex State with a clear democratic deficit, and it remains a difficult case for the EU. During the absence of the EU, while it coped with its internal problems, Bosnia, and the Western Balkans have become of increasing interest of some other powers, which could threaten the interests of the EU in the region. Thus, the EU is under pressure to defend its interests, while there is growing opposition within the Union for widening in the short- or middle-term.

The internal crises within the EU, on the one hand, and the lack of progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the other, puts the EU in a difficult position. While coping with its issues and growing Euroscepticism, the EU enlargement represents an undesirable policy, and there is a concern of experiencing consequences of any eventual instability in the Balkans, because of its geographical proximity to the EU member States. The increased presence of other States with interests in the region represents another concern for the EU and its member States. Russian role is well described as a “spoiler” that undermines the democratic development, while the role of China is seen as a possibility of using the Western Balkan countries as “Trojan horses” once these States become full members of the Union (Politico 2018a). Thus, the question arises why the EU still has the enlargement on the agenda.

The new approach from the EU towards Western Balkans that emphasizes the regional cooperation and the socioeconomic reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina could be best described as tools to achieve its interests. European Union interests are to keep its immediate neighbourhood stable and peaceful while having in mind European interests as well (Roth 2018).

To sum it up, the EU enlargement policy has three sets of constraints. The first one is the internal political situation in which the Eurosceptic, and especially the right-wing Eurosceptic parties, have risen and it has affected the group dynamics after the big enlargement in 2004. These parties have proven successful to attract citizens to support them in the elections by criticizing the EU. The low support of the public opinion for further enlargements is an additional pressure on decision-makers to pursue with the enlargement agenda. The crises caused the resetting of the priorities of the member States. The enlargement has fallen down on the priority list, while the crisis management climbed on the top. The decreasing interest of the EU to deal with Bosnia

and Herzegovina leads to the second set of constraints. The absence of the EU from the country, and the region as well, has contributed to democratic backsliding and increased instability, although the responsiveness of the domestic political actors to the external factors such as China and Russia represent a fertile ground for the impact of competing countries. Finally, the third set of constraints are the new actors in the region who are perceived as to undermine the democratic development but also undermine the role of the EU in the region which is surrounded by EU member States. Any instability would impact the EU as well.

1.1 Outline of the thesis

This work consists of five chapters. The first chapter will give an overview of rationalism and constructivism, two approaches from the international relations theory that are also used to explain the EU enlargement process. More precisely, scholars use these theoretical umbrellas to explain why the EU, on the side, has decided to expand, and on the other side, why the potential member States have decided to join the EU. The chapter, then, will make a short overview of the EU enlargement specific theories.

The chapter proceeds with the theory that will be used in the work. The basis of the work will be liberal intergovernmentalism (LI) to explain the enlargement policy of the European Union. The theory should explain why the EU, despite the constraints within its own borders, has decided to “restart” the integration process of Bosnia and Herzegovina. LI perceives the policies of the EU as reflections of the member States' policies. In other words, the EU enlargement policy is dependent on member States policies.

The second chapter will examine constraints of the enlargement politics of the EU, and the enlargement fatigue and the affected group dynamics in the EU. Also, it will examine why there is a decline among the EU citizens for further enlargement in the EU in general. The chapter then proceeds with the analysis of the rise of the right-wing populist parties during the crises in order to explain how these parties have affected the EU the enlargement policies.

The third chapter will analyse the EU enlargement policy in times of crisis. The chapter starts with the official policies of the EU towards Bosnia and Herzegovina during and after the crises. More concrete, there are two aims in this chapter. Firstly, drawing from the findings in the second chapter and the official policies of the EU towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, the first aim is to analyse how constraints in the Union have affected the EU enlargement policy during the crisis. The second aim is to analyse the changed policy with regard to enlargement, and why there is an increased interest of the EU in the enlargement policy. In particular, the roles of Germany, France, and Great Britain will be analysed with regard to enlargement in times of crisis. Germany and Britain are chosen for the analysis due to their initiative for a new approach towards Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2014, and Germany initiated the Berlin Process in the same year. These two countries have been also firm supporters of the EU enlargement process in the past decades. The “restart” of the EU integration process was accepted by other States, and it has been introduced as the new EU policies. This chapter should elaborate why there is an interest of Germany to pursue an unpopular policy, while the role of Britain should be perceived through the Brexit, and how the departure of UK from the Union will affect their enlargement policy. It is important to note that EU enlargement policy is still an official policy of the UK and the British government has announced to increase the aid for reforms in 2020.

The role of France is important as that country has raised objections throughout the EU enlargement history.

In the fourth chapter Bosnia and Herzegovina's ability to join the EU will be analysed. However, it will not focus on technical aspects of the integration process, but rather on the existing democratic deficit and the democratic backsliding in that country and the role of the EU and its member States to promote democratic development. Additionally, a short overview of the relations with neighbouring Serbia and Croatia will be presented due to the fact that the neighbouring States have an impact on the politics of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The chapter continues with a short analysis of how the decision of the OHR to perform a more passive role had an effect on the domestic politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and how the lack of common agreement of domestic political actors about the political system has an effect on domestic political relations. The politics of Bosnia and Herzegovina is still embedded in nationalism and at the same time it occupies a significant part of public life.

The fifth chapter will examine the roles of Russia and China in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as it is argued that these States have contributed to the EU policy change towards Balkans, and Bosnia. The chapter continues with a short analysis of the US politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and its reduced visibility after the agreement to hand over the leading role to the EU.

1.2 Research questions and hypotheses

Research question 1:

How have the financial, economic and the Eurozone crises within the European Union impacted the enlargement policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina?

Hypothesis 1:

The financial, economic and the Eurozone crises have caused a policy re-ordering within the European Union that moved the enlargement policy at the bottom of the priority list.

The effects of the crises on the enlargement policy are twofold. Firstly, during the crises within the European Union, the focus of the European Union institutions and the member States has been crisis management in order to reduce the damage caused by the crises. Thus, the space for dealing with enlargement policies has been limited. Secondly, the crises within the EU have become a salient issue in the public. This has contributed to the rise of the Eurosceptic voices, especially the ones of the right-wing parties, who have become a hurdle for the accession process because of the questioning of the European project. The right-wing populist parties have used the momentum of the dissatisfaction of the citizens with regard to the EU and the traditional political parties in order to gain their support in the elections. Thus, the decision of the radical right-wing political parties to use Euroscepticism is of a strategic nature (Startin 2015). While prior to the crises were to a large extent marginal, the difficulties within the Union provided the space for the right-wing populist parties to “explain” Europe to its citizens, or to put it differently to question Europe. The enlargement policy was put “on hold”. Raising a question about the goal to enlarge the Union would have eventually led to increased Euroscepticism, due to the ability of the parties to use the public opinion polls as their agenda-setter.

The group dynamics has been weakened after the 2004 enlargement when 10 new, of which eight former socialist States, have become full members of the EU. The affected group dynamics within the EU has become more pronounced after the crises started. This was also because of the lack of a suitable legal and institutional framework after French and Dutch citizens rejected the European Constitution in 2005. After the increased number of member States, the complex decision-making process (Maurer and Wessels 2003) has become even more difficult. Different histories of the old and the new member States after World War 2 have contributed to varying developments in the old and new EU members. Distinct political systems have developed and consequently, the political culture was dissimilar. The adoption of democratic constitutions at the beginning of the 1990s was insufficient to change also the “minds” within the new democracies in more than a decade after the collapse of the single-party system. The outcome was that decision making in the EU has been affected. After the crises in the EU have started, the outcome regarding decision-making processes has resulted in more State-centric decision-making processes.

Research Question 2:

What roles did Germany, the United Kingdom, and France play in the integration process of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the crises in the European Union?

Hypothesis 2:

Germany and the United Kingdom have “restarted” the integration process of Bosnia and Herzegovina after the process was carried out rather on a technical level, while France appears to be an enlargement sceptic that affects the group dynamics with regard to the enlargement process.

It was first the Berlin process that was started in August 2014 that contributed to the new approach towards Western Balkans in order to enhance the cooperation among the regional States. While introducing the new approach, the initiative was supported by several other countries from the EU. Later, in November the German and British governments have proposed the new approach towards Bosnia and Herzegovina that puts the economic and social reforms as the top priorities, while the human rights issues are to be solved at a later stage of the integration process. The new approach was adopted a month later as the new approach of the EU. The two initiatives were caused by the perceived increased instability in the region. These new policies in 2014 were an important signal for the States in the Western Balkans region about the commitment of the Union to include new member States, but it did not change substantially the EU enlargement policy in times of crisis.

Germany is at the moment the fourth-largest economy in the world, and in order to maintain its impact on world politics and to stay competitive in the world market, it assumes that its impact will remain at a high level in a more integrated and wider Europe (German Federal Government 2016: 22). The Western Balkan, which is geographically surrounded the EU, is a region that is seen as an area with potential conflicts due to unresolved issues among the States of former Yugoslavia. The interest of Germany in the region is to maintain peace and stability, and enlargement is understood as the best tool to achieve that goal. Yet, due to new powers, which have an interest in the region of the Western Balkans, there is a stronger interest from the EU, and Germany, to increase their presence in the region in order to prevent eventual instabilities. The economic interests of Germany are to be considered as well, however, to a lesser extent compared to the security interests. In fact, this study treats German economic interests as a constant.

The interest of the United Kingdom is also the security in the continent, and the embeddedness of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the European Union is seen as a tool to achieve these interests. Furthermore, the support of the enlargement of the European Union was an essential part of British politics, even the reasoning behind it was to weaken the process of a more integrated Union (Ker-Lindsay 2017). Yet, the Brexit referendum in 2016 has decreased the role of the country in the EU enlargement process. As a future non-member State of the EU, the UK loses its leverage and the formal ability within the Union to impose agendas or impact decisions. Also the credibility of the country that promotes the enlargement, while at the same time the country announced leaving the EU, decreases. Finally, the announced departure of the country from the EU has caused debates about what future relations with the EU should look like. Since there is no agreement within Britain about the nature of the future relation, the focus of the UK will likely be to find its new role in the world politics and to reduce the economic consequences and solve potential security issues in Ireland, and crisis management in Scotland in which the ruling party demands another referendum on independence. In other words, the focus will likely be on domestic affairs rather than on other issues. The main reason to include the UK in the analysis of the EU enlargement is the formal support of the widening process in the Balkans also outside the EU framework.

The enlargement policies of the member States are constrained on the one hand by other States and actors within the EU, and on the other, by external States who have an interest in the region. The most vocal EU member State who expresses its reluctance for the enlargement process is France, until the EU is reformed in order to simplify decision making within the EU. France, however, is in a more difficult position compared to Germany due to its internal political landscape. As with the strong extreme

right-wing political party National Front (FN), the French EU politics is constrained more than the German government also due to constitutional changes from 2008, when the amendment was adopted to organize a referendum for every new enlargement that can be overridden by three-fifths of votes in both houses of the French parliament. The success of Front National has reduced the scope of the French government with regard to EU matters.

Russia is seen as a spoiler that undermines the EU integration process in the region. The goal of Russia, however, is to prevent the NATO accession of Western Balkan States, while China is pursuing its economic policy. None of the two mentioned States, however, do have the prevention of the EU integration process on their official agenda, but the increased impact in the region leads inevitably to the decrease of the impact of the EU in the region and weakens its position.

1.3 Methodology

The method that will be used in this work is process tracing. Elsewhere, some authors might call it “*causal process observation*” (Collier 2011: 823), or “*historical analysis*,” and “*detailed case studies*” (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994, 86). Process tracing is a qualitative method that seeks to explain causal mechanisms between one or more independent variables on the side, and the dependent variable on the other (Hildebrandt et al. 2015: 219). A causal mechanism can be defined as “a complex system, which produces an outcome by the interaction of a number of parts” (Beach and Pedersen 2013: 2). Collier defines it “as the systematic examination of diagnostic evidence selected and analyzed in light of research questions and hypotheses posed by the investigator” (Collier 2011: 823). George and McKeown define process tracing

as “the decision process by which various initial conditions are translated into outcomes” (George and McKeown cited in King, Keohane, and Verba 1994: 226).

This method is well suited for the study of international relations (Janusch, Behrens, and Hennig 2017), and it is a preferred method for many influential studies of the EU integration processes, as well (Schimmelfennig 2014: 100). Process tracing is also well suited for single case studies, while on the other hand, it is more difficult to make generalizations by using this method (Beach 2018).

The process-tracing method looks at how *a* caused *b*. In particular, process tracing looks at the process between *a* and *b*, where *a* is the cause, and *b* is the outcome. “Process tracing starts from the assumption of a temporal and analytical sequence, in which later stages in the process are dependent on earlier stages” (Schimmelfennig 2014: 107). There are three types of process tracing. The first one is theory-testing, the second is theory-building, and the third is explaining the outcome, which is mostly used (Beach and Pedersen 2013: 11). This work also uses the third type.

This study looks at the EU enlargement policy as the outcome and the effects that contribute to the policy during the crises. It looks both at internal and external factors that affect the enlargement policy. The first one is the halt in the integration process of the European Union after the crises have started. Thus, it aims to answer the first research question about the effects of the crises on the enlargement policy. In particular, it looks at the constraints that affected the accession policy in the EU such as the growing public opinion rejecting the membership of new countries, the rising power of the right-wing Eurosceptic parties, the affected group dynamics, and the refocusing of the priorities of the EU institutions and the member States to cope with the crisis. Furthermore, it examines how these internal factors are interrelated and how they affect each other and the enlargement policy.

It looks then at the policy change with regard to the EU enlargement process, and the roles member States played in the revival of the accession policy. As it is argued that external factors have contributed to the policy change, the role of Russia and China will be examined to identify the role in the particular process. The common point of the internal and external factors are the European Union institutions and the Member States governments. The actions of the external factors have contributed to the policy change in some of the member States, and accordingly, it led to policy change at the EU level.

For the purpose of drawing a picture of the EU enlargement policy in times of crises, a variety of sources is needed. Firstly, the theories of international relations and EU integration theories are needed to present different explanations for the EU enlargement process. Secondly, as public opinion is defined in this work as a constraint for policymakers it is important to draw on relevant theoretical and empirical works that explain the phenomenon, and what is more important for this work, how public opinion is changed. The results from public opinion polls Eurobarometer conducted by the European Commission will be used to present the change in opinion among the EU citizens. It is issued biannually, and therefore it provides relevant and comparable data for a longer period. Even this work is qualitative, the data from polls are important to indicate some trends relevant for this work, in particular, the support for the enlargement.

The rise of right-wing Eurosceptic parties will be examined as well. For this section, the work will draw on works related to extreme right-wing parties, Euroscepticism, and populism. In this regard, the results of the 2014 European elections are relevant to indicate the rise of the right-wing Eurosceptic parties. Media reporting about the crises

is of great importance for this work, as media is the main source of information for citizens and affects the public opinion.

At the central point of this study is the EU enlargement policy towards the Balkans in general, and Bosnia and Herzegovina in particular. The EU official documents, such as enlargement strategies and other official documents are relevant to indicate the official policy towards Bosnia. Also, speeches, public statements, and media appearances of the officeholders are important for this work as the source of information. The State of the Union speeches of the Head of the Commission to the European Parliament is of great importance for this work. In these speeches, the Commission announces the priorities for the following period. More precisely, these speeches are relevant to trace policy changes and examine the justifications for the proposed policies. The appearances in the media of public officials are important sources of information about justifications of proposed policies as well. Expert comments and analyses with regard to EU enlargement policy will be used as well.

Relevant academic works about the general EU policies of the three selected member States will be used to examine the stance of Germany, the UK, and France towards EU integration and enlargement. Media sources with statements of the officials of three countries are a source of great importance as well, and official documents as well.

Secondary literature with regard to EU policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina will be used in order to explain the democratic deficit in Bosnia. Additionally, international documents and media sources will be used to examine the democratization process of Bosnia as well.

Finally, relevant academic works, expert papers, and media sources will be used to examine the roles of Russia and China in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

2 Rationalism and Constructivism

2.1 Chapter introduction

In the last few decades, international politics scholars have engaged in a lively debate about the motives of international actors to act on the international level. While on the one side rationalist scholars, drawing assumptions from neo-realist, institutionalist and neoliberal traditions, identified material interests as driving force for acting on the international arena, constructivist scholars argued that there is more than “egoistic and self – interested” motives (e.g. Sjursen 2002: 496). They argue that identities play a role and the interests are defined and created by people, and more importantly, that interests can change. On the other hand, the rationalist assumption is that interests are given and stable over time.

The debate also continued in European studies in EU integration theory and, more important for this work, in the EU enlargement theory. With regard to EU enlargement, the debate aimed to define why, on the one side, the EU has decided to enlarge, and on the other, why do potential EU member States have expressed their desire to join the EU? Was the motive of EU member States simply to expand its market, and exert security or was the decision based on the shared values (Sjursen 2006: 4–6)? Did the EU follow the goal-oriented logic of consequence or did they follow the logic of appropriateness (March and Olsen 1998: 949–52) and tried to do the right thing (Risse 2000: 4)?

The following sections will make an overview of the basic assumptions about constructivist and rationalist approaches in world politics. After making basic assumptions, the most prominent approaches to EU enlargement will be presented. The aim of the chapter is to define theoretical assumptions on which the chapter with

the analysis will be based. It continues then with a new theoretical approach based on the liberal intergovernmentalism and that falls within the rationalist theoretical umbrella.

2.2 Is Anarchy what States make of it? – Constructivism in International Relations

The headline of this section intentionally starts with a question. Namely, *Anarchy is what States make of it* (Wendt 1992) is the title of a famous paper by Alexander Wendt, one of the leading and influential constructivists. As Wendt's claim might look simple at first sight, it is far from that. To simplify its meaning, the claim entails a summarized constructivist approach to international relations and at the same time, it is a response to Waltz's (1979) realist assumption that there is anarchy at the international level. It also tells that humans create the reality, the norms, and interests and that the reality is not given.

But what is constructivism? Constructivism as an approach in international relations has been introduced after the end of the Cold War as a challenging approach to neoliberalism and neorealism as the dominant theories in international relations (Reus-Smit 2005: 188). Reus – Smit has identified four factors that have affected the emergence of constructivism. The first one is that motivated by "an attempt to reassert the pre-eminence of their own conceptions of theory and world politics, leading rationalists challenged critical theorists to move beyond theoretical critique to the substantive analysis of international relations" (Reus-Smit 2005: 195). The second factor is the inability of rational approaches to understand the new changes in the world. In other words, they did not manage to explain new developments in the world and whether other factors besides economic gains or security considerations did play a role. Thirdly, the assumptions from critical international theory were used by new

scholars to develop new theoretical approaches. The fourth factor is that mainstream academics were “frustrated by the analytical failings of the dominant rationalist theories” (Reus-Smit 2005: 195–96). To sum it up, from the constructivist point of view the rationalist approaches could not provide an explanation about world politics at the end of the Cold War and scholars have identified the need for further explanation. This explanation was set up on an ideological basis, which in practice means that governments acted based on a specific set of norms and identities, and State actions are explained beyond pure material interests. Sørensen and Jackson state that additionally to the Cold War debate, the theoretical discussions among IR scholars “helped to set the stage for a constructivist approach” (Jackson and Sorensen 2013: 270).

Adler, who sees constructivism as the “middle ground” between rationalist and interpretative approaches, defines constructivism as “... the view that the manner in which the material world shapes and is shaped by human action and interaction depends on dynamic normative and epistemic interpretations of the material world” (Adler 1997: 322). What is important is the understanding of the world, because the understanding gives meaning to actions.

First of all, Constructivism assumes that societies have created a reality that “does not fall from the sky” (Risse 2009: 145) and that society has created ideas and values. People themselves create the reality, norms, ideas, and values, and these norms, values, and ideas are subject to change because they are created by humans and they are not given. Furthermore, “constructivism questions the materialism and methodological individualism on which much contemporary scholarship, including much rational choice work, has been built” (Jupille, Caporaso, and Checkel 2003: 14). The material world is not questioned, but the world must have a meaning, and it is

constructivism that explains the meaning beyond pure materialism. Thus, when there is a meaning, human actions can be understood.

Hence, the constructivist approach rejects pure materialism as the driving force for human action. Instead, constructivists include also materialism and rationality, but nevertheless, they argue that materialism only cannot describe the reasoning behind the decisions and interests of actors (e.g. Schimmelfennig 2001). According to Hopf, “Contra neorealism, constructivism assumes that actors and structures mutually constitute each other; anarchy must be interpreted to have meaning; State interests are part of the process of identity construction; power is both material and discursive; and change in world politics is both possible and difficult” (Hopf 1998: 181).

Also, constructivists emphasize the interaction between the actors and structures (Jupille, Caporaso, and Checkel 2003: 14). In Adler’s words, constructivists “believe that the identities, interests, and behaviour of political agents are socially constructed by collective meanings, interpretations and assumptions about the world” (Adler 1997: 324). Thus, identities, interests, norms, and values are a product of these interactions. As such, the identities, interests, norms, and values are not eternal, contrary to, for example, Keohane’s argument that mutual interests are given (Keohane 1984: 6).

According to Gstöhl, “Identity includes both an internal dimension of shared norms (e.g., about the political and social order) that bind the nation together and an external dimension with regard to the State’s self-placement within international contexts (e.g., foreign policy traditions and experiences of foreign rule)” (Gstöhl 2005: 40).

Risse describes constructivism as a “social ontology” which “insists that human actors do not exist independently from their social environment” and their collective system of meaning, or “culture in a broader sense” (Risse 2009: 145). Finnemore and Sikkink explain that constructivism focuses on “social facts” like money, sovereignty, and

rights, which have no material reality. These facts “exist only because people collectively believe they exist and act accordingly” (2001: 393). In other words, people give meaning to their environment and values to “social facts”. On the opposite, if the people would not give meanings and values to non – material facts, they would not have a value for the community. Thus, the social environment is a result of human interaction and agreement of these humans on how to shape society. The major concern of constructivism is the understanding of social facts change and their impact on politics (Finnemore and Sikkink 2001: 393). Put it differently, the social facts are not eternal – they are subject to change. Hence, it is important to understand how human interactions create new social facts, but also the creation of new identities and new understandings of the material world. The new understanding of the social changes helps to understand the way the actors act.

In words of Risse, “social constructivism's contribution to the study of ideas in international relations consists of emphasizing that collective norms and understandings constitute the social identities of actors and also define the basic "rules of the game" in which actors find themselves in their interactions. This does not mean, however, that constitutive norms cannot be violated or never change” (Risse 2000: 5). Constructivists assume that human behaviour is led by the logic of appropriateness, contrary to the logic of consequences. The first one explains human behaviour as identity and norm-based, and the second one explains human actions as based on egoistic and materialist interests.

The actions within the logic of appropriateness are seen as norm-based and human actions are “imagined to follow rules that associate particular identities to particular situations, approaching individual opportunities for action by assessing similarities between current identities and choice dilemmas and more general concepts of self and

situations” (March and Olsen 1998: 951). In other words, when humans act, they do so in an environment with established rules based on identities rather than based on material interests i.e. they are trying to do the right thing (Risse 2000: 6). “The right thing” implies a specific understanding of what the right thing is. In other words, within a society or groups of societies, there is an understanding of an appropriate action based on the identity and the values of a society, which is then reflected in the foreign policy of a State. In general, States are concerned about their reputation and they strive for international recognition by others (e.g. Schimmelfennig 2005). Therefore they act in accordance with international norms, which are by States perceived as legitimate. Identities of actors play an important role while creating interests of actors, or as Wendt puts it “Identities are the basis of interests. Actors do not have a “portfolio” of interests that they carry around independent of social context; instead, they define their interests in the process of defining situations” (Wendt 1992: 398). Again, the role of human interaction is underlined as the basis of identities creation, which is not eternal. Hopf finds identities as necessary “in order to ensure at least some minimal level of predictability and order” (Hopf 1998: 174). Furthermore, Hopf argues that identities are important to “ensure predictable patterns of behaviour” and that a world without identities is a world of chaos. Identities help you to tell who you are and who the others are. On that basis, identities imply a particular set of interests with respect to choices of action (Hopf 1998: 174–75).

Or to make it more clear, Wendt’s example says that “British missiles have a different significance for the United States than do Soviet missiles” (Wendt 1992: 397). Thus, the perception of a State depends on mutual relations between States and their identities. To come back to Wendt’s example, one of the States he used in the example is an ally, and the other is not. As one State might be perceived as the enemy, the

other might be perceived as friendly. According to constructivist assumptions, identities constitute the core, the starting point, of interest creation. Identities help to create expectations and predictions about future behaviour because, to paraphrase Hopf, we know who we are and who the others are. This is related to “doing the right thing”. The right thing depends on the understanding of a given society.

These assumptions reveal also an important assumption of constructivism. Interests are created in a process of interaction of different actors, and interests can change. The change of interests is the main difference between rationalists and constructivists. While rationalists assume that interests are given and stable over time, constructivists assume that interests can change.

One of the understandings of how these interests are created is the impact of epistemic communities. Adler and Haas use Putnam’s description of international politics as “two levels game” in order to define the process. The first level or the national one includes interest groups who create pressure on governments to adopt favourable policies and “politicians seek power constructing coalitions among these groups” and “at the international level national governments seek to maximize their own ability to satisfy domestic pressures” (Adler and Haas 1992: 373).

In Adler’s and Haas’ words:

“Two level games, however, are not only about fixed interests and power; they are also about the selection, spread, and retention of expectations and values at national and international levels. The domestic game therefore refers to how expectations and values enter into the political process through active participation of domestic and transnational epistemic communities and how through the policy process these ideas help define the national interest, which then becomes a conceptual and normative input to the international game. In the international game, governments not only act out of

concern for the domestic political environment, but they are also motivated by the need to solve international problems, whose interpretations and meanings are embedded in the national interest” (Adler and Haas 1992: 374).

This interpretation of State action at the international level should be perceived as a bottom-up approach. Thus, the State action is constrained by the different social groups that seek to impact the State policy based on a specific set of values. Bottom-up approaches are as well a part of some rationalist approaches, like for instance, the two-level game (Putnam 1988), or the new liberalism (Moravcsik 2009). The difference is, however, the driving force of State action.

The basic roles in the process of creation of policy innovations have epistemic communities (Adler and Haas 1992: 374). Epistemic communities refer to experts or groups with specialized knowledge, who work in institutions or academics or other expert groups, with specialized knowledge and a common set of world views. Furthermore, the knowledge is embedded into a set of shared understandings that gives it a meaning and therefore powerful in social life. These epistemic communities often promote the “norms and understandings along with technical expertise” (Finnemore and Sikkink 2001: 402). According to Adler and Haas epistemic communities appear in the short and long term. In the short term, epistemic communities rather appear independently than under the government’s direct influence. In the long term, epistemic communities are institutionalized in the process of socialization (Adler and Haas 1992: 374).

In short, epistemic communities are groups with specialized knowledge, who disseminate their knowledge, along with the dissemination of new norms, and influence decision-makers who make decisions based on the impact of these communities.

2.2.1 Constructivism and populism

As populists, especially the right-wing ones, use terms like identities, or values in their rhetoric, it seems logical to ask whether the actions of populists can be explained by the constructivist approach. Recalling the specific identity is one of the key elements of the right-wing populist parties. It helps the parties to present themselves as distinct compared to others. The acts of the right-wing populist parties can be compared to the process of nation formation. The process consists of five elements. The first one is the self-definition that includes “community constituting ‘us’ in contrast to ‘them’”. The second one is “myth-and-memory-making” which consists of myths, the third one includes “territorialisation” – a specific territory on which the group resides. The fourth element is the creation of distinct „public culture,“ and the fifth one is “law making” which means the “observance of shared ancestral customs” and its dissemination (Smith 2007: 19). Hence, when speaking of Europe of nations as one of the slogans of the German AfD or “Taking back control” the phrase used in the Brexit referendum campaign in Britain, or the “Make America great again” slogan of the US President Donald Trump, implying that there is something distinct with regard to a specific nation such as territory, culture, myths or values. It is used to mobilize people to support specific policies – whether to blame immigrants for the Islamization of the country or the continent, destroying specific values, destroying the economy, or the promise of a „reset“ to a State as it was before which is presented by the political actor in a more romanticized manner.

It is argued in this work that the acts of the populists are used strategically in order to gain support, which will be explained in more detail in the subchapter on populism. This was, for example, seen in Italy, when the right-wing Lega Nord changed from a regional to a national party, which was followed also by a change of rhetoric of the new

Party President Matteo Salvini (Albertazzi, Giovannini, and Seddone 2018). Another example is Front National from France when the party in its early days was EU friendly, and later it adopted the Eurosceptic position (Reungoat 2010: 303). Although the ideological scope under which the populist parties operate should not be excluded, recalling the values and identities is rather a strategy.

2.3 Rationalist approach

The other part of the debate is Rationalism. Simplified, Rationalism is about rational behaviour, where actors act as goal-seeking units. According to this approach, States make cost and benefits calculations and try to find a way that has the greatest benefit, while trying to keep the costs as low as possible. Actors calculate the outcomes and search for the best way to achieve their goals. The assumption about rationalism is that the actors are “self-interested and egoistic” (Sjursen 2002: 496). Perceived from the rationalist approach, the values of the States do not play a role when acting at the international level.

Looking at Rationalism, one might assume that anarchy takes place in the foreign policy of the EU, or more specifically, that the EU takes whatever it wants from enlargement. The truth, however, is more complex and it cannot be painted only black and white. There is a specific set of rules and practices to be followed in this process, both for the organization and the acceding State. The norms cannot be ignored in the EU enlargement process. In order to give a reward, meaning a full membership in the organization, States need clear rules to join the “club.” The factors why do international or supranational organizations decide is different. States have clear expectations and interests why to “institutionalize horizontally”, as enlargement is defined by

Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier. These interests or preferences are created partially on the basis of demands of social groups within States or within governments because governments are usually better informed about the national preferences.

Rational choice theory was the dominant approach in international relations when constructivism emerged as a response to liberal and realist theories at that time.

Rational choice theory in international relations should not, however, be perceived as a single theory, but rather as a second-order (meta) theory which constitutes an umbrella for various first-order theories (Jupille, Caporaso, and Checkel 2003: 11; Pollack 2006: 32).

Basic assumptions of rational choice are methodological individualism, goal maximizing assumption and the existence of various institutional or strategic constraints on individual choice (Pollack 2006: 32).

The first assumption “Methodological individualism, means simply that rational choice analyses treat individuals as the basic units of social analysis. By contrast with ‘holist’ approaches that treat society as basic and derive individual characteristics from society, rational choice approaches seek to explain both individual and collective behaviour as the aggregation of individual choices. Individuals, in this view, act according to preferences that are assumed to be fixed, transitive and exogenously given” (Pollack 2006: 32).

Secondly, acts of the units are directed towards the maximization of their expected benefits (Pollack 2006: 32). Actors perceive possible outcomes and choose among alternatives (Jupille, Caporaso, and Checkel 2003: 12). Furthermore, actors are expected to act based on, what March and Olson have labeled as the “logic of expected consequences” (March and Olsen 1998: 949). Thus, actors are assumed to weight possible outcomes and to “choose among alternatives” and act based on the

perception of the most suitable solution (March and Olsen 1998: 949). In different words, there is a set of opportunities for the actors, and there are different possible outcomes to be achieved which are related to the opportunities. The one that suits best the interests of the actors, or more precisely, the one that is perceived to provide the most desirable results of all possible outcomes is the one to be used.

The third assumption is that actors choose under constraints. In Pollack's words, "individuals do not directly choose their ideal States of the world, but weigh and choose among alternative courses of action within the constraints of their physical and social surroundings, and often on the basis of incomplete information" (Pollack 2006: 32). In different words, the State level is under pressure by different groups who have different agendas and expectations about what policies the State should follow. The government chooses what they believe best suits their interests. This assumption is well connected to the previous ones. The first assumption perceives the actions as an aggregation of individual choices which inevitably leads to the second and third assumptions. Firstly, individuals have specific interests that cannot be always be fully achieved, and it is, therefore, necessary for actors to make concessions as they are constrained. Hence, the State policy can be also be seen as a compromise of the aggregation of the different interests among different actors involved.

To sum it up, the rationalist approach treats individuals as basic units of acting. Contrary to constructivism, rationalism treats interests as fixed, given and stable over a longer period (e.g. Keohane 1984: 6).

Also, as mentioned at the beginning of the section, rationalism is an umbrella for different first-order theories. In terms of international relations, rationalism derives its basic assumptions from neoliberalism, institutionalism, and neo-realism. Although all of these theories rely on methodological individualism, with stable preferences and

goal-oriented behaviour, there are significant differences between these theories. Neo-realists (Waltz 1979) and institutionalists (Keohane and Martin 1995) perceive the international level as anarchy, meaning that there is no central authority, where the States are striving for survival and there is a constant fear of war. Thus, their actions are oriented to ensure security for themselves and their allies. The difference, however, is how to achieve their interests. While institutionalists emphasize the cooperation in order to achieve the absolute gains, neo-realists emphasize the self – help system of States to survive by trying to achieve relative gains as long the competitors do not make more gains.

New Liberalism (Moravcsik 2009), on the other hand, assumes that State politics on the international level is created as a process of bargaining of actors within the States. In other words, different interest groups within the States (NGOs, political parties, professional associations, ministries, etc.) bargain in order to achieve different goals. Thus, States adopt their policies as the result of the bargaining and act accordingly on an international level. Yet, Moravcsik assumes that international actors have an impact on State policies (Moravcsik 2009: 239). The cooperation of States is assumed as possible and desirable in order to achieve specific goals.

Cooperation among States in order to achieve absolute gains is one of the main assumptions of the institutionalist theory (or neoliberal institutionalism). In order to enhance cooperation and reduce transaction costs, States establish international institutions which then reduce transaction costs and helps States involved to achieve absolute gains (Abbott and Snidal 1998; Keohane and Martin 1995).

2.4 EU Enlargement

The European Union has faced several enlargement rounds. It started in the 1970s when the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Ireland joined the EU. It followed by the two rounds in the 1980s when Greece, Portugal, and Spain became members of the Union than in the 1990s when Austria, Sweden, and Finland acceded. In the 2000s the biggest enlargement rounds happened when in total 13 new countries became full members of the EU.

Even the EU enlargement is an important political process, both for the EU itself and for the future member States, it was not perceived as major political event and the end of the Cold War (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005: 3). From the EU perspective, the enlargement process is seen as a stabilizing factor that brings peace, stability, and prosperity to new member States. The enlargement of the European Union was followed also by theoretical debates about the enlargement. These debates aimed to answer one basic question. Why does the EU enlarge? This question can also be asked differently. Namely, what factors have contributed that the EU has decided to expand, and what factors have contributed to the decision that potential member States change their politics and policies in order to adapt to the requirements of the Union to become a full member? Or, in a third way, why is it important that a country has a full membership?

Scholars have engaged in a debate in order to give answers. The debate among these scholars, in general, reflects the debate among constructivists and rationalists in international relations. On the one side, there are material and egoistic factors and on the other, there are non-material factors like values and ideas as the driving force for enlargement. Some scholars make a difference between single rounds of enlargement. Stahl differentiates between strategic and civilizing enlargements (Stahl 2010). Even

he does not explicitly refer to one of these two approaches, it is recognizable that he uses the theoretical explanations in order to state his arguments, while others use rationality and social factors in order to explain the enlargement process (Schimmelfennig 2005).

These questions have been very much discussed among scholars in the past two decades. However, the crisis within the EU started with the financial, followed by the economic, crisis in the Eurozone, and followed by the refugee and migrant crisis, while retaining the enlargement policy, sheds new light on the enlargement policy. The support numbers among EU citizens for the further accession of new members is on the decline, but the EU keeps still the enlargement policy on the agenda. Thus, it is relevant to raise the above-mentioned question again. Why does the EU enlarge?

In the following two subsections there will be a presentation of rationalist and constructivist approaches to EU enlargement. The most prominent approaches will be presented in order to have an overview of the general assumptions of these approaches. The aim is to present the driving forces for change in potential member States. To be more specific, the aim is to answer the question of why do potential member States change their politics and policies in order to adopt and adapt to EU law.

2.5 Constructivism and EU enlargement

Constructivist approaches with regard to European Union enlargement have a strong rhetoric element. In other words, students of the EU enlargement process emphasize rhetoric while constructing interests and enlargement politics. However, they do not neglect the rational interests of member countries in these processes. Schimmelfennig

and Sedelmeier explain that “(t)he more an external State identifies with the international community that the organization represents and the more it shares the values and norms that define the purpose and the policies of the organization, the stronger the institutional ties it seeks with this organization and the more the member States are willing to pursue horizontal institutionalization with this State” (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005: 15).

In different words, the authors emphasize the importance of mutual understanding of the norms, and on what values these the States are built on. It appears as a logical consequence that when there is a shared set of values, the States are more likely to cooperate in a formalized manner through international organizations.

Among prominent theories is the rhetoric action, which was developed by Frank Schimmelfennig. He explains it as the “strategic use of norm-based arguments” (Schimmelfennig 2005: 154) in institutional environments, where political actors are concerned about their reputation as members and the legitimacy of their preferences and behaviour. In the case of Central and East European Countries (CEEC) enlargement, the CEEC States were in an inferior position in comparison to the old member States while striving for the European Union membership, and therefore they demanded the membership based on EU values and norms. Hence, the CEEC States exposed “inconsistencies between the Community’s standard of legitimacy, its past rhetoric, and its past treatment of applicant States, on the one hand, and its policy toward the CEECs” (Schimmelfennig 2005: 143). As a consequence, the enlargement opponents would be “rhetorically entrapped” (Schimmelfennig 2005: 143). Thus, the opponents could not reject or veto the enlargement, without damaging themselves as credible members of the EU (Schimmelfennig 2005: 142–43). Schimmelfennig also emphasizes the rational behaviour of States, which, in his opinion, is “constrained by

value-based international norms of legitimate Statehood and proper State conduct” (Schimmelfennig 2000: 110). That means that member States of an international organization do act rationally, but the external State must conform to the norms and values of the international organization. He also emphasizes that an international organization represents values and norms. Thus, if an external State wants to join an international organization, it is more likely that enlargement takes place if the external State shares the norms and values of the international organization. With regard to the EU, it is the liberal norms and values (Schimmelfennig 2002: 600).

In his work on EU enlargement, Schimmelfennig emphasizes two aspects. The first one is that the EU is committed to its promises towards potential member States and that they are acting on behalf of its commitments. Thus in order to avoid the rhetorical entrapment, the international organization remains to its policies. The other aspect is the sharing of common norms and values as a precondition for the process of enlargement. This, however, does not mean that only sharing norms of values is the only precondition for accession, because in his opinion, States who desire to join an organization act also rationally. Furthermore, in order to join the organization, it implies that potential member States want and must change, or in other words, they must conform to the norms and values of the liberal community. In the specific case of EU enlargement, States must Europeanize.

According to Ulrich Sedelmeier, the European Union has developed a special responsibility as a policy discourse towards CEEC during the Cold War as a response to dramatic changes in the late 1980s as self – interested behaviour on the EU side. The process of the development of the EU’s identity towards CEEC, however, began at the origins of the European Economic Community (EEC). The responsibility implies support for political and economic reforms and their integration within the EU.

Sedelmeier uses speech acts of political representatives of the EU about overcoming divisions or emphasizing common culture geography etc. as arguments for his claims. The speech acts continued also after the Cold War. The crucial step in forming enlargement policies towards CEEC started at the Copenhagen summit in 1993 and was a gradual process (Sedelmeier 2005).

The starting point in Sedelmeier's argumentation is that the EU officials have started to develop responsibility towards CEEC during the Cold War as an act of self – interested behaviour of the EU side and it continued after the Cold War. Also, the gradual development of discourse constitutes an important element of this approach. The approach implies a social learning process and persuasion in which the CEEC States have adopted the rules and norms of the Community. The EC was perceived as a successful organization of States that attracted the CEEC and motivated them to change, while the materialist factors did not play a role in the process. At the same time speech acts are emphasized.

Another approach that argues that the process of interest creation has started during the Cold War was developed by Fierke and Wiener. They argue that “meaning and language are central when constructing interests” (Fierke and Wiener 2005: 102). They argue that the enlargement decisions in the case of CEEC “have to be embedded in a longer process going to the Cold War” and that the Western institutions enlarged because of the promises in their speech acts. Otherwise, if the West would not be consistent, “it would lead to a loss of popular support for democratic institutions and a free-market economy” (Fierke and Wiener 2005: 115). This approach rejects the materialist explanation as well and uses value-based arguments for the explanation of the enlargement process. It also includes the support of the EC citizens for the

proposed actions. Thus, the enlargement politics is seen as legitimized by the citizens, which is based on State policies.

On the other hand, Gstöhl identifies both, rationalist and constructivist explanations as the basis for the decision to enlarge. She argues that neither rationalist nor only constructivist approaches can explain the readiness of the EU to accept new member States. In her words “we lack an integration policy theory taking into account both material and ideational factors (or rationalist and constructivist insights) in order to be able to explain the individual countries’ varying willingness to integrate” (Gstöhl 2005: 40).

Helene Sjursen’s approach suggests that there is a “sense of a kinship-based duty” (Sjursen 2002: 508) which helps to explain the decision to enlarge on the CEEC, on the one hand, and on the other, it helps to explain the differences in support for enlargement on CEEC States in comparison to Turkey. She emphasizes the norms of a “liberal democratic community” as important to enlargement, but she goes beyond norms and also suggests that the community-based identity plays a very important role in the decision to enlarge, while she rejects the material explanations (Sjursen 2002: 508). In other words, norms do play a role, but what also matters is the identity or the “kinship-based duty.” It implies that there is an attachment between the EU and the CEEC that precedes enlargement and because of that attachment the EU, on the one hand, has decided to enlarge, and on the other, the “kinship-based duty” gives priority to certain countries over others.

From the brief overview of these five constructivist approaches with regard to EU enlargement, three basic conclusions can be drawn. First of all, the EU acts as a transformative power. It has an impact on States to change their identities in order to comply with the ones of the EU. In Gstöhl’s words “Identity includes both an internal

dimension of shared norms (e.g., about the political and social order) that bind the nation together and an external dimension with regard to the State's self-placement within international contexts (e.g., foreign policy traditions and experiences of foreign rule)" (Gstöhl 2005: 40). Changing identities implies a change to liberal democratic norms and values. Following that, the EU membership is a desirable goal to achieve and therefore States conform to rules and norms in order to join the organization. This is also because of the picture of the EU as a success story that becomes desirable for acceding countries to become a part of it.

Secondly, language plays an important role. It is the starting point in policy change. Its power is also emphasized by Risse (2000). The role of language is crucial while constructing identities, both, of the members of the international organization and of the membership applicant. Speech acts of EU officials help to develop a discourse and to create interests, and as some of the examples indicate, there is a continuation during and after the Cold War. Also, the commitment of EU decision-makers towards CEEC States is emphasized. In other words, the policy did not change after the Cold War, it rather moved in the same way, while creating formal preconditions for enlargement.

And, thirdly, member States of the international organization do act rationally. However, there is a strong normative element. The norms of potential member States have to be changed and implemented and a new identity has to be created. The changes include the transformation of the political system – from a single-party system to a multi-party system that is based on democracy.

2.6 EU Enlargement – Rationalist approaches

The enlargement of the European Union from the rationalist umbrella offers a variety of different explanations why the EU has decided to widen. It ranges from liberal, realist, neo-Gramscian and institutional approaches. Explanations range from economic gains to the stability of Europe or both. Some of the approaches understand the process of enlargement as the result of pressures from different groups within States, or geopolitical approaches where very little space was given to internal factors that might explain why member States have decided to support the accession of new member States. Every one of these approaches provides useful insights for discussion on this topic. In this subsection, several approaches will be presented from different theoretical schools.

One of the first theories to explain integration is neo-functionalism which was developed in the 1950s by Ernst Haas as one of the grand theories of European integration. The central assumption of the theory is the concept of spillover of European integration. In other words, automation of the process of EU integration is assumed in order “to identify the driving force and inherent logic of integration via increased/functional economic interdependence” (Niemann and Schmitter 2009: 49). In simple words, neo-functionalism assumed that the successful integration had a spillover effect and the integration process continued. Regarding the EU enlargement, the neo-functionalist theory did not provide deep insights. Its focus was rather to examine the deepening than the widening of the Union. However, from neo – functionalist perspective enlargement is explained by the magnetism of the successful Union that made accession desirable and “exclusion costly” (Niemann and Schmitter 2009: 62). By using the concept of spillover, it appears that the enlargement is a natural

process in which the economic success of the European Union has motivated the external countries to integrate into the Union in order to become part of the success. Mattli and Plümer have examined under which conditions Central and East European States (CEEC) would show greater interest to join the EU. Similarly to Schimmelfennig, they conclude that more democratic States are more willing to join the Union compared to less democratic States. However, Mattli and Plümer see their findings supplementing theories which assume economic and stability arguments as the driving force for the decision of the EU to enlarge, rather than a theory that can explain the whole process (Mattli and Plümer 2002). As the membership is perceived as a desirable goal, the external States have committed themselves to adopt the rules of the EU in order to benefit from the membership. This argument tells a lot about the importance of a common understanding of democracy. For formal cooperation embedded in an institutional framework, such as the EU, it is important to set formal rules as the basic understanding of the democracy, because a shared understanding of democracy opens further the space for achieving common goals.

Liberal intergovernmentalism (LI) is a theory explaining regional integration. In the opinion of Andrew Moravcsik, one theory cannot explain regional integration, but rather it requires more theories. By using elements from liberal theories of international relations (State preferences) and the intergovernmental theories (bargaining and institutionalization), LI seeks to explain EU integration.

Firstly, at the core of the LI theory, there is the assumption of rational State behaviour. LI argues that States define their interests based on domestic pressure on national governments from different social groups in their own States. These interests are aggregated through domestic State institutions and create State preferences. Secondly, after a State defines its interests, States bargain with other States in order to achieve

their interests. Since different States have different interests, they need to bargain in order to achieve their goals. And thirdly, for the achievement of their goals, States create intergovernmental institutions and delegate powers to these institutions (Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig 2009: 69). Regarding enlargement the theory examines the motives for enlargement, both from the EU and from potential member States. Moravcsik and Vachudova argue that the West and the East have “calculated the expected economic and geopolitical consequences of enlargement for their domestic societies and acted accordingly” (Moravcsik and Vachudova 2005: 198). Similarly to LI, the historical materialist approach based on the neo-Gramscian approach considers also different interest groups while explaining the enlargement of the EU. However, this approach argues that EU integration is an “open-ended process” that is caused by class struggle (Bieler 2005: 77). In other words, this approach does not support the argument of the rational assumption of stable and given interests of States. It could be rather explained that politics is the outcome of different groups who strive for more economic gains and power. Bieler analysed how Austria and Sweden have decided to join the Union, even the main political parties were reluctant for accession at first. He identified the representatives of transnational capital in both of these countries as the driving forces for membership, while in Sweden, also a part of the labour union, supported it (Bieler 2005). “What is clear from both internal party struggles is that international forces of capital and labour successfully rallied the parties around a strategy towards membership, which was based on the neo-liberal rationale of opening up the sheltered sectors to international competition in order to overcome economic recession” (Bieler 2005: 83). Hence, the driving force for the accession of the two named countries is economic reasons.

An explanation of the EU to expand is also offered by the realist approach. Skalnès argues the decision of the EU member States to enlarge in 2004 is explained by geopolitics. In particular, he argues that the former communist countries were perceived as a threat and that the EU membership would reduce that threat. Therefore, the old member States would consider the costly enlargement in order to reduce the threat. He hypothesizes that “The higher the threat, the more current members should favour deeper (costlier) engagements with East European countries” (Skalnès 2005: 215). As support for his arguments, he claims that the EU member States have learned from the Yugoslav crisis in 1991 and 1992 (Skalnès 2005: 214). He uses the classic neo-realist assumption about the balance of power that exists in the EU. Some States were reluctant to enlargement due to the fear to lose power. Thus, States did consider whether the enlargement will decrease the power of some member States, while on the other hand, the power of some member States might increase and affect the decision to enlarge (Skalnès 2005: 217).

Some conclusions can be drawn from the above-mentioned approaches from the rationalist tradition.

Firstly, the rationalist assumption of “methodological individualism” proves to be one of the main overlapping arguments in these approaches. The decision to enlarge does not occur as a single opinion of all member States, but rather as the result of initiatives from single countries or interest groups within the member States which are then transferred to the State level. The exception might be the neo-functional theory, but the literature regarding the enlargement of this approach did not provide many insights to explain the decision to enlarge, besides the underlined “magnetism” of the EU as a success story.

Secondly, the second assumption of “logic of consequences” where actors seek to maximize the benefits also overlaps. Thus, the expectations of member States are explained rather as the expectation to maximize the economic benefits, reduce security threats or both. The values and identities are, thus, not considered as motives for the enlargement.

And thirdly, States are weighing costs and benefits of different actors from the State or inner State level or transnational level, or all of these actors combined. Thus, the decision to accept new member States is the result of calculations of costs and benefits. In simple words, the above-mentioned approaches argue that States have concluded that the benefits of the enlargement process exceed the costs.

However, there are also differences among the different approaches of how States have decided to enlarge. While some approaches consider only governments as the driving force for enlargement (Skalnes 2005) and present it as a single State policy, others emphasize the impact of economic interest groups on governments to engage in the enlargement process (Bieler 2005). It also offers more competing explanations for the enlargement policy compared to constructivist approaches. While the constructivist approaches use rhetoric as one of the main “tools” used in enlargement policy, the rationalist approaches offer a bigger variety of approaches to explain the enlargement.

The following subsection will create a theoretical approach that will be used for the analysis.

2.7 The theoretical framework

The theoretical framework that will serve as the framework in this study is Liberal Intergovernmentalism (LI). It is a theoretical framework, rather than a “narrow theory” (Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig 2009: 68). This approach, which has been introduced by Andrew Moravcsik, “has acquired a status of a “baseline theory” in the study of regional integration” (Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig 2009: 67). It is a rational framework that puts States as the main actors in regional organizations. In this regard, the intergovernmental organization is assumed to be instruments for coordination or to “credibly commit States to enforcement” (Moravcsik 2018: 1649). Thus, the intergovernmental institution reflects the agreed policies of the member States. In different words, the regional organization relies on member States and their policies, and the organization is only strong or weak as the autonomy that was given to the international organization by the member States. Thus, the limits of an intergovernmental organization are defined by the member States.

Liberal intergovernmentalism argues that the regional organization cannot be explained by one theory or factor, but rather connects different theories. Thus, it rejects single causes and uses multi – casual factors as explanations of State behaviour (Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig 2009: 68). In particular, LI uses the theories of national preferences, bargaining, and institutionalisation. Moravcsik emphasizes these as the three essential elements in LI: “the assumption of rational State behaviour, liberal theory of national preference formation, and an intergovernmental analysis of interstate negotiations” (Moravcsik 1993: 480).

The national preferences start with the assumption that there are different interests and groups within the States who express their interests. The State acts rationally and chooses the options that the government believes it serves best its interests. Thus, the

State makes cost-benefit calculations. At the core of the LI theory, there is the assumption of rational State behaviour (Moravcsik 1993: 480). LI argues that States define their interests based on domestic pressure on national governments from different social groups in their own States. These interests are aggregated through domestic State institutions. Moravcsik holds interests as important, and these interests emerge through “domestic political conflict” (Moravcsik 1993: 481). This assumption differs from other rationalist theories such as neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism (or institutionalism), which treat interests as fixed and stable over time.

The next stage after the State chose the preferences is bargaining at the intergovernmental level, where the States aim to achieve their interest through negotiations with other member States. “States must overcome collectively suboptimal outcome and achieve coordination or cooperation for mutual benefits, yet at the same time they must decide how the mutual gains of cooperation are distributed among the States” (Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig 2009: 71). In this case, the States make concessions in order to achieve these goals. The achievement of the goals depends on the interests of States’ to achieve some other interests. The more a State strives to achieve a goal, the more that State is willing to make concessions and the more a State has information about other States’ preferences it can easier achieve the preferred outcome (Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig 2009: 71).

The final stage is the institutionalisation. The assumption derives from neoliberal institutionalism (Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig 2009: 72). The neoliberal institutionalist theory of international relations starts with the assumption of cooperation between States in order to achieve gains. Contrary to realism, where relative gains are assumed to be the goal of States, while at the same time the rival power does not make gains, the institutionalists assume that absolute gains are the goal of States. Or to put

it differently, the cooperation increases the possibility of absolute gains for all actors involved. Thus, the cooperation among States is seen as desirable, because it is the cooperation that opens the opportunities to achieve the goals. Therefore, States engage in creating institutions in order to manage the cooperation and to reduce transaction costs while providing them a certain degree of autonomy (Abbott and Snidal 1998). The above-mentioned goals are not be seen merely as materialistic, but also as an opportunity to reduce conflict potential. The second assumption is that interdependence among States reduces conflict potential among States. Thus, when States cooperate and are dependent on each other, the potential of conflict is reduced, because the goals of States cannot be achieved by the States alone. The example which is often used for this claim is the EU, due to interdependence in economic terms (Burchill 2005: 67). The embeddedness of a State in a formalized cooperation, such as an international or intergovernmental organization, increases its dependence on other actors, which makes the cooperation more desirable.

Liberal intergovernmentalism as a theoretical framework suits well for this study, because, firstly, this study looks at the inner crises in the European Union, and whether the crises had an impact on enlargement policy. In particular, the study looks at different actors and constraints during times of crisis that might have an impact on enlargement politics. Secondly, as it is argued in LI, the States are the main actors in the EU integration process. It looks at the different interests and policies of the EU member States in the enlargement process. Thirdly, this work assumes that a multi-causal approach can better explain the enlargement policy in times of crisis. Finally, this theoretical approach suits well the methodological framework of process tracing, which aims to link causes to the outcomes.

2.8 The theoretical model

This theoretical model assumes that public opinion can have an impact on foreign politics under certain conditions. Public opinion is seen as a constraint. However, the impact of public opinion is assumed to be limited due to a possible change of attitudes. It is also assumed that international actors, other States, can have an impact on State policy. The effects of the policies at the international level will be analysed through the External incentives model (EIM). The EIM is a “rationalist bargaining model.” The actors involved are assumed to be strategic utility-maximizers interested in the maximization of their own power and welfare” (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004: 663). The external incentives model proposes four conditions under which the EU conditionality will be successful. The first three conditions are EU related i.e. they must be met by the EU in order to succeed, and the last one must be met the targeted country. The conditions are rewards, determinacy, credibility, and costs.

If the reward is bigger it is more likely that conditionality will be more efficient (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004: 665). The reward, such as membership, is likely to have a greater impact on the targeted country the more the respective country desires the membership.

Determinacy refers to “the effectiveness of rule transfer increases if rules are set as conditions for rewards and the more determinate they are” (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004, 664). Thus, there needs to be a roadmap for the aspiring States in order to become a member State in the organization. When it comes to credibility “the likelihood of rule adoption increases with the credibility of conditional threats and promises” (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004: 666). Hence, in order to succeed the organization needs to set clear rules which the targeted country has to fulfil in order to become a member of the organization. Changing conditions during a process of

integration are thus more likely to affect the performances of the potential member States.

Finally, “the likelihood of rule adoption decreases with the number of veto players incurring net adoption costs (opportunity costs, welfare and power losses) from compliance” (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004: 667). In different words, if the rule adopted in order to get the reward is perceived costlier for the veto players, it is less likely that rules will be adopted and vice versa.

Other States are defined as one actor, which is then divided into two groups. The first groups are the allies and the second group are the States that are not considered as allies, but rather as competitors at the international level. The realist assumption for striving for more power in order to strengthen the position of the State at the international level is considered in the model. In other words, the more a competitor or competitors are interested in the same area as the international organization, or the member States of the organization, the more likely are that the organization and its member States will act in order to protect their interests.

Firstly, the model has identified three main inner State actors whose interest is to impact State policy. These actors are associations and other interest groups, political parties and governmental bodies. All these actors are assumed to be interlinked and organized. Actors are understood as those who have a certain agenda or interests that they seek to promote in order to make it public policy. These actors can be formally or informally organized and have regular communication in order to achieve their desired goals.

Public opinion is assumed to be unorganized. Thus, there is a large number of individuals who are not formally or informally connected and they do not express their opinions in a planned way. Their will is mainly expressed through public opinion polls.

Secondly, the model links the causes to the attitudes of the actors. In other words, the model establishes why a certain group has a particular stance on a specific topic. At the bottom, there is a social and political environment in which all actors co-exist. The following subsection will present all actors.

2.8.1 Public opinion

Public opinion is understood as the aggregate opinion of a large number of individuals on a certain matter. In order to be characterized as public opinion, at least four conditions must be satisfied: “(1) there must be an issue, (2) there must be a significant number of individuals who express opinions on the issue, (3) there must be some kind of a consensus among at least some of these opinions, and (4) this consensus must directly or indirectly exert influence” (Davison 2016). For Ruddock “public opinion is quite simply what the public thinks, either as individuals or as members of social groups characterized by a particular worldview” (Ruddock 2001: 78).

Public opinion could be well understood as the reflection, or as an expression or an answer to the current social and political environment. This means that public opinion is impacted by issues that appear important in the public, or that are salient. Thus, the more is reported about a specific topic, the greater the possibility that the respective topic appears to be more important for public opinion. Hence, the timing of public opinion polls is what matters – it is fluid depending on the information that respondents receive (Ruddock 2001: 75–76).

Public opinion was not recognized as an important factor in the liberal theories, although some authors suggest that there is room for public opinion to be included in liberal intergovernmentalism (Hobolt and Wratil 2015: 239). Other works indicate that only a few studies consider public opinion and other factors to have an impact on State

policies (Burstein and Linton 2002: 383). To put it differently, most of the studies observe policymaking under certain conditions, or constraints, but not all factors that might have an impact on policy-making are considered in these analyses. However, this does not mean that these studies perceive public opinion as a single predictor, but rather as one of the predictors that have an impact on State policies.

In his Two-Level Game theory, Putnam suggests to include a public opinion as one of the domestic determinants of foreign policy and international relations. He points out that “foreign policy and international relations must stress politics: parties, social classes, interest groups (both economic and noneconomic), legislators, and even public opinion and elections, not simply executive officials and institutional arrangement” (Putnam 1988: 432). It is the government that creates policies, but these policies can be impacted by other factors as well. Therefore, it is of great importance to look at the social and political environment when analysing foreign policy.

Risse-studied how public opinion and domestic structure can affect the foreign policies of liberal States. His results indicate that public opinion and interest groups may affect coalition building (Risse-Kappen 1991: 482). However, the impact of domestic factors, including public opinion, depends on whether State institutions are strong or weak. States with weak institutions are more responsive to domestic demands, while States with strong institutions are more reluctant to respond to domestic pressure (Risse-Kappen 1991: 484–85).

Baum and Potter propose an interdisciplinary approach “that incorporates public opinion, elite preferences, and the mass media as independent strategic actors with distinct preferences and incentives” (Baum and Potter 2008: 40–41). The approach treats public opinion as an actor. Yet, as public opinion is an aggregation of, usually

unrelated, a large number of people, it is difficult to perceive them as an actor, due to their unorganized nature, as elaborated above.

Thus, a question that arises from the short overview is, can public opinion affect State policy in general and foreign policy in particular? Prior to answering the posed question, an overview of some approaches with regard to public opinion and policymaking will be made.

There is a number of quantitative studies that examine the relationship between public opinion and public policy. Page and Shapiro have examined how public opinion shapes policy in the US in the period between 1935 and 1979 by using data from different surveys. One of their conclusions is that the bigger the shift in public opinion, the greater the possibility for a policy change (Page and Shapiro 1983: 180). The effect on politics is more likely to appear when there is specific public opinion expressed in a longer period. Some other studies from the US find a correlation between public opinion, political parties, and State policy (Erikson 1976; Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1989). Other studies also conclude that there is a relationship between public opinion and foreign policy in the US and UK, and the media serves as a main public opinion shaper (Soroka 2003).

The post-functionalist theory indicates that public opinion has an impact, in terms that public opinion can shape public policy in the EU (Marks and Hooghe 2009), while others neglect the role of public opinion as a policy-shaping factor (Schmitter 2009: 215).

The findings of a study on the impact of public opinion on State policies in the Council of the EU suggest that EU member States are responsive to public attitudes. This responsiveness is labeled by the authors as “signal responsiveness”, which is greater when a specific issue is more exposed to the public and “gains more importance in the

domestic party competition” (Hagemann, Hobolt, and Wratil 2016: 3). Signal responsiveness is understood as a “communication tool” to signal their positions, while they cannot significantly change the policies of the Council because signal responsiveness is more likely to occur when no unanimous decisions are required (Hagemann, Hobolt, and Wratil 2016: 5). Simply, the governments send the message that they acknowledge and care about people’s preferences.

The importance of public opinion has risen in recent years (Hobolt and de Vries 2016b: 415) due to the growing influence of populist political parties, which tend to respond, at least rhetorically, to public opinion. The findings of Hobolt and de Vries (2016a) suggest that the rise of Eurosceptic populist parties in the elections for the European Parliament in 2014 was connected with the economic crisis at that time, and a picture was created of a Union that was not capable of coping with the crisis. Voters who were negatively affected by the crisis were more likely to vote for Eurosceptic parties. Another finding from the study was that voters who were in favour of liberal immigration policies and financial redistribution were more likely to vote for left Eurosceptic parties, while those voters who were less in favour of liberal immigration policies and financial redistribution were more likely to vote for right-wing Eurosceptic parties.

Thus, it is an important constraint to be considered in political life. Furthermore, the impact on governmental policies takes place mostly through political parties.

The focus of the literature of public opinion and European integration has been on shaping public opinion. In other words, what factors play a role in changing attitudes about European integration? Three approaches have emerged in order to explain shifts in opinions – utilitarian approach, identity approach and cueing (Toshkov et al. 2014; Hobolt and de Vries 2016b). The utilitarian approach is an interest-based approach, which explains support for EU integration as a result of socio-economic considerations.

More specifically, those who benefit from European integration are more in favour of integration. An identity – based approach assumes that national identities matter when it comes to supporting EU integration (Marks and Hooghe 2009: 13). In their article “Who is Cuing Whom”, Steenbergen et al. (2007) analyse who has an impact on whom – the citizens of elites or the opposite – the elites on citizens. They conclude that there is an impact on both sides. Simply, States strive to have support for their own policies. The authors of the study conclude that there is an impact from both sides on each other (Steenbergen, Edwards, and de Vries 2007).

Public opinion is assumed to be unorganized. There is a significant number of individuals who have certain opinions on specific issues, and these opinions are subject to change. These individuals have no formal agenda towards governments, but rather expectations to be fulfilled. Public opinion, in general, lacks subject-relevant information (Hobolt 2007: 153–54). Thus, they rely on other sources, mainly mass media. A number of studies have established a direct correlation between media and public opinion. In other words, the media is the main opinion shaper because citizens do not have “first - hand experience in politics” and they, therefore, rely on mass media (Maier and Rittberger 2008: 261). Put it simply, public opinion reflects the perceived social and political environment of citizens. The perceived environment does not have to be accurate - it is the impression of truth rather than the accuracy of facts that matter. Thus, does public opinion matter, and if it does, under which conditions? The simple answer is that it does matter. The impact of public opinion on policy and politics is twofold. On the one hand, public opinion can affect policies in cases where no great policy outcomes are expected, as described above as “signal responsiveness”. However, it is less likely to affect foreign policymaking when important strategic interests are at stake. Simply, because public opinion lacks subject-relevant

information and is subject to change, it is less likely to affect the foreign politics of a State, but it can postpone a policy. Furthermore, the importance of public opinion depends also on the extent of exposure to the issue. The more an issue is exposed to the public, the more likely it is that government and political parties will respond (Hagemann, Hobolt, and Wratil 2016: 3). Thus, if there is support for certain policies, then governments will make the issue more public. However, if there is no support for certain policies, then governments will tend to avoid these topics in the public. The relevance of public opinion has grown during the crises due to the ability of populist parties to use polls and set the majority opinions from the polls as the party policy.

On the other hand, a negative public opinion can shape policies during elections. As some studies demonstrate, during the pre-election period it is more likely that political parties will be more responsive to public attitudes and other parties (Bevan and Krewel 2015). A possible impact is more support for populist parties, as described above in the case of the European elections in 2014. Additionally, the interest of political parties in public opinion is stressed through numerous public opinion polls on a weekly basis, or even on a daily basis during political campaigns.

2.8.2 Associations and other interest groups

Associations and other interest groups are assumed to be organized either formally or informally and to have a specific agenda they seek to promote in order to achieve their goals. These are subject-specific actors who tend to promote their interests while influencing governments. The range of subjects is wide, such as environmental issues, economic interests, human rights, etc. These actors have relevant information on the topics they matter. Their agenda (policy) is influenced by specific knowledge, such as

reports, research or governmental data, etc. The interests of these actors are stable over a longer period.

2.8.3 Political parties

Political parties are formally organized. They are defined as "any political group identified by an official label that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections (free or nonfree), candidates for public office" (Sartori in Janda 1993: 166). Hence, in its most simple form, political parties are formal organized groups to seek and maintain government office. Therefore, political parties depend, on the one hand, on voter preferences, but on the other hand, political parties possess relevant knowledge on specific issues that might be opposed to public opinion. Party policies might be subject to change if there is pressure from public opinion. Parties are more responsive to public opinion, because they tend to adjust their policies to preserve party cohesion (Marks and Hooghe 2009: 19). Political parties' policies might be influenced also by non-governmental actors through donations, information, reports, formal meetings or other public events where interest groups present their interests. Different interest groups might have different opinions on particular issues.

2.8.4 Governmental bodies

The role of governmental bodies is twofold. Firstly, they are assumed to be an active actor, highly organized and possessing relevant issue-specific knowledge of a particular matter. Secondly, governmental bodies, or government in general, is the decision-maker who collects all relevant information and makes decisions.

Governments are assumed to be influenced by political parties, experts (during proposing public policies and other documents), and commitments made to other

States, as some EU enlargement theories suggest (Sedelmeier 2005; Schimmelfennig 2005; Fierke and Wiener 2005), security (Skalnes 2005) or economic issues and international actors (Moravcsik and Vachudova 2005). Thus, “(g)overnment policy is therefore constrained by the underlying identities, interests, and power of individuals and groups (inside and outside the State apparatus) who constantly pressure the central decision makers to pursue policies consistent with their preferences” (Moravcsik 1997: 518). The role of governments is the most complex one since there is a constant pressure to pursue specific policies.

2.8.5 International actors

In the previous section, inner State actors were presented as having an impact on State policy at the international level. It is a new liberalism approach at its core, which is, however, not sufficient to explain why a State makes certain decisions. This model is specifically designed to explain how States in the EU have defined its policies towards the Western Balkans, but the model is applicable to other States as well.

Thus, two additional actors will be introduced in this theoretical model. The first one is other States, and this argument is borrowed from the realist theory of international relations. Other States can impact State policies when their interests overlap. A simple example is when a certain State A or several States have an interest in a certain geographical area, but at the same time, a different State B or States have an interest in the same area as well. Thus, each side will try to influence the decision-makers in the targeted area the States are interested in, in order to gain their support. The government of the targeted State will consider what options they have and act accordingly. States follow their goals at the international level and there is a purpose in their policies, but at the same time, they react to policies of other States with which

they compete in the international arena. Hence, the assumption is that a State or an intergovernmental organization is more likely to react when interests of the respective State or intergovernmental organization and interests of a competing country or competing countries overlap. Simply, if there appears to be a “competition” regarding a specific geographical area between two or more actors, it is likely that the involved actors will actively try to achieve their interests. A more active approach should be measured by policy or strategy changes, or the devotion of more resources to achieve the defined interests or all of these measures combined which is more likely.

2.8.6 Governmental level

Considering all the different interests and actors from within and outside the State, all opinions and stands are aggregated at the governmental level. The government then weighs possible options and chooses the alternative they consider to be the best by using the logic of expected consequence as it was introduced by March and Olsen.

In their words:

“Those who see actions as driven by expectations of consequences imagine that human actors choose among alternatives by evaluating their likely consequences for personal or collective objectives, conscious that other actors are doing likewise. A consequential frame sees political order as arising from negotiation among rational actors pursuing personal preferences or interests in circumstances in which there may be gains to coordinated action. Political integration represents a collection of “contracts” negotiated among actors with conflicting interests and varying resources” (March and Olsen 1998: 949).

Simply, the governments make cost – benefits calculations and weigh possible outcomes. Based on these calculations, States create decisions they think that best

serve their interests. These interests are then presented at the international level, where the governmental representatives bargain with other actors to achieve their goals.

This theoretical model combines different theoretical approaches from different theories of international relations and EU integration theories in order to explain the State policies. It is an LI model at its core, where inner State actors have different preferences and State policies are mainly shaped by inner State actors. However, the inner State actors are not sufficient to explain how States create policies. Additional actors are identified as having an impact on State policies. However, it had to be underlined that it is not all of the identified actors that must shape the policies of a State.

This model was specifically designed to explain why States in the EU decide to enlarge despite the crisis the EU has been coping with for years. Although there are other causes of the crisis, the ability of the EU to solve the problems has been always questioned. The EU was, and is still, seen by many as problem making rather than problem solving (Copeland and Copsey 2017). This model assumes States are rational actors, but also that all actors involved in influencing government policies are rational actors.

2.9 Chapter conclusions

This chapter sets the theoretical framework for this thesis. It has started broadly by presenting the theoretical basis of constructivism and rationalism as these approaches are used for the theories of EU integration. It proceeded with the theoretical approaches used in EU integration theories to explain the rationale for EU

enlargement. In short, the aim was to present what explanations were used for justifying the accession policy of the EU.

The chapter followed by presenting liberal intergovernmentalism, as one of the major theories in EU integration, and EU enlargement approaches. It serves as the basis for the theoretical model in this work. In other words, the work follows the logic of the theory by using it as a theoretical framework (Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig 2009: 68). The international politics of a State depends on inner State struggles between different groups, which are then reflected at the international level. The theoretical model has introduced public opinion as a constraint that under certain conditions can affect the State policy. Competing international States are understood as well as actors who can have policy impact on an international organization. It is argued that public opinion polls are used by Eurosceptic populist parties in order to present it as their agenda. This will be in more detail presented in the following chapter.

3 Crisis in the EU

3.1 Chapter introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present how the public opinion in the EU regarding enlargement has changed during the financial, debt, Eurozone, and migration crisis. Firstly, it starts with the notion that there has been enlargement fatigue after the 2004 enlargement round when 10 new member States joined the Union, which impacted the group dynamics of the EU regarding decision making. Yet, the fatigue was less visible in the public, and therefore it did not affect the enlargement process to a great extent. In different words, prior to the crisis, the change from “permissive consensus to constraining dissensus” (Marks and Hooghe 2009: 5) did not take place. With the appearance of the crises, the already existing Euroscepticism increased and the fatigue has deepened, which has affected the group dynamics of the Union and the enlargement policy of the EU.

Secondly, it examines how this enlargement fatigue has continued and deepened during and after the crises in the EU started and how the public opinion with regard to enlargement has changed towards growing opposition to accept new member States. It is argued that the media have mostly contributed to this change, but also the personal economic situation played an important role. The role of public opinion is assumed to have greater importance in a more recent period, and the importance has increased during the crises. In practice, it is assumed that negative public opinion towards the EU is the result of the negative media reporting and that the attitudes of the people have been used strategically by the right-wing Eurosceptic parties in order to gain support for their policies. The crises represent fertile ground for populist political parties. In the particular case with the crises the EU coped with, they have opened the

space for the right-wing Eurosceptic parties to increase their visibility and to offer their programs as an “alternative” to traditional political parties.

3.2 Approaches to crises

The crises within the EU have raised a number of questions with regard to the explanation of the effects of the crises. These questions have resulted in different approaches to analyse different outcomes of the crises. From the perspective of this work, there are three sets of approaches during the crises which are relevant. The first one is related to institutional changes in the EU, the second one is related to the crises and public opinion, and the third set of approaches is the rise of Euroscepticism and the right-wing parties.

Firstly, as new institutions have been created as a response to the financial, economic and Eurozone crises, different theories aimed to look behind the decision to create these institutions. Liberal intergovernmentalism explains the creation of new institutions as a result of preferences created within member States that have mostly suited German interests (Schimmelfennig 2015b) that have been argued by other liberal intergovernmentalists as well (Moravcsik 2012). The outcomes are rather member States driven, and the policies and institutions are the results of interstate bargaining. This led to the strengthening of intergovernmental Europe (Puntscher Riekman 2016: 204).

From the historical institutionalist perspective, the establishment of new institutions was based on previous experiences while creating institutions by using the existing rules, or new intergovernmental treaties were adopted in order to have a legal basis for new institutions (Verdun 2015). Hence, a specific pattern that has been successfully used in the past has served as the basis in times of crisis.

The neo-functionalist approach explains the creation of new institutions as the outcome to reduce the functional pressure due to incomplete architecture from the Maastricht Treaty (Niemann and Ioannou 2015: 201). Following the neo-functionalist logic, the process could be understood as a spillover effect in order to “complete” the institutional deficiency and to strengthen the supranational level.

Secondly, there was a significant change in public opinion with regard to the European Union. Scholars aimed to explain the changed attitudes of citizens and how the crises have contributed to this change. These are, for example, related to support of the Euro and whether the crises have contributed to the change of citizens’ attitudes towards common currency (Hobolt and Wratil 2015), while others examined whether the crises have affected the trust in the EU institutions (Roth et al. 2013). Also, an important contribution to the study of the crises within the European Union are studies related to changed public opinion and the success of the Eurosceptic votes. The conclusions of the studies are related to how the crises have affected the citizens i.e. whether positive or negative and on the other side, the results are based on previous attitudes of citizens on immigration (Hobolt and de Vries 2016a).

Thirdly, there is vast literature devoted to the rise of Euroscepticism and the right-wing parties. Some authors examined the rise of the right-wing populist AfD in Germany (Steiner and Landwehr 2018; Korsch 2016; Fedders 2016), while others offered the answer about the success of Front National from France (Backes 2019; Mayer 2013; Goodliffe 2015). Other studies have examined the factors related to the electoral success of the right-wing parties. The authors offered more general explanations about the social and political environment in which the right-wing political parties succeeded to become more relevant political actors (Decker 2018; Hirschmann 2017).

The latter two approaches are interconnected as the success of the right-wing populist parties is closely related to the changed public opinion towards the European Union and its growing. This is also closely related to crises as some figures from the following subsections will show. In different words, as a crisis at the EU level appears, the support for the EU and its policies decreases.

3.3 The outcome of the crises in European politics

The enlargement of the European Union is one of the most successful policies of the Union. The argument goes that it has helped to transform the former socialist States into functioning democracies and maintain peace. However, after the biggest enlargement round in 2004 citizens from the old member States were to a large extent reluctant to membership of new States. Shortly after, the term enlargement fatigue was spread around the Union. It refers to the “unwillingness to grant the EU membership to new States” (Szołucha 2010: 1). The impression was that the EU is not ready to accept new member States due to its inability to deal with a greater number of States. Some authors emphasized that the EU is “exhausted, leaderless and somewhat unwelcoming” (Barysch 2006: 78), which is a consequence of two enlargement rounds, and “an indifferent or opposing public opinion which paired with other external challenges supposedly piles up to an unmanageable amount of work for the organisation (Szołucha 2010: 3).

In a similar vein, French President Emmanuel Macron emphasizes the difficulties to manage an enlarged Union and rejects a further enlargement until the EU is reformed and has the capacities to manage an increased number of States (Politico 2018b). His concern is the blocking mechanisms that he wishes to overcome, but also he proposes

a several speed EU in which a number of States can cooperate on issues they find important, as he stated in a speech (Macron 2017).

Also the European Commission in its 2006 – 2007 Enlargement Strategy was aware of the enlargement fatigue and opposing public opinion with regard to acceptance of new member States (European Commission 2006a: 3). The unwillingness of citizens to accept new member States is nothing new, but the rejection has increased when the crises started. The awareness of the Commission in its 2006 – 2007 document, however, did not represent a formal obstacle for accepting new member States, as the accession of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, and the 2013 accession of Croatia have proven. That fact was not of great concern for the EU institutions, because the Union was not questioned in the case of Bulgaria and Romania. The Eurosceptic voices were to a large extent silent and were not able to present themselves as an alternative for the traditional political parties.

However, the worst-case scenario of those rejecting the accession of new members did not occur. It was not proved that the EU is unmanageable, but the group dynamic of the EU has been affected. Difficulties have become visible when reaching an agreement was on the agenda. This was evident shortly after the 2004 enlargement after the failed referendums in France and Netherlands in 2005 about the new European constitution when citizens of these two countries decided not to support the proposed referendum. Concrete, the increased number of member States has affected the effectiveness of the Council and the Commission, which can be explained by the Eastern enlargement (Maurer 2006: 265). The EU was already embedded into a complex decision-making process before the “big bang” enlargement (Maurer and Wessels 2003), and after the accession of ten new members, of which eight had a non – democratic background in the period less than two decades before, the complexity

has increased. The decision-making process slowed down (Hertz and Leuffen 2011), while a pattern of voting behaviour between the old and the new member States has become visible in the Council in the period from 2004 to 2006 (Hosli, Mattila, and Uriot 2011). Similar trends were sometimes observable in the foreign and security policy (Luif 2014). Simply, the priorities between the old and the new ones were different. After the failed referendums it was observable that the member States have been stronger involved in the decision-making process (Faber and Wessels 2006: 253). The affected group dynamics of the EU and the State-centric decision making have continued and deepened during the crises. Due to pronounced member State roles in the post-2004 period, the outcomes have weakened the importance of the EU institutions. Consequently, the roles of member States have increased, which was observable while negotiating the plans to reduce the impact of the crises (Puntscher Riekmann 2016: 204).

This was very much visible during the migration crisis, when some of the States refused to accept refugees. Put it differently, while there were no major obstacles the EU was coping with, such as crises, the agreement among the member States was easier to reach. In times of crisis, the member States' governments are trying to achieve what they believe is in the interest of the State. Some examples of governments' behaviour are the Eurozone crisis (Schimmelfennig 2015b) or the Visegrád group States during the migration crisis. The national interests of member States prevailed, and the shared interests declined on the priority agenda. This was understandable from the viewpoint of political parties in power, as they intended to send a signal to their citizens to represent their interests which appeared to be of greater importance for the voters compared to Union interests. This has also revealed the structural problems of the EU which is complex and that has become clearer after the crisis (Di Fabio 2017: 52).

When it comes to new member States, findings of a study illustrate that new member States have fewer infringements compared to some of the old member States, and especially compared to Spain, Portugal, and Greece which entered the Union in the 1980s. Their accession was not bound to strict conditionality as the countries that joined the EU in the 2000s. Authors conclude that the strict conditionality during the negotiations had an impact on new member States with regard to the implementation of EU law (Börzel and Sedelmeier 2017). Furthermore, Toshkov found out that the enlargement did not affect the legislative procedure of the EU when it comes to the number of adopted laws (Toshkov 2017). Besides the strict conditionality as the explanation of the compliance with the EU legislation, the desirability of the new member States to join the Union can also explain the lower number of infringements and the higher number of adopted laws. The role of the EU as a transformative power is, thus, more visible in the CEEC States, but less in the Balkan States. Yet, the transformative power of the EU in terms of implementation of laws weakens, once a State becomes a member, because of the weak procedures of the EU to impose sanctions after the accession (Börzel and Schimmelfennig 2017; Falkner and Treib 2008). This argument goes as well for the democratization of the new member States. While in some studies it was argued that in the pre – crises period the democratization process in the new member States from CEEC was not backsliding, but rather moving slower forward (Levitz and Pop-Eleches 2010), the after – crisis process in some of the member States can be well described as democratic backsliding. The EU institutions and the member States were aware of the consequences. After the Croatian accession in 2013, the EU decided to emphasize the question of the rule of law. Hence, the negotiations chapters 23 and 24 are the first ones to be opened and

the last ones to be closed. The former is about the judiciary and fundamental rights, and the latter is related to justice, freedom, and security.

Above all, in the post-accession period, the fear among citizens of economic consequences was spread. The membership of their countries in the EU was perceived by the citizens from the economic point of view i.e. whether the crises will affect them, rather than through identity (Hobolt and Wratil 2015: 250). The assumption was that cheap labour from the new member States could lower the wages in the old member States. The fear, however, was irrational to a large extent, due to restrictions on the free movement of workers that each of the countries could impose for a period of seven years, which was used by most of the member States.

The enlargement proved to have a positive economic impact, both, for the old and for the new member States (Busch et al. 2014). Yet, the data from 2004 indicate the economic inequalities between the old and new member States. For example, when in 2004 the eight new countries from the CEEC with 73 million citizens joined the Union, their combined GDP was 458.4 billion Euros, which is less than 465.3 billion Euros GDP of Netherlands at the same time (Kühnhardt 2010: 194). The economic disparities indicate that reaching the Western welfare standard is likely to be present for years to come.

On the other hand, the enlargement of the European Union did not affect to a greater extent the legislative processes of the EU, even the impression was often the opposite in the public, yet the group dynamics have been affected. This impression was often portrayed by the media, but also by populist political parties.

The situation did not seem to be welcoming for new member States as the failed referendums on the EU constitution in the Netherlands and France have demonstrated (Mamadouh 2009: 321). Besides the above-mentioned difficulties with regard to the

decision-making process, these referendums are the direct consequence of the opposition to enlarging, while the refusal of Dutch citizens in the 2016 referendum to sign a free trade agreement with Ukraine was also understood as opposition to enlargement (Korteweg 2017). The opposition of the public to accept new members of the EU has created new troubles for EU member States governments, because the membership promise was given to potential member States after they fulfill the necessary criteria (European Council 2003).

Yet, the crises, as the global financial and debt crisis, and the Euro crisis, have deepened the negative trend when it comes to supporting for further deepening and widening of the Union.

During all these crises the European Union has faced probably the worst period since its founding. Europe, namely, coped with several crises in a relatively short period. Although, these crises were not the first ones in the EU, however, the ones after the biggest enlargement round lasted longest. This could also be explained by the fact that the news about these crises has dominated the public sphere for a longer period.

The financial crisis, with its spillover effect, starting from the US and spreading all over the world has caused not only economic but also political damage. The crisis hit hard the EU as a political union, which was unprepared for such an outcome. Until the crisis, the EU served as a political and economic success story that was able to transform its ideas to other parts of the continent and beyond. However, some scholars perceive the EU, prior to the financial crisis, as not completely legitimate due to the increased legislation produced by the judgements of the European Court of Justice due to lack of citizens' participation, and which has distanced the citizens from the EU. After the financial crisis, this impression was strengthened (Grimm 2017: 32). This view portrays the Union as an elite-led project. Indeed, the EU prior to a crisis can be described as

an elite-led project, but mainly due to a lack of interest of citizens to participate actively in the political processes. The political elites in the member States, on the other hand, also did not show much interest to include citizens in the political processes.

However, as the first crisis emerged and continued, some common conclusions can be made. Firstly, the EU as a project was questioned, which however is nothing new, but the voices who called for less Union have become louder and it had an effect on European politics. This questioning has become a part of the mainstream debate. The crises reshaped the European political arena. It opened the arena for new Eurosceptic political powers. In 2014 European elections Eurosceptic parties gained more support than ever before, while the turnout was at its lowest level. A question emerged what type of Union is desired. In order to trigger a debate, the European Commission issued a White paper in 2017 with five different scenarios of how the EU, with 27 member States, could look like in 2025. These scenarios present a less integrated Union, a *status quo*, a more integrated Union, or a Union where several member countries can cooperate on specific topics, which has become known as the EU with several speeds, or an EU where all countries can cooperate together on a smaller number of issues (European Commission 2017). The fact that the 27 member States are mentioned in the document, excluding the UK, could also be understood as the consequence of the enlargement fatigue.

The debate about the future seemed to start since the French President Emmanuel Macron has already stated several ideas about the deepening of the EU such as military cooperation, a single intelligence unit, and common asylum policies with single databases (Macron 2017). German Chancellor Merkel has also proposed a more integrated Union, while the, at that time, the chairman of the Social Democratic Party

of Germany (SPD) Martin Schulz has called for the United States of Europe in 2025 (Die Zeit 2017b).

On the other hand, the German government also is taking into consideration that the collapse of the EU by 2040 is a possible scenario, as a magazine has revealed from an internal document of the Ministry of Defence (Der Spiegel 2017: 34–35). How Europe will be shaped will depend mostly on the governments of these two countries, which are recognized as the leaders of the Union.

The result of the Brexit referendum, when the majority voted to leave, was an unexpectedly big hit for the Union. However, the result of the referendum turned the wheel in the opposite direction – to have more support for the EU. Namely, as noted in the previous chapter, citizens have little information about the EU, and they care more about domestic States and politics (Reif and Schmitt 1980), but due to extensive media reporting about the negotiations, citizens can gain more insights about the Union, and how costly leaving of the Union can be and what long-term consequences can occur. The outcome of these developments could be more support for the EU.

De Vries has shown in her study that the public opinion in some EU member States and the UK has changed after Brexit and people became more supportive of the EU after facing possible negative impacts on the country if it leaves the EU (De Vries 2017: 50–51). The results of previous research suggest that media reporting about the possible economic downturn and the costly “divorce” from the EU could have far more negative implications on the UK than it was promoted during the “Leave” campaign.

Evidence of the Eurosceptic policies was seen in the Netherlands and France where right-wing Eurosceptic parties gained very much support, even they lost the elections. The leader of the populist right-wing Party for Freedom Geert Wilders has called also for a referendum to leave the EU – the so-called Nexit. However, such development

was practically unthinkable a decade ago. Their demand was more of the national State, and less of the EU. A similar message was sent during the Austrian presidential elections from the right-wing candidate, and the German AfD was successful in some of the Laender and at the national level during general elections in 2017, by becoming a third strongest party in the Bundestag.

But have all these crises affected the Union? The simple answer is yes. The trust in the European project has decreased, among citizens, and among elites. It helped populist parties, especially the right-wing ones, to gain power, which can be observed in many EU member States and in the European Parliament, where since 2014 two Eurosceptic groups exist – the European Nations and Freedoms Group, and the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group, with a total of 82 MPs. The right wing populist parties should not be perceived as a “single” unit that represents equal stand for all issues. As some studies suggest there is incoherence among them (Falkner and Plattner 2019: 13). This fact eventually weakens their position. An eventual coherence on all issues would make them more vocal and consequently allow them to increase their visibility and have a greater political impact. These parties used the moment of the crisis and responded in their speeches and political program to popular demands. On the other hand, Beichelt perceives all the disputes among different member States as an increase in the democratic quality of the EU (Beichelt 2017: 91).

Yet, the crisis has deepened the integration, since new institutions have been created in order to strengthen the Eurozone (Schimmelfennig 2015a).

The argument of Follesdal and Hix that the EU is too distant from the people (Follesdal and Hix 2006: 536) has changed since the Euro crisis raised interest in EU integration and EU related topics gained importance, while at the same time the public support for

the Union was at its lowest level (Rittberger & Schimmelfennig 2006: 390). “As the crisis evolved from a financial crisis into a sovereign debt crisis and a euro area crisis, citizens also started to assign responsibility to the EU for its actions and inactions” (Hobolt and Wratil 2015: 242). The increased interest of citizens in the EU can be also interpreted as a positive outcome of the crises because it opens the opportunity to have more legitimacy in decision making.

3.4 Public opinion and the EU

There is a decline of trust in European institutions that goes along with the financial, economic and the Euro crisis. There are basically two reasons that explain these developments. The first one is a personal situation. Those affected by the crisis (e.g. unemployment) are more likely to be reluctant to the European project, as explained by the utilitarian approach (Hobolt and Wratil 2015: 240). Secondly, the media had an impact on opinion formation. Extensive media reporting about the crisis caused a turn in public opinion. On the other hand, the media can cause a crisis (Winter and Sarikakis 2015: 146).

As de Vreese and Boomgarden pointed out in their study on public opinion and enlargement, media matters (de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006), as well as the pre-existing attitudes of citizens, which might be deepened by the reporting about the enlargement (Azrout, Van Spanje, and de Vreese 2012). Thus, exposure to media content increases the importance of the issue that is reported about. It also matters how media content is framed and how much media attention is devoted to a certain topic. Framing means “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem

definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman 1993: 52). More precisely, “(f)rames in the news may affect learning, interpretation, and evaluation of issues and events” (de Vreese 2005: 52). Hence, it is important how and what is said, as the media reporting has the ability to steer the audience in a specific direction. Moreover, an issue must be salient. Salience refers to something that is “noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences” (Entman 1993: 53). Public opinion is likely to support certain occurrences or policies if the media reports about that are positive, and vice versa. On the other hand, when there are no extensive media reporting on the certain issue, or the messages are both positive and negative, it is less likely that media reporting will have a significant effect on public opinion (de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006: 430–31). The argument can be extended to other topics as well. In this particular case, it is the EU that has been to a large extent portrayed in a negative sense by the media which affected the public opinion. This is well illustrated in some studies. Sarikakis and Winter have examined the reporting of German-speaking media about the Euro crisis. Interestingly, the authors found out that the focus of media was on Greece and negative reporting, compared to less reporting about States that were also hit by the crisis. On the other hand, the media devoted less attention to the positive news with regard to Greece and the Euro crisis (Winter and Sarikakis 2015: 147–50). This has contributed to a more negative stand of public opinion about the EU.

An oversimplified explanation is that nothing seemed to work and the EU was not able to solve any of the issues. The decline of support for the EU went hand in hand with the news about the crisis in the EU and questioning of the Union, as the following figure shows.

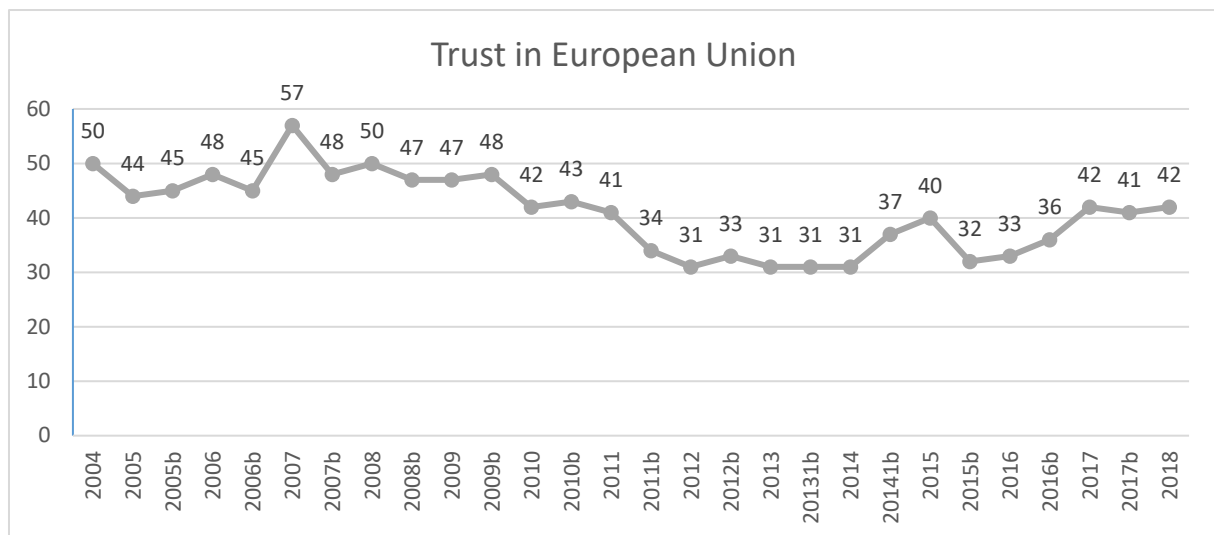


Figure 1: The trust in the European Union. Data used from Standard Eurobarometer 91 from 2019. p. 27.

Figure 1 reveals how the trust in the European Union has changed over time, since the “big bang” enlargement in 2004, until the end of 2018. After the accession of new member States, the support has declined by several percentages, until 2007, when it reached its peak and the trust was 57 percent, but there was a sharp decline of 9 percent in the next observed period. After that, the financial and economic crises started, and the support started to decline gradually. The lowest support was recorded at the beginning of 2012 and it was constant until 2014. This can be explained by the Eurozone crises, which reached its peak in 2011, and when the EU was questioned on a daily basis. The support for enlargement was also at the lowest level during the Eurozone crisis (see Figure 3 in the next subsection). After a short period of growth of trust, the trust in the EU decreased again in 2015 to 32 percent. That was the period of the migration crisis, and when this crisis dominated the news, and the heads of the governments struggled to find a common solution to share the responsibility of the problem. At the end of the observed period, trust in the EU has increased. Part of the explanation for the growth can be led back to Brexit, because the decision of the

majority of British citizens to leave the Union caused more reporting about the Union and how costly leaving of the block could be, while on the other hand, the remaining 27 governments expressed unity towards the UK. Besides the Brexit, there were no major crises in the observed period, and the political situation remained relatively stable. It can be concluded that the Euroscepticism of citizens increases when there is a crisis, which is related to information perceived based on which citizens form their opinion.

The decline of support for the EU and national institutions is well illustrated in some studies. The more the unemployment rate grew, the less the EU citizens were supportive of domestic and European institutions, in particular for the parliaments and executive branches of power (Roth et al. 2013). When the economic crisis started, there has been a decline of support for the EU enlargement process among EU citizens. While the support for the accession of new member States was 53% in 2008, three years later the percentage of citizens who supported the enlargement decreased to 39% percent (Di Mauro and Fraile 2012).

Maier and Rittberger rightly argue that media is shaping the citizens' attitudes towards the enlargement process because the citizens do not have "first - hand experience of politics, whether domestic, European or international", and therefore they "rely on mass media" (Maier and Rittberger 2008: 245). Citizens depend on provided information and the interpretation of the provided information from the media. Thus, for creating public opinion it is important how the media content is framed – in a positive, negative or neutral way. As already stated in the previous chapter, public opinion can be perceived as the reflection of the social and political environment in which people exist. People judge based on information they receive – and most information is received from the media.

The European Union is in a far more difficult position compared to the period of the biggest enlargement rounds. Firstly, the Union has more member States, which makes it more difficult to rule. Secondly, the EU was hit by several crises, and the EU as a project has been questioned on a frequent basis. More concrete, as the crises have continued, the political arena has opened its doors to new political actors. These actors are the foremost right-wing Eurosceptic political parties.

The EU matters have become an important part of the everyday lives of EU citizens and the EU citizens have become more aware of the Union. All the issues the EU coped with have emerged in a relatively short period of time. In fact, the citizens have been confronted with the EU on a daily basis. Such development has increased the pressure from the citizens, and at the same time the Eurosceptic parties have used the momentum to question the existence of the “problem maker.” The traditional political parties failed to explain the advantages of the European Union. The failure of the established pro-European parties opened the space for new “explanatory actors” – the right-wing populist parties who demand more of the nation-State and less of Europe.

3.5 Public opinion and enlargement

When it comes to enlargement, there is a significant decline in public opinion for the further accession of new member States. The following charts illustrate the change in the EU, Germany, France, and the UK from 2008 to 2018. The data used for these graphics are from Standard Eurobarometer. It was used only one report per year.

The data are used from reports where respondents were interviewed in the spring of each year. The years in the graphics refer to periods when fieldwork took place. The question asked was *“What is your opinion on each of the following Statements? Please*

tell me for each Statement, whether you are for it or against it. Further enlargement of the EU to include other countries in future years.” It has to be noted, however, that wording of the questions related to EU enlargement can provide different results (Toshkov et al. 2014: 16). In a special issue of the Eurobarometer about the enlargement from 2006, the question asked was *“Once each of the following countries complies with all conditions set by the European Union, would you be strongly in favour, fairly in favour, fairly opposed or strongly opposed to the accession of each of them to the European Union?”* (European Commission 2006b: 68). The number of respondents favouring enlargement was higher compared to the question when the wording *“Once each of the following countries complies with all conditions set by the European Union”* was missing in the same year. It can be concluded that a more specific question that provides more information to the respondents and which, in this specific case, links conditionality to the EU enlargement is more likely to have higher approval.

The following figure will present the data from the Standard Eurobarometer. It shows the support and opposition towards enlargement in the EU.

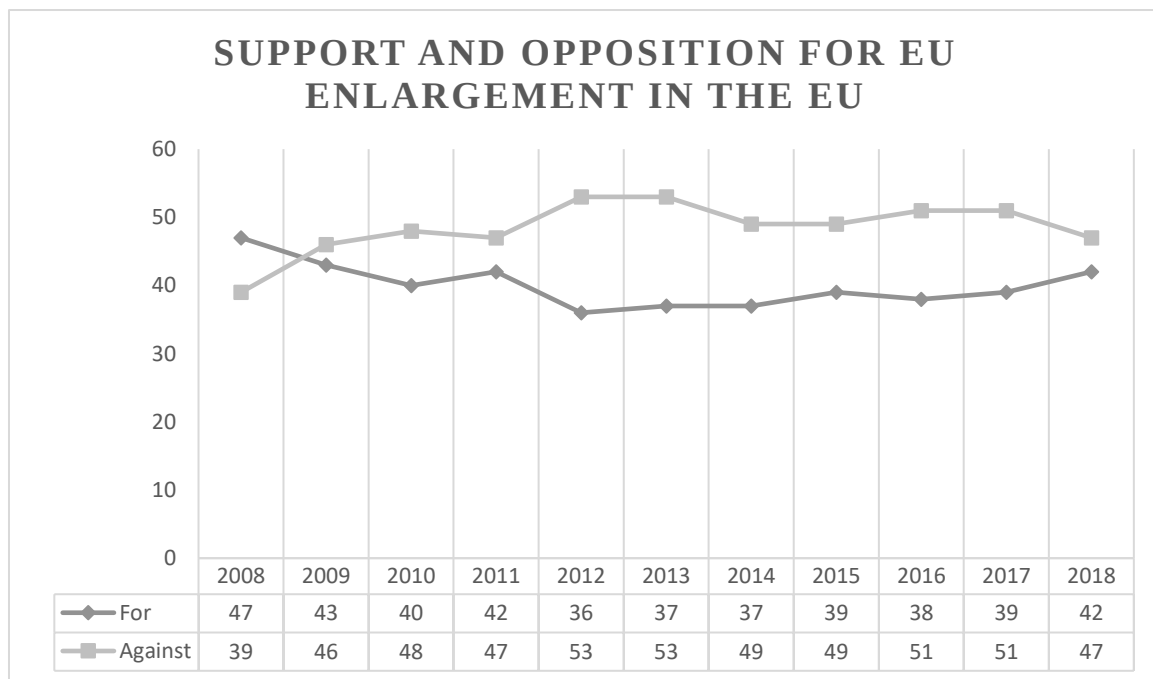


Figure 2: The support and opposition for further EU enlargement at the EU level. The source are Standard Eurobarometer reports 69, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, 83, 85, 87, and 89.

As can be seen from the figure, the support for enlargement at the EU level in 2008 was almost 47 percent, while it started to decrease gradually until 2012, when it was 36 percent and it was the lowest level. The economic crisis was at the peak in this period, when austerity measures were imposed on many of the member States. As the economic situation improved, the support started to increase, but the percentage of those who oppose further accession is below the support rate.

It has to be noted, however, that the rise of support was caused mainly by the new member States, whose citizens were favourable of widening. The results in some of the old member States provide a clearer picture, where the support for enlargement is far below the new member States. The following figures will provide data for the period from 2008 till 2018 for Germany, France, and the UK.



Figure 3: The opposition to further EU enlargement in France, Germany, and the UK. The source are Standard Eurobarometer reports 69, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, 83, 85, 87, and 89.

The data provided in the figure for France, Germany, and the UK show that the reluctance for enlargement existed prior to the crisis. Yet, as the crises started and continued, the support for enlargement decreased, and the opposition towards enlargement increased. This shows a clear trend as the crises continued, and later when the countries and the EU started to recover, the rejection for further accession process has decreased.

The lowest support for enlargement in Germany was noted in 2011 when 17 percent of German citizens favoured enlargement, and at the same time, 76 percent opposed it (European Commission 2011). This was the period when the existence of the EU was questioned on a daily basis. In different words, different statements about the future of the EU were made, and it affected public opinion. This is due to the salience of the issue in the media, where a lot of attention was given to the crisis. The results from the 2011 autumn EU Barometer provide some interesting results. The image of the EU was at its lowest level, and the trust in the EU institutions also reached its lowest

level. According to the report “there is a decline in optimism about prospects for the next 12 months” (European Commission 2011: 20–21). Thus, it can be concluded that the media and citizens’ personal expectations have affected the final results.

As can be seen from the provided data the decline of the support for further enlargement went hand in hand with the crises in the EU (see figure 1), as the EU was presented as an entity unable to solve problems. For example, the German public was exposed to media reporting that the German taxpayers were responsible to cover the costs for the Eurozone crisis, especially when it comes to Greece. There was practically a campaign against Greece in some media with a large circulation, while on the other hand, some Greek media portrayed the German chancellor Angela Merkel as a destroyer of Greece. The whole situation appeared to be very hostile, and as a consequence of the hostility and the media reporting, Greece was used as a benchmark for bad economic performances and for future enlargements.

This is well illustrated by some headlines in the German media with regard to Croatian accession. The title of an article in the German newspaper Bild, with the largest circulation in Europe, was “*Wetten, dass... Kroatien wird das nächste Milliarden-Grab*”¹ where the concern was that Croatia will be the grave for the billions from German taxpayers like in the case of Greece. The online platform of the newspaper *Die Welt* also titled “*EU-Neuling Kroatien – das nächste Griechenland?*”² referring to Croatian poor economic performances and the possibility that Croatia becomes the new Greece – an economic failure. Another example is the online article of the N-TV news channel “*Die letzten Heuler Europas - Wird Kroatien das nächste Griechenland?*”³, again asking whether Croatia will be the new Greece. Each of these articles has the potential to

¹ <http://www.bild.de/geld/wirtschaft/europaeische-union/kroatien-naechstes-milliarden-grab-30506248.bild.html>

² <https://www.welt.de/wirtschaft/article116924733/EU-Neuling-Kroatien-das-naechste-Griechenland.html>

³ <https://www.n-tv.de/wirtschaft/Wo-droht-Europa-sonst-noch-der-finanzielle-Gau-Kroatien-koennte-das-naechste-Griechenland-werden-article15283831.html>

prepare German citizens for potential enlargements, but at the same time it provides the reader already information in the title of the article, or more precisely, these titles of the articles already steer the reader in a specific direction. These articles send the message to the readers in advance that they will pay for the future member States as they have paid for Greece.

Besides the financial risks, as reported by the media, the opinion on enlargement can also be shaped by the performances of the new member States (O'Brennan 2014: 225). The better a new member State performs its role within the Union, it is more likely that the public will support a new member State, and these performances must be visible to the public. Consequently, the stories about the performances of the new member States have to be framed in a positive way.

Still, there is a number of issues in the new member States that can affect the opinion. The very much criticized judicial reform in Poland, the border dispute between Slovenia and Croatia, the Hungarian authoritative government, or the Slovak unwillingness to accept refugees, can have an impact on public opinion with regard to the acceptance of new member States, because these are the issues that occupy a significant share of media reporting.

The better compliance with the EU law in the new member States or the well-functioning of the legislative procedures after the biggest enlargement round on many other questions, as mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, remains unseen by the broader public. The message that appears to media consumers is that some States have to take all the risks, while others use the benefits. This is also a general picture that can be drawn.

3.6 Right-wing populist Eurosceptic parties – The new explanatory factor

3.6.1 The rise of right-wing populist parties

The following subsection will analyse the right-wing populist Eurosceptic political parties and its effect on the EU policy with a focus on the enlargement policy. However, it cannot cover all of the right-wing populist parties in the EU, but rather the work of these parties. In different words, the primary goal is to identify the pattern of the emergence of the mentioned parties during and after the crises. It is argued that they used the salience of the issue with regard to the crises within the EU and started to behave strategically in order to gain support in the elections. That behaviour has resulted in an increased number of members of parliament from the right-wing populist parties, both, at the national and the EU level. Secondly, it is argued that these parties have pushed the boundaries, and some policies like anti-immigration and anti – EU have become more socially acceptable.

The reason to analyse only the right-wing populist parties, and to exclude the left-wing ones, is the type of Euroscepticism these parties represent. While the right-wing parties could be labelled to a large extent as hard Eurosceptic, the leftist is to a large extent soft Eurosceptic. In particular, the left parties' Euroscepticism appears due to different reasons. While they do not neglect the EU, but the neoliberal nature of it, the right-wing parties reject the EU in general (Mayer 2013: 167).

The Euroscepticism refers to a rejection of the EU as the whole, or parts of it, and which can be defined as “a set of practices driven by a multiplicity of ideologies and shaped by a multitude of factors to produce myriad results” (Leruth, Startin, and Usherwood 2017: 4). The definition of hard and soft Euroscepticism is provided by Szczerbiak and Taggart. They define hard Euroscepticism “as principled opposition to the project of European integration as embodied in the EU, in other words, based on

the ceding or transfer of powers to a supranational institution such as the EU” (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2017: 13), and soft Euroscepticism “as when there was not a principled objection to the European integration project of transferring powers to a supranational body such as the EU, but there was opposition to the EU’s current or future planned trajectory based on the further extension of competencies that the EU was planning to make” (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2017: 13).

Thus, the common feature of a large number of right-wing populist parties is the rejection of the Union and the demand for more national sovereignty. The portrayal of the EU as a problem maker was used to strengthen the group cohesion of the right-wing Eurosceptic parties. The group cohesion is most likely achieved by having a common enemy, while the State of need is the second-best way to achieve cohesion (Pollak 2007: 90). This was expressed through statements like “Take back control” which was one of the slogans in the Brexit referendum campaign, or to create a Europe of nations, and similar public statements. Also, during the 2014 electoral campaign for the European Parliament, the anti – EU sentiments were used strategically to attract voters to support the radical right Eurosceptic positions of the parties (Startin 2017: 76).

The right-wing populist Eurosceptic political parties in the European Union are not a new phenomenon. Overall, its presence was, however, less visible prior to the crisis due to the limited support they enjoyed among citizens, and fewer media devotion to these parties. Yet, the crises have changed the political arena, and this fact has contributed to their rise. The crises within the EU have led to increased Euroscepticism. *“This is clearly discernible on a number of levels: the evolution of European public opinion that has become more hostile towards the EU; support for parties opposed to further European integration; an increase in Eurosceptic rhetoric among traditionally*

pro-EU mainstream parties; a rise in the number of Eurosceptic civil society groups; changing (and more challenging) media discourses; and more transnational cooperation among Eurosceptics within EU institutions, notably the European Parliament (EP)” (Brack and Startin 2015: 240).

Decker points as well to the financial and economic crises as the sources of right-wing populism and growing anti – EU sentiments, also among parties that have supported the integration process, and to 2001 terrorist attacks as the source of the anti – Islamic stands of the parties (Decker 2018: 359). In different words, the crises are the fertile ground for populists. Crises cause fears among people, which then are purposively strengthened by the populist parties by using different tools to attract voters. In general, the populist parties are the product of modernization crises (Decker 2018: 356). Others see as well the rise of populism as the outcome of globalization fears (Hirschmann 2017: 48–54), as globalization did not provide the desired results, even the opportunities have arisen (Höll 2000).

Decker identifies three negative consequences of modernization, which are economic, cultural, and political. The economic consequence is the increased wage competition and the polarization between the poor and the rich. The cultural consequence means that the differences between different cultures, which is an outcome of migration, become more visible, and some of the people perceive it as a threat to national identity. The political consequence is that some people feel underrepresented by the established political parties (Decker 2018: 357). All of these consequences have been visible during the crises. The leaders of the Eurosceptic parties have successfully pointed at these differences and provided an explanation of the causes of the differences, which at the end resulted in better election results. The rise of these parties from 2000 until 2016 was 8 percent (Hix 2018: 74).

3.6.2 What are right-wing populist parties?

Prior to looking at their successful appearance in mainstream politics, these parties will be shortly defined. After the definition of the parties, the factors for the success of the right-wing populist parties will be explained. The five factors defined by Grabow and Hartleb will be used for this part.

The Dutch political scientist Cas Mudde defines populism as “an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people” (Mudde 2004: 543).

However, even the definition does not refer directly to right-wing populist parties, Mudde states that populism is mainly associated with the radical right (Mudde 2004: 549). This holds true, because the populism in Europe is mainly a right-wing one, as a global academic study initiated by the British newspaper the Guardian reveals. The study points to the global rise of populism as well, especially in the last five years (The Guardian 2019a).

Another definition is provided by Grabow and Hartleb, who define the right-wing and national populism “as an exclusionary and discriminating mobilisation strategy used by political entrepreneurs to exploit either latent prejudices against strangers or the deep disappointment among parts of the electorate with the performance of the political elite for their own interests, that is, in order to gain public attention, votes, and access to public office for themselves and their followers” (Grabow and Hartleb 2013: 20).

Minkenberg and Perrineau define the radical right as “collection of nationalist, authoritarian, xenophobic, and extremist parties that are defined by the common characteristic of populist ultranationalism” (Minkenberg and Perrineau 2007: 30).

The three definitions differ in their core. While for Mudde populism is an ideology, for Grabow and Hartleb it is a strategy, Minkenberg and Perrineau define it as a collection of parties who share common features. It has to be noted, however, that the starting positions for the definition differ as well. While the definition of Mudde is more general i.e. it refers to populism in general, and points at the division of society, the Grabow and Hartleb point at the strategies of the populist radical right parties to get support and their ideology. Minkenberg's and Perrineau's definition, on the other hand, tells little about the intentions of the RRP's and focuses on common features.

The definitions of Mudde, and Hartleb and Grabow, on the other hand, tell more about the intentions of the parties to gain support from citizens for their policies. Startin points as well at the strategic decisions of right-wing populist parties to change its policies in order to gain support (Startin 2017: 76).

This study perceives the acts of right-wing populist parties also as a strategic choice for the support of the citizens in order to gain support for their policies. It includes also the anti – EU stands of the parties into consideration. It has to be noted, however, that the party's ideological identity has to be considered as well. In other words, the parties are less likely to avoid their ideological scope under which they operate, even they pick sometimes topics that are traditionally "owned" by competing party families. Finally, parties act under what Mudde calls nativism. Nativism refers to "an ideology, which holds that States should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group ("the nation") and that nonnative elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-State" (Mudde 2007: 19). The focus on nativism has increased during the crises within the EU as the calls for the increased role of the nation-States have become louder, as it has become an integral part of the right-wing

parties – a kind of trademark. As already noted in the theoretical chapter, the rise of these parties can be compared to the process of nation formation (Smith 2007: 19).

Hartleb and Grabow identify five explanatory factors in order to understand the success of right-wing populist and nationalist parties.

The first factor is the social and economic progress and change. This factor explains that if a person has been negatively affected by “higher level or cheaper competition” (Grabow and Hartleb 2013: 23), such as an immigrant worker, or at least feels threatened that the social and economic changes might affect his or her life, the person is more likely to support these parties. As Mudde puts it “they seek simple messages” (Mudde 2007: 223). Thus, the politics which appear to be too complex for citizens are picked up by the right-wing populist parties and an oversimplified message is spread by these parties. These parties aim to create a reality, which is to present facts to people that do not always coincide with the truth, but rather represent the “truth” of the right-wing populist parties. It is important to create an impression of a specific situation, rather than present the facts. Findings in a study about the 2014 European elections suggest that voters who were negatively affected by the crisis were more likely to vote Eurosceptic parties. The ones who are less in favour of immigration were more likely to vote for the right-wing parties, and those in favour of immigration were more likely to vote left Eurosceptic parties (Hobolt and de Vries 2016a). A party that is more able to create a specific picture and “sell” it to the voters is more likely to achieve a better result.

The second factor is that the strategic behaviour of Christian democratic and moderate parties have helped the RRP to enter the mainstream political arena and to become acceptable. However, Grabow and Hartleb claim this is only partially true, by naming Austria between 2000 and 2002, and the Netherlands between 2010 and 2012 as the

examples, arguing that the argument “falls much too short” (Grabow and Hartleb 2013: 25). Their argument is that the right-wing populist parties chose topics, both, from the left-wing and the right-wing parties to gain the support. Thus, the claim is that these parties are filling a gap that has emerged when the, for example, social democratic parties have moved more towards the political centre (Grabow and Hartleb 2013), as the examples from the Austrian Freedom Party (Heinisch and Hauser 2016), or Front National in the Presidential elections in 2012 suggest (Mayer 2013). To a large extent, it is the targeted voter group of social democratic and leftist parties. The typical voter of the right-wing party is male, and with a lower education level (Treib 2014: 1550).

A significant reason for this factor is immigration. Thus, if immigration becomes an issue in the media, it is more likely that “the populists—who fuel those debates with xenophobic propaganda and the exploitation of prejudices—will benefit from the growing discomfort with immigration among segments of voters” (Grabow and Hartleb 2013: 30). As the above-mentioned findings in the study of Hobolt and de Vries suggest, immigration is an important issue and can affect the voters depending on their attitudes towards immigration. Fedders, for example, links the electoral success of the German Alternative for Germany (AfD) with immigration. Their strict position on immigration has ensured them significant media coverage and the party has become recognizable mainly because of that fact (Fedders 2016: 165). The anti-immigration policy is an essential part of right-wing populist parties, as examples from several European countries show (Grabow and Hartleb 2013: 31–32; Hirschmann 2017). The migration crisis in 2015 gave new fuel to right-wing populist Eurosceptic parties. The salience of the issue in the public gave these parties the opportunities to adjust and restate their positions on immigration. This eventually led to the electoral success of the AfD in the 2017 federal elections when the party entered Bundestag, as findings of

a study suggest that the AfD voters are against migration (I. Bieber, Roßteutscher, and Scherer 2018: 449). It was also an essential part of the British Brexit supporters during the 2016 referendum when immigration was an important issue in the campaign. European integration is an additional explanation in the second factor. There are two reasons to describe this. The first one is one of the EU as a “wholesale” project of national sovereignty, and the second one is the EU as a bureaucratic project that does not care about the needs of the people (Grabow and Hartleb 2013: 32). The above-mentioned definition of populism provided by Mudde suits well to explain this factor. The right-wing populists strategically promote the politics of divisions within the society in which the decision-makers are accused of being ignorant towards the needs of the people. This factor has been present to a large extent during the crises in the EU, when the EU has been blamed as a problem maker, rather than problem solver, and when the existence of the Union has been questioned on a regular basis by the representatives of right-wing populist parties. When it comes to EU enlargement, an analysis of the election manifestos of Eurosceptic parties in the 2014 European elections shows that right-wing hard Eurosceptic parties tend to oppose further enlargement of the EU, but also some of the left-wing Eurosceptic parties. On the other hand, right-wing soft Eurosceptic parties tend to support the enlargement process (Kaniok and Hloušek 2016).

The third factor is the institutional context, which links the success and failure of the parties with the electoral system. Thus, the parties are more likely to be elected if the threshold in the domestic political system enables parties to win seats during the elections (Grabow and Hartleb 2013: 33).

The fourth factor is public awareness which links the media exposure of the populist right-wing parties with their success (Grabow and Hartleb 2013: 35). This means that

exposure in the public matter because the more a party is present in the media, the bigger the opportunity to spread the desired message to a broader audience. Mudde suggests that whether the reporting about the parties is negative or positive does not matter, because “any publicity is good publicity” (Mudde 2007: 252). Indeed, in general, the media reporting could not be described as positive about the right-wing populist parties, but the extensive reporting about the negativities opened the space for the right-wing parties to be heard. In different words, populists use the media as a stage to spread their message. The media are, therefore, essential for populists (Moffitt 2016: 49–62). Moreover, the importance of social media has to be considered as well, because the members of the right-wing populist parties use these channels to circumvent the traditional media to spread their messages. Traditional media serve as a “filter” of information. They collect and interpret the information prior to publishing. The audience receives the news as a short version of the available information and often interpreted in a way that is not intended by those who try to spread the message. In short, when using the new media and social networks, the right-wing populist parties chose what messages to send and how to interpret it. Additionally, there is an increased number of media that is controlled and used by the right wing populist parties for promoting their policies. In fact, people tend to follow media that match their preferences, and on the other hand avoid media that they believe does not present the facts. The outcome is one-sided information, embedded in an ideological cover that suits a specific ideology (Hirschmann 2017: 202–9).

The fifth factor creates a link between political leaders with electoral success. Thus, a strong charismatic leader is an important factor that contributes to mobilizing citizens to vote for a party (Grabow and Hartleb 2013: 36). Even this factor focuses on single leaders, the success of AfD in Germany does not rely on just one recognizable person,

but rather on more than one (Panreck 2019: 31). The roles of Alexander Gauland, Björn Höcke, Beatrix von Storch, Alice Weidel, and Jörg Meuthen have to be considered as well because it is difficult to identify a single member of the party that has been recognized as the face of AfD. It is rather the aggregation of all these people. The argument of an important figure does not hold true in every case. For example, after the leader of the Austrian Freedom Party Jörg Haider left the party, and formed a new one, the FPÖ lost some of its support, in the beginning, yet later the party regained the votes it has lost. On the other hand, the Pim Fortyn List disappeared after the assassination of the leader (van Holsteyn 2018: 1370), and the PVV of Geert Wilders is a single member party (Decker 2018: 363). Thus, it is important to look from case to case, and this cannot be understood as a general rule.

The right-wing Eurosceptic parties can well be described as an explanatory factor. It refers to the ability of the right-wing populist parties to use the fears of the people and to make it public in order to capitalize on these fears in elections. In other words, the right-wing populist parties present themselves as the “voice of the people” and demand that the will of the people should be represented. The logic is simple. The parties use, for example, public opinion polls to identify the opinion of the people, and then make these opinions part of their policies. An example that supports this claim is the question of the support for further enlargement of the Union and the German AfD. During the 2014 European elections, the party wrote in their election manifesto that the German citizens should be asked in a referendum whether they support further widening of the Union (Alternative für Deutschland 2014: 11). It has to be considered that the support for further EU enlargement in Germany is among the lowest in the EU, as it was presented in the first section of the chapter. Later, in 2018 the AfD faction in German Bundestag has asked in an inquiry the executive government whether they are aware

of the public opinion polls regarding this question and whether they aim to organize a referendum. The answer of the government regarding the question about the awareness of the polls was rather vague, without a clear answer, while pointing at the high support rates in the Western Balkan States. For the second question regarding the referendum, the response of the government was that the German constitution does not foresee holding a referendum regarding EU enlargement (Deutscher Bundestag 2018). The avoidance of a clear answer from the German government regarding the polls shows the constraining effect of the party. It could open the path to a new pressure once the topic becomes a salient one, as in case of a debate about granting candidate status to Bosnia and Herzegovina or other Western Balkan States because the national parliaments of each member State are formally entitled to vote for granting a membership status to an applicant State. Furthermore, in the 2019 election programme for the European elections, AfD included the question of the referendum again (Alternative für Deutschland 2019: 9). Without to make any predictions about the outcome of the enlargement policies, this example shows how populist parties operate. They tend to choose topics that appear to be unfavourable to the ruling parties and try to make them public in order to gain public support. Yet, the chances to achieve a better result in these cases increases when the issue is salient. It means that a certain topic has to be represented in the public, and has to be debated. The more a topic is present in the public, the more it appears to be important. Or in different words, parties choose topics they believe could bring an advantage in terms of seats (Marks and Hooghe 2009: 19). It follows the Mudde definition of populism which refers to the people versus the corrupt elites and that the politics should be an expression of the general will (Mudde 2004: 543). Traditional parties, on the other hand, tend to avoid topics they believe could divide the party (Marks and Hooghe 2009:

19). In short, the populist parties look at polls or other sources of information about the opinion of the people in order to identify the problems and use them as part of the policies. It is important to note that these parties must have a distinct position with regard to salient issues which is different compared to other parties. That is the way to be recognized in order to increase their visibility. Visibility is one of the key elements for political parties because it is the visibility that enables political parties to present their policies to potential voters. This is also an issue that could pose a threat to populist parties. As they increasingly become part of mainstream politics, they are expected to go beyond the single issue policies they usually represent. In different words, there is a pressure to adopt positions in policy fields which they would rather avoid, but their supporters are expecting them to provide an explanation.

The right-wing populism has entered the main political arena. With its public presence, the right-wing populist parties are establishing themselves as an alternative to the traditional parties. This shows that the boundaries of the political programs and rhetoric of these parties have been pushed. What was practically unthinkable in the 1980s, the 1990s, and even the early 2000s, has become a reality. This is well illustrated by numerous examples, of which four will be mentioned.

While in 1982 the Dutch Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) criticized the Centre Party (CP) for stating “The Netherlands is full. Stop immigration”, in today’s times this is a frequent topic in public debates (Mudde 2016: 24), and it is a topic on which, more or less, all European right-wing populist parties build their agendas as examples from above suggest. Or to put it differently, this topic is not shocking anymore, and it has become a part of public debates, also among some traditional parties. The anti-immigration stand is not an exclusively right-wing issue, but rather a topic that has become a part of policies of a number of traditional parties.

The second example is the 2002 French Presidential election, when the radical right-wing politician, and at that time, the head of the political party Front National, Jean-Marie Le Pen has made it to the second round. In the end, Le Pen was not elected as the President of France, but the fact that he made it to the second round was received with a big concern in France, and outside of France as well (The Guardian 2002), even Le Pen got only nearly 18 percent of the votes in the second round, and Jacques Chirac won bit more than 82 percent of the votes (The Economist 2002). Only 15 years later, Le Pen's daughter Marine, and his successor as the chair of Front National, made it unsurprisingly into the second round of the Presidential elections. She received nearly 34 percent of the votes and lost to Emmanuel Macron, a pro – European President, who based his campaign to a large extent on European topics. The better result in 2017 of the Front National candidate was not a surprise anymore. The Macron win was portrayed as a big win of the EU, yet it was often overlooked that the Front National achieved an impressive result. This is because of the success of the Front National to own an issue. That is the ability to use strategically topics which might be unpopular among citizens and to raise these issues in the public in order to gain more support in the elections. Or as Mudde explains it in his definition the party divides the society into two distinctive groups “us” the people versus them “the elites” (Mudde 2004: 543). This is the strength of the right-wing populist parties – to create divisions within the society. This is also visible from the historic development of the party when the party was Euro friendly by supporting the EU economic integration process with rather limited success, while their position later changed due to the belief of better chances to have more support in the elections (Startin 2015). Thus, the Front National has become one of the main constraints to the traditional political parties. Furthermore, it is the party with the most Eurosceptic radical right members in the European Parliament in the period 2014-

2019, and at the same time the strongest French political party in that body. This is a prime example of the pushed boundaries and opened the mainstream political arena to the far-right political parties.

Thirdly, the example from the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) shows how the right-wing political parties entered the mainstream, and how the political climate changed in terms that parties that appeared to be unwanted. When this party got 27% of the votes in 1999, the whole country was pressured by other EU member States in order to prevent the participation of the party in the government. This was not a successful undertaking, since the party did join the government in 2000, and the EU imposed sanctions on Austria because the FPÖ joined the government. The sanctions were announced by the Portuguese Presidency and included isolation of Austria as long the FPÖ is a member of the executive government. The sanctions foresaw the avoidance of any bilateral contacts with Austrian officials, the lack of support for Austrian candidates who run for offices in international organizations, and the meetings with Austrian ambassadors will take place only on a technical level (Pernthaler and Hilpold 2000: 105).

Less than two decades later the Austrian Freedom Party has again entered the executive coalition government in 2017 together with the conservative Austrian People's Party (ÖVP). Yet, the voices to criticize the country for its new governing party are silenced, and there is no initiative to sanction the country. As the political climate has changed it is less likely that an agreement about sanctions among the member States is possible, even if some governments in member States, like the Hungarian, present themselves far more radical compared to FPÖ, and as the initiative to impose sanctions on Poland shows.

The fourth example is Alternative for Germany (AfD), a party that started its political life as a soft Eurosceptic party rejecting the Euro, the common currency, has continued its political life as an Islamophobic and anti-immigration party, and a party that pursues a revisionist politics with regard to German role in World War 2. The Head of the party Alexander Gauland stated that Germany must be proud of the achievements of German soldiers in the two world wars (Die Zeit 2017a). With the German World War 2 history, statements made by a representative of a party that is elected in the Bundestag were unthinkable only a decade ago. Yet, the statement he made at the beginning of September 2017 did not cause any damage to the party in the elections three weeks later when the party got more than 12 percent of votes, which is an increase of 8 percent compared to 2013 when AfD did not manage to get elected into the parliament.

Thus, the policies and Statements and the acceptance in the political life, in the case of the Austrian Freedom Party, of the above-mentioned parties show how the boundaries have been pushed, and some topics entered the mainstream. These parties and policies have become more socially acceptable. Pushing the boundaries is an essential element of the right-wing populist parties. This could have negative democratic effects. As the public statements and policies of the right-wing parties become more socially acceptable, it becomes “normal”. Or in different words, it is nothing unusual. There is the danger that right-wing populist parties could try to push the boundaries further in order to get recognized. After the hostile messages, it is difficult to imagine what the new policies could lead. An additional effect is that some mainstream parties enter the Eurosceptic arena, and use topics that appear to be owned by the right-wing parties. The move to the right of the traditional parties reduces the scope of the right-wing ones, which opens the space to pursue a more radical

politics. Such a development would further undermine the democratic order of the EU and its member States.

Right-wing populist Eurosceptic parties could be described as reactionist. The strategic nature of these parties is to react when some issues with significant public attention occur i.e. to raise an issue and to provide an “alternative” explanation or solution when the members of the parties assume that the reaction could result in a better approval rate or in elections. These proposed “solutions” sometimes do not fit into the legal framework of their native countries, yet they continue to pursue such a policy in order to pursue “the will of people”. The above-mentioned example of the AfD proposal to organize a referendum for further EU enlargement is such an issue, even the German constitution does not foresee referendums on EU enlargement.

3.7 The right-wing populism and EU enlargement

To come to the question in the title of the work in which it asks whether the internal crisis is a hurdle for the EU accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The short answer is yes. Thus, the work starts with the assumption that the internal crises within the EU have affected the enlargement policy, and that the right-wing Eurosceptic parties have contributed to that affection. It did not, however, stop the widening policy, but it did slow it down. So, a question arises on how the right-wing populist parties have contributed to this development.

First of all, the electoral success of the right-wing Eurosceptic parties in the member States and in the EU Parliament, especially in 2014, has increased the visibility of these parties in the public. The increased visibility allowed the parties to spread their messages successfully. These messages were to blame the national governments and

the EU for not being able to cope with crises (Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese 2017), and on the other hand to exploit the negative stands and the fears of the population towards the EU and other topics of relevance for the citizens, like immigration, or Islam, or to combine all the topics and to blame the EU for an increased immigration and “Islamisation” of the member States (Mayer 2013: 167–68). Indeed, the question of Islamization could become an issue in the future for Bosnia and Herzegovina and other States from the region. Islam is frequently used by the right-wing populist parties as a topic to raise fears among citizens from the Islamization of Europe. Following the pattern of the right-wing populist parties to use topics that are usually avoided by the mainstream parties to attract citizens for their policies, one can expect populists to raise this topic in case of Bosnia and Herzegovina because most Bosnian citizens are Muslims. The AfD Faction of German Bundestag has already raised the question of Islam in an inquiry to the Government by asking whether the Government fears the Islamization of Europe for Muslim majority States in the region such as Bosnia, Kosovo and Albania, and a great percentage of Muslims in Northern Macedonia (Deutscher Bundestag 2018). Because the enlargement was not a salient topic, the inquiry did not become a topic in public discussions. However, it is likely that the right wing populist parties will expose this topic to create an advantage in the electoral process when the enlargement policy becomes salient.

Besides Islamization, another topic with the potential to become an issue is whether Bosnian accession would raise the terrorism threat in the EU. From the Balkans, around 950 persons between 2012 and 2016 travelled to Syria and Iraq. From Bosnia, the number of persons who travelled to Syria and Iraq in the above-mentioned period is 240, including women and children. In the same period, 70 persons from Bosnia were killed, and 56 returned (Azinović 2017: 10). The author compares Belgium and

Bosnia and Herzegovina to demonstrate whether there is a bigger terrorist threat in Bosnia compared to other Western European States. He applies the total number of Muslims in both countries as the base for a calculation to illustrate the radicalisation and the recruitments. His result shows that one in 1552 Muslims are radicalised in Belgium, while in Bosnia there is one in 7370. Hence, he concludes that there is a nearly 5 times higher chance for a person to be radicalised in Belgium than in Bosnia (Azinović 2017: 9–10). An eventual membership would not increase the risk of terrorism compared to other Western European States. This is also a result of the work of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina that is actively involved in the campaign against the radicalisation. Furthermore, Bosnia was the first State in the region of Western Balkans that amended the Criminal Law in order to define fighting in other States as a criminal act. Based on this Law, several persons have been convicted because of their involvement in Syria and Iraq, and some of ethnic Serbs who fought in East Ukraine as the part of the Russian paramilitary forces.

The right-wing populist Eurosceptic parties have also contributed to changing the stands of the population towards the EU. Thus, there is a link between public opinion and the right-wing populist parties. As the findings of some studies suggest, there is a link between the exposures of certain media content with the success of political parties (Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese 2017: 1; Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart 2007). The more a certain topic that is favourable for the right-wing populist parties appears in the media, the more likely is that the parties will have greater support. In short, the right-wing parties have proven to possess the ability to be an “explanatory” factor who tells the people what is wrong, and who is to blame.

Secondly, the rise of the right-wing parties has become a constraint for the governmental political parties in the member States and for the EU institutions. This is

also connected to the visibility of the parties. As elected parties in the parliament, it gave them the new potential to raise the issues in the parliamentary debates and in the public. The role of these parties could be described as a spoiler. Thus, if it was easier to reach an agreement between the traditional parties prior to the crisis, in recent years it has become more difficult because the traditional parties must put more effort to explain its intentions and conducts to the citizens. For example, the German parliamentary parties have always been strongly pro – European, also during the Eurozone crisis (Wimmel 2012: 33). Yet, as Münkler predicts, the election of the AfD in the Bundestag in the 2017 elections will cause that the executive must always look at the political right before making decisions, and Germany could become a “lame duck” in European matters. He states as well that the success of Front National in France has already clearly reduced the scope of the French government in European politics (Münkler 2017: 114).

Thirdly, the strong anti-European stand of the right-wing populist Eurosceptic parties, which was clearly stated during the crises, and which contributed to their success, made the EU and its member States more cautious when it comes to enlargement policies. Raising the question of enlargement in times of crisis would have led eventually to an increased anti-EU sentiment, which would give new fuel to the Eurosceptic parties to increase their visibility and to pursue a stronger anti-EU politics. Yet, the enlargement policy has continued on a technical level, but more clear statements of the officials were missing. This was also observable in the acts of the European Council due to missing enlargement agenda with a special devotion to Western Balkans (Elena 2019). After the 2003 Thessaloniki summit, the first summit on Western Balkans was organized 15 years later in 2018 in Sofia during the Bulgaria Presidency (European Council 2018b) while in 2003 and 2004 seven enlargement

summits regarding CEEC enlargement were organized (Puntscher Riekmann 2016: 216). The party landscape in the parliaments of the member States is reflected in the EU politics of the States. The refusal of France and Netherlands to start the accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania in 2018 (Politico 2018b) can be also understood as the expression of the constraints within these countries. Namely, as already mentioned during the 2017 Presidential elections in France the Front National candidate won 34 percent of the votes. During the parliamentary elections in the same year, the result of Front National was rather moderate, with 8 seats won, which, however, was an increase of 6 seats compared to 2012 elections, and the best result in history. The results in the parliamentary elections in France should not be perceived as a massive decline of the support for Front National within a month after the presidential elections, but rather an expression of the French majoritarian electoral system. In a proportional electoral system, the results would have looked different, with the Front National at 13 percent of the votes as polls suggest (Poll of Polls 2017), which in practice would mean around 75 seats in the lower house of the French Parliament. The limited result in the general elections is thus explained by the above mentioned third factor i.e. the legal framework did not allow for greater success in national elections.

After the 2017 parliamentary elections in the Netherlands, the right-wing populist Freedom Party (PVV) led by Geert Wilders has become the second strongest party in the country in which the question of identity has been the dominant theme in the campaign (van Holsteyn 2018: 1366). Both of these political parties express strong anti-EU sentiments, and both of these parties have called for Frexit and Nexit, following the term Brexit, which describes the decision of Britain to leave the EU. In both of these

countries the right-wing populist parties represent a strong constraint with regard to EU integration policies in general, and in particular on EU enlargement.

Finally, the rise of the right-wing Eurosceptic parties has pushed also some of the traditional parties to take a more Eurosceptic, or an anti-immigration stand (Topaloff 2017: 63). The awareness of the mainstream political parties with regard to the increased Euroscepticism among the citizens has created pressure to adjust to the preferences of the voters. This also eventually led to putting the enlargement agenda at the bottom of the priority list.

This subsection made a short overview of the right-wing populist parties, which emerged in the main political arena after the crises had started. The extensive media reports about the crises have enabled the parties to strategically use the anti – EU sentiment in order to increase their visibility and to spread their messages in order to gain support. The strategy proved to be a winning one, since the number of members of national parliaments, and the EU parliament, has increased. The increase in the number of mandates has created a constraint to the traditional parties, who are under greater pressure. This is also due to the ability of the right-wing populist parties to exploit an issue and to make it public.

3.8 Chapter conclusions

The chapter started with an overview of the enlargement fatigue after the 2004 enlargement. It was argued that after the biggest widening there was a reluctance for the next expansion rounds, due to affected group dynamics within the Union. The increased number of member States was not followed by an adequate institutional setup after French and Dutch citizens rejected the proposed European constitution in

referendums in 2005. The results were more State-centric policies, and at the same time differences between the new and the old member States have become visible. It led to slowing down the decision making processes, but as some studies suggest, in the end, it did not affect the number of adopted laws. Hence, the increased number of member States has affected the group dynamics, however, it was not proved that the EU is unmanageable. The affected group dynamics has become more pronounced after the crises started. The State-centric policies have also continued after the crises have started, even the EU has become more integrated. The chapter then followed by public opinion and how public opinion is formed. The argument used is that public opinion is mainly formed based on information people receive from the media. It continued by emphasizing the effects of the crises on public opinion. In other words, the media have reported extensively about the crises, and these reports have caused a negative public opinion about the EU and EU enlargement in particular. In short, in order to affect public opinion, it matters what was said in the media, how often was it said and how it is said. It continued with a short overview of public opinion in the EU and in three member States – France, Germany, and the UK.

Since the crises started, the EU as an institution has faced many challenges. The existence of the EU was questioned and its ability to cope with the issues and Euroscepticism increased. This was to a large extent due to right-wing populist parties, because these parties have used the crises to spread their message, which eventually led to a better result in the elections. The right-wing Eurosceptic parties have moved from the political invisibility into the main political arena, and have become a constraint for the traditional Euro friendly parties.

The following chapter is devoted to the EU enlargement policy in times of crisis.

4 The effects of the crises on the EU and member States enlargement policies

4.1 Chapter introduction

The primary aim of this work is to look at how the financial, economic and Eurozone crises have affected the EU enlargement policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is argued that the crises have caused a policy re-order that moved the enlargement at the end of the priority list. Second, the role of the three member states is used to examine their impact on the enlargement process. The argument is that the member States have revived the enlargement process. This chapter looks at the enlargement policy in times of crises. In particular, the primary aim of this chapter is to present the role of the EU institutions and the enlargement policy as the outcome, which is affected by the internal crises. Secondly, it looks at how the enlargement has gained importance as the consequence of the appearance of global competitors which the EU perceives as threats for its interests.

It was argued in the theoretical chapter that the main political actors are the member States and that the EU institutions represent the interests of the member States. However, not all member States have equal leverage, nor all member States prioritise the enlargement policies, while others do. The enlargement of the EU is one of the policies where some States express more interests than others.

This work looks at two periods of the enlargement policy of the EU. The first phase should be perceived from the beginnings of the crises until the end of 2017. Due to the previous enlargement rounds in 2004, 2007, and in 2013, and the crises in this period, there was less attention devoted to Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, there was less devotion from the EU institutions, which was also expressed by the Head of the Commission Juncker, who has announced to take a break from the widening process. Yet, there have been initiatives from the member States in 2014, most notably the

German initiative that is called the Berlin Process, and the German and UK led initiative for a new approach towards Bosnia. These initiatives have affected the aspiring states, but they did not represent a general change in the enlargement policy of the EU. The aim was to steer the candidate and potential candidate countries to fulfil the accession criteria and to confirm the commitment of the EU to integrate new members. Although the initiatives have resulted in an increased interest among the aspiring States, it did not cause an increased interest at the level of EU institutions. In 2014 these policies did not become a priority at the EU level. In particular, the two policies from the member states in 2014 were proposed outside the EU framework and were led by member states. Furthermore, only the British and German initiative regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina has become an official EU policy in 2014. The Berlin process policies have become visible in the 2018 Enlargement Strategy.

The EU enlargement policy will be analysed through the External incentives model, which analyses the effects of the enlargement policy.

Thus, following the claim that the member States lead the agenda in enlargement policies, it is argued that when a powerful member States initiate a policy, it is more likely that the initiated policy becomes a part of the official policy of the EU institutions. In order to support that claim, the two policies initiated in 2014 by the member States with regard to enlargement will show how the Berlin process and the German and UK approach have become formal policies of the EU. In different words, it was the member States which have “restarted” the enlargement process towards Bosnia and Herzegovina and other Western Balkans States. Furthermore, as the EU level is member States dependent, the division among the member States harms the accession process and the credibility of the EU.

In this section, the roles of the three countries are analysed. Firstly, Germany as the initiator of a new approach towards Western Balkans, and in the second case the together with the UK towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. Secondly, the UK as a role will be used as the co-initiator of the new approach towards Bosnia, and as a firm supporter of the enlargement process. Moreover, the UK left the block after the 2016 referendum, yet the official policy remains a support for enlargement. Thirdly, the role of France will be explained as a country that unwillingly has confirmed the enlargement process in all rounds. These were also the big States in European politics, which have a greater impact on EU policies compared to other countries.

4.2 EU Enlargement Policy and the Crises

When in July 2014 the, at that time, nominee for the head of the European Commission Jean Claude Juncker announced that in his five years term there will be no further enlargement, but the accession negotiations would continue, it was for some of the candidate countries rather disappointing. Serbia was hoping that they would have the chance to join the Union within that period or a year later (Euractiv 2014). The explanation of the new Commission head was:

“I fully recognise that this has been a historic success that brought peace and stability to our continent. However, the Union and our citizens now need to digest the addition of 13 Member States in the past ten years. The EU needs to take a break from enlargement so that we can consolidate what has been achieved among the 28. This is why, under my Presidency of the Commission, ongoing negotiations will continue, and notably the Western Balkans will need to keep a European perspective, but no further enlargement will take place over the next five years” (Juncker 2014).

The focus of the Commission led by Juncker was to stabilise the Union after the crises and to consolidate the economies in the EU. Furthermore, his announcement can be also understood as a confirmation of the affected group dynamics within the EU that impacted the widening policy. As a result, the enlargement process was pushed aside. The statement was made shortly after the EU elections in which the right-wing Eurosceptic parties have achieved the best results in the European Parliament so far. Nearly one in three MEPs was a member of a Eurosceptic party including also the left-wing Eurosceptic parties (Treib 2014: 1544–45). However, the number of 89 members from hard Eurosceptic right-wing parties (moderate and radical) (Treib 2014) represented a constraint to the newly elected Commission and its work. As already noted in the second chapter, these parties have proven to have the ability to raise issues in public and gain attention for their policies. The greater number of them increased their visibility even more. The increased visibility raised the potential to make unpopular policies public and to gain support for own policies. Moreover, the decreasing public opinion about further enlargement of the EU became an additional constraint on the EU as the citizens have become more interested in EU politics. The EU, on the other hand, had to paint a more positive image of itself after the rise of Euroscepticism.

The enlargement policy was practically “on hold”. This is well illustrated by the fact that the High Commissioner for Foreign Policy Federica Mogherini made her first visit to Balkans in 2017 – 30 months after her appointment (O’Brennan 2018: 3). The reduced devotion of the European Union regarding the widening caused a decreased visibility of the Union in the potential member States. The visibility of the EU policies is an important “input” for the potential member states that signals the aspiring countries that the European Union commits to its promises and policies. Simultaneously, the

increased State-centric policies in the European Union have weakened the EU because the EU is only strong or weak as the member States provide them with powers and support the proposed policies. The outcome of such a development is weaker EU policy. The different interests of member States and the complicated decision-making process are among the main difficulties to be more efficient in foreign policy because the decision-making processes require more time for adoption and need to make compromises that could weaken the Union. Common positions in foreign policy have become a goal of the Union since the 1970s, which have been pronounced in the later decades as well. The idea was to speak with one voice (Luif 2014: 289–91). The unique stand is more emphasized in questions related to enlargement because the accession of a new member States requires a unanimous decision. The focus of the EU foreign policy has shifted to other regions, but the internal problems have prevented the EU to have a more active approach towards Balkans, and on Bosnia in particular. The changed focus to other States indicates that the European Union considered the devotion of Western Balkans to become full members as given.

The key dates presented at the EU Delegation website in Bosnia and Herzegovina show the absence of a more active approach towards BiH. While there was since the Thessaloniki Summit in 2003 practically a key date in each year in formalized relations between the EU and Bosnia, from 2011 to 2014 there were no key dates. It was 2015 when the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) came into force. After that period, the key dates indicated a more active EU approach (Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina 2017). In the State of the Union speeches from 2010 to 2013 the Juncker predecessor José Manuel Barroso did not mention the enlargement of the Western Balkans. The focus of the Commission was to tackle the effects of the crises and to strengthen the EU, and as time has passed the threat of

populism and Euroscepticism have become of greater concern (Barroso 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013). In words of Barroso: “It is only natural that, over the last few years, our efforts to overcome the economic crisis have overshadowed everything else” (Barroso 2013: 7). Thus, the enlargement agenda was clearly not on the priority list of the EU institutions.

The increased Euroscepticism and the enlargement fatigue from previous accession rounds have impacted the EU policy. More precisely, the rising Euroscepticism has constrained the EU policy making. This was also evident in the second and third year of the Juncker Commission.

In his State of the Union Addresses in 2015 and 2016, Jean Claude Juncker did not devote attention to enlargement, but rather mentioning the bilateral issues such as Serbia and Kosovo, and the need to implement reforms. Yet, the enlargement perspective for the Western Balkan States was not mentioned in the speeches (Juncker 2015; 2016). In different words, the enlargement question was not of great importance for the EU. This has changed in the following two years. The change of the policy is, however, not connected by the disappearance of the enlargement fatigue or the Euroscepticism, but rather as the necessity to do something about the Balkans. The region came again under the radar after the migration crisis started, as it was mentioned in the State of the Union Speeches in 2015 and 2016. In 2017 the EU has become aware of the possible negative outcomes if the EU remains absent from the region. The question of enlargement was more emphasized in 2017 as the strategic goal of the EU to expand in Western Balkans (Juncker 2017). The policy shift which brought the enlargement back on the agenda was not a change of the political climate in the Union towards a more acceptable enlargement policy, but rather a strategic

decision to preserve other actors to exert influence in the Western region, and the perceived increased instability in the region.

This can be well explained by the logic of consequences (March and Olsen 1998: 949). An actor makes cost-benefit calculations and weighs possible options, and chooses the one that is perceived to suit best the interests of the actor. The perceived alternative of non – acting in Bosnia in particular, and in Western Balkans in general, is assumed to be more threatening to the EU than to remain passive as it was in previous years. There are three explanations for the policy shift. The first and second can be seen as external factors, while the third is an internal explanatory factor that is connected to the member States.

Firstly, the emergence of the new powers in the region, which are by the Union and its member States perceived as competitors that undermine the efforts of the EU to transform the region into functioning democracies. The High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini pointed out that: “I have seen in the Western Balkans in these days much more than ever before a region exposed to different layers of challenges and tensions,” and underlying that Balkans could become a “chessboards where the big power game can be played.” Furthermore, she called the concern as profound (Euractiv 2017).

In particular, it is the Russian and Chinese presence that has contributed to the concern, and the stability of the Balkans (Euractiv 2018). The assumption of the Union officials is that if the EU is not active in the region, the role will be taken by other States (Juncker 2017). The announcement from the speeches and other public statements was reflected in the 2018 Enlargement strategy when the Commission declared that the membership is “geostrategic investment in a stable, strong and united Europe” (European Commission 2018a: 1). The former director of the Directorate-General for

Enlargement in the European Commission Pierre Mirel notes that in case of any instability in the region that threatens the EU, there is a danger of a “sudden rush towards early membership”, like in case of Greece, which would then lead to derogation of values and principles, as in cases of Hungary and Poland (Mirel 2018b: 7).

Besides Russia and China, German officials underline the role of Arabic countries as well (Roth 2018), yet it is argued in this work that the role from the Arabic countries is less significant compared to the two mentioned countries. Western Balkans is geographically surrounded by EU member States, and any instability in the region would affect the EU as well. The role of Russia in Bosnia and Herzegovina is mainly connected to the Bosnian entity Republic of Srpska, which is used to exert influence in the country (Bechev 2017: 72–74) and to prevent it to join NATO and the EU.

The Chinese interest, on the other hand, is of economic nature. Yet, the country does not always stick to the procedures defined by the EU. This was evident in the case of the Chinese loan to build a new thermo block in the coal power plant in Tuzla, which is one of the largest infrastructural projects in post-war Bosnia. The EU criticized the Bosnian authorities to breach the State Aid Law because the entity of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is the guarantor of the loan (Euractiv 2019a), but the authorities have continued to pursue the project. Moreover, the role of China in the region has already been described as to use Balkan States as “Trojan horses” (Politico 2018a), meaning that the countries once enter the EU could be used by China to exert its influence within the Union. The roles of Russia and China will be elaborated in more detail in chapter 5.

Before crises, when the EU exerted significant pressure on domestic political elites, the Union was an agenda-setter in domestic politics. This was observable for example

in the human rights issue regarding the Sejdić/Finci case when it was the main condition to move forward in the EU integration process. The constitutional changes dominated the discourse. After the pressure decreased, a change was observable. The change in Bosnia and Herzegovina was moving back to nationalist tensions and rhetoric. In different words, as long the European Union shows consistency and sets specific policies as a condition for further integration, it is the main player in the State. Instead, as the EU is less visible, the visibility of the competing countries increases. The increased visibility of Russia and China reduces the scope of the EU to act. A devoted EU enlargement policy would increase the odds to be “the only game in town.” The devoted enlargement policy implies a unified and credible stand of the EU that shows no scepticism about the intentions to expand in a foreseeable future.

This was also the first time the EU had to compete in a geopolitical battle with other states to exert its influence in a specific region which the Union regards as its sphere of interest. In previous enlargement rounds, the European Union had an easier task. Until the 2004 enlargement, all the new Member States had a democratic history and their integration was easier compared the 11 former socialist States which have become members in the 2004, 2007, and the 2013 enlargements. The fact that other actors were able to engage in the region indicates the decreased transformative power of the EU.

Secondly, the tensions and disputes between the States in the region are perceived by the high officials from the EU as a security threat that could lead to an armed conflict. Therefore the EU must act in order to prevent the worst-case scenario (Euractiv 2018). The acting of the EU is understood to increase its visibility in the region and to promote the integration process more openly. More concrete, the idea, and the hope are that States in the region should embed themselves into institutionalized framework under

the support of the EU, and gradually fulfil the necessary conditions for full membership. The introduced multilateral framework should then help States in the region to solve bilateral disputes which have become more salient in the recent period.

In particular, the Croatian and Slovenian dispute about the Bay of Piran caused the announcement of Juncker, because Croatian government does not recognize the arbitrary decision and rejects its implementation, due to a claim that the Slovenian government illegally impacted the members of the arbitrary body in order to achieve a more favourable decision for Slovenia (Reuters 2017). In fact, each of the candidates, and the potential candidate States have bilateral disputes with the neighbouring countries (Djolai and Nechev 2018). These mostly include the lack of a demarcation agreement between the States, but also succession from the former Yugoslavia has not been fully implemented yet. For years these issues have been pushed aside, and the political elites have shown little interest to cope with it. Rather, it was used as a topic of daily politics. Yet, in order to avoid bringing the disputes in the EU as member States, Juncker announced that these have to be resolved prior to accession. To a great extent there is also the question of reconciliation in the region among the States, which is one of the six flagship projects in the 2018 Enlargement Strategy, but also among the single ethnic groups in Bosnia about the nature of the war i.e. was it an act of aggression of neighbouring States or was it a civil war, and who was the attacker and who was the defender. The possibility to find a solution in this particular case will be difficult to manage.

Due to the political absence of the EU from the region, the peace in the Balkans after the bloody wars in the 1990s has become fragile. This is especially true for Bosnia and Herzegovina. After the EU took responsibility in BiH in 2006, and the High Representative announced to “step back” (Schwarz-Schilling 2006), the political

situation has worsened. The intention of the international actors was to transfer the responsibility to the local political actors. Furthermore, the former High Representative Schwarz – Schilling who was the first one to among the High Representatives who had to follow the passive approach writes that “Institutions that have been created by imposition will never function effectively unless Bosnians of all ethnicities buy into them and until Bosnian citizens expect them, and not in to international organizations, to deliver reform” (2006). That year was planned to be the turning point in Bosnian Statehood – when domestic political elites should have taken full responsibility for domestic affairs, and in which the EU integration process should dominate the political life three years after the Thessaloniki European Council Summit took place.

Yet, the desired functionality never occurred, because the State was never fully legitimized by the political elites. This holds also true for the created institutions within the country. The international reluctance to interfere more actively in political life did not provide the expected results. In different words, ethnic tensions were on the rise. At the same time, illiberal practices have become part of everyday life, and the democratization process is backsliding (Ker-Lindsay 2017).

Even the announcement to transfer the responsibility to domestic actors in order to create responsible local governments cannot be seen as a wrong step, yet the impression is that the transfer came too early, or at least it was too publically announced. This gave practically a free card to local political leaders to create tensions in order to stay in power. Simply, the institutional setup was not strong enough to resist the attempts of its undermining by the local political actors. Moreover, the perceived effects of increased cooperation among the ethnic political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina seemed costlier for the elites than the *status quo*. As a consequence, the tensions increased, and the politicians started to talk about the war in 2009 (Weber

2009). Six years later some commentators from the international media asked: “Is War About to Break Out in the Balkans”(Lyon 2015)? This shows that tensions and rhetoric about the war is not a single event, but rather a years-long fact. Additionally, during the refugee crisis in 2015, the German chancellor Merkel warned that armed conflicts are possible in the Balkans if countries close its borders for refugees because the fence on the Hungarian border has created tensions (Zeit Online 2015). The former Member of the Bundestag from the Greens and the chairperson of the German – Bosnian Parliamentary Group Marieluise Beck called Bosnia the “trouble spot” in which there is potential for conflicts (Deutscher Bundestag 2017). Even there is a low possibility of armed conflict or war in the region, mostly because of the international troops in Bosnia and Kosovo, such rhetoric undermines the democratization and the State-building process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It keeps the country in constant fear of violence, and at the same time, it overshadows the State-building process.

The third explanation for the policy shift is a more active approach within some of the member States to pursue a more active enlargement policy after years of the “autopilot” approach from the EU. It was mainly Germany that restarted the accession process in 2014 in the Berlin Process, and later that year a new approach towards Bosnia was proposed by Germany and UK, and adopted by the Council as the new approach. The Berlin process priorities were visible in the new Enlargement Strategy of the EU, adopted by the Commission in 2018. Bringing back the enlargement on the agenda was, thus, a bottom-up initiative from member States, which was then incorporated into the work of the EU institutions. It also shows the reliance of the EU institutions, and the Commission in particular, of the member States' policies. The following subsection will elaborate on the new approach from Brussels.

4.2.1 The reborn enlargement agenda

The commitment of the head of the Commission expressed in the 2017 State of the Union speech was followed by concrete action. In 2018 in February the Commission presented the new Enlargement Strategy, a document with six flagship projects (European Commission 2018a), and which was reiterated by the Sofia European Council Summit in May (European Council 2018c).

The new adopted 2018 Enlargement Strategy foresees the year 2025 as a realistic date for the next enlargement round, by pointing at Serbia and Montenegro as the countries that are in the most advanced phase of negotiations (European Commission 2018a). The idea of a concrete date was to provide an additional motive for countries to reform faster. Yet, immediately after stating the date, some heads of States and other high officials from member States and the EU Parliament refused 2025 as the date, but rather explained that it could be a realistic one if the countries fulfil the necessary criteria (Mirel 2018b: 6). The Hungarian representatives, on the other hand, have shown interest in Serbia to become a member State in 2022 (Reuters 2018).

This has forced the Commission to step back. Moreover, it shows the limits and the divisions among the member States of the EU concerning enlargement. This was also reflected in the European Council conclusions at the 2018 Sofia summit. The proposed six flagship projects have been confirmed, but without mentioning the concrete date for the possible accession (European Council 2018c). Yet, the lack of consistency undermines the credibility and weakens the position of the EU, because the EU cannot speak with one voice (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2019: 4). The lack of commitment of all the member States for a single policy shows the disunity of the member States with regard to enlargement and signals the aspiring States the

inconsistency of the enlargement promise. This eventually leads to confusion in the aspiring States and affects the Europeanization of the countries.

Moreover, it affects the rule adoption in targeted States as there is no clear signal about the intentions of the EU, as the External incentives model predicts (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004, 2019). On the other hand, it signals the competing powers in the region the inability of the Union to agree on a specific policy, and it opens further the door to new competitors. The internal problems within the member States have been reflected at the EU level. Not all member States perceive the enlargement of the Union as a priority, with France as the most vocal opponent of the enlargement policy as long the Union is not reformed.

The enlargement strategy and the European Council's conclusions define six flagship projects to be implemented. As some authors put it, it was the first time a strategy has identified the most important policies to tackle (Fouéré 2019: 3). In fact, the proposed six topics overlap to a great extent with the goals defined in the German-led Berlin process.

The following table provides an overview of the policies in the Berlin process and the new enlargement agenda.

European Commission – Enlargement strategy – February 2018	European Council Sofia Declaration – May 2018	Berlin Process – August 2014	Berlin process
Initiative to strengthen the rule of law	Strengthening support to the rule of law and good governance	Rule of law and good governance	Democratization – Visibility of the opposition, free media, civil society
Initiative to reinforce engagement on security and migration	Reinforcing engagement on security and migration		
Initiative to enhance support for socio-economic development	Supporting socio-economic development and putting a special focus on youth	Economic development, improvement of academic and vocational training	Enhancement of export strength in 2015 by Germany
Initiative to increase transport and energy connectivity	Increasing connectivity	Transport community and expansion of information and communication technology, cooperation within the Energy Community for SEE	
Initiative for a Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans	A Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans		Help for better use of IPA funds
Initiative to support reconciliation and good neighbourly relations	Supporting reconciliation and good neighbourly relations in the Western Balkans	Bilaterally disputes; achieving reconciliation within and between the societies in the region	

Table: 1. Defined policies in Berlin Process, the 2018 Enlargement Strategy, and the 2018 European Council Conclusions

The table shows that the initiatives from the German Berlin Process from 2014 foresee similar policies as defined in the EU Enlargement Strategy from 2018 that has been confirmed at the European Council Summit in Sofia 2018, except the migration crisis that reached its peak in 2015. The table shows also the great extent to which the

Commission is dependent on member States' policies, but also the leverage some member States have. The new approach shows also the inconsistency of the EU, which is characterized by changing demands. In the particular case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the demands have been changed in favour of more economic and social policy reforms, and less to the human rights issues, as it has been the main condition prior to 2014.

In the addresses in 2017 (Juncker 2017) and 2018 (Juncker 2018), the enlargement of the EU is more emphasized. In the two cases, Juncker makes a clear link between enlargement and stability, underlining the EU as a stabilizing factor that could contribute to a more stable situation, while pointing at possible negative outcomes for the EU, if the EU does not act (Juncker 2017). A similar statement was made also by Johannes Hahn, the commissioner for neighbourhood policy and enlargement negotiations, who said in an interview that “either we export stability, or import instability” (Zeit Online 2017). Thus, the security question has been more emphasized. Vachudova (2014) also emphasizes the question of security, rather than the economy, when it comes to the enlargement of the Western Balkan States. This is also a great shift in rhetoric compared to pre-crisis times. While in the earlier period the wording of a united Europe and European family was emphasized in the case of BiH (e.g. Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina 2010), the more recent rhetoric focuses rather on security and the importance of Balkans for the security of the EU. This is visible at the EU, and at the national levels as well. This could be explained by the speech act theory. The speech act theory starts from the assumption that something becomes a threat when the responsible persons call it a threat (Wæver 1995). It is important to give a name to a specific object or occurrence in order to give it a meaning. From the EU perspective, this is important in order to justify its policies

when there is a growing opposition within the Union to pursue the enlargement process. Following these assumptions, one could argue that the EU paints a particular picture of the region, and proposes a solution. It was easier for the EU officials in 2017 and 2018 to promote the enlargement policy more openly. The peak of the crises was over, and the EU has imposed sanctions on Russia. A specific picture about Russia has been created among the EU citizens. Namely, pro – European citizens have supported the sanctions the European Union has imposed on Russia (Onderco 2017), and the acts of the EU officials were easier to justify.

The enlargement policy during the crises has been member States driven. In other words, there have been new initiatives from Germany with the regard to the region of Western Balkans, and a new German and UK initiative for Bosnia and Herzegovina. These initiatives, which will be in more detail explained in the following subchapter, have been transformed into official EU politics towards the regions. The renewed interest in Brussels has been “reborn” in 2017 when the Commission has become more aware of other States interested in the region of Western Balkans, which was seen as undermining of the interest of the EU.

4.3 The New Approach from Berlin and London

The year 2014 has been marked by two important events with regard to the EU and the Western Balkans EU enlargement. The first event was a conference in August when the German Government hosted the members of the executive governments of the seven Western Balkan States, and, at that time, the Head of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso, and representatives of Austria, France, Italy, Croatia, Slovenia, and the UK. The initiative has become known as the Berlin Process.

The idea of Germany was to expedite the enlargement process, by noting that WB States have to fulfil its obligations in order to become the members of the EU. The aim of the initiative was to create a framework of four years to enhance the cooperation of the countries and to make progress. In each of the following years, a new conference should be organized in a different EU member State.

The first conference was hosted by the Austrian government in 2015, the second by Italy in 2016, and the third by France, and finally, it was hosted in London in 2018. In particular, the conferences should help overcome and solve bilateral issues among the Western Balkan States, enhance youth cooperation, help the building of transport infrastructure, for which a significant part of costs will be covered by the EU. Furthermore, the initiative should help improve vocational training and the education system (German Federal Government 2014). The initiative was developed as an ad hoc format outside the enlargement framework, but it was linked to the overall EU enlargement strategy (Marciacq 2017: 5). In some reports, the authors estimate that the possible effects of the investments could be the creation of 200.000 new jobs (Holzner, Stehrer, and Vidovic 2015). Thus, the main idea of the process was rather to use “the carrot”, than “the stick” in order to trigger the process. This is also connected to the competitors in the region, who have increased their impact in the region (Mirel 2018a: 12). Rather than punish the Balkan States, the EU emphasizes the benefits of increased cooperation that should result in the desired membership.

The German government recognized that the integration process lagged behind in the region and initiated a new policy that should tackle the most problematic issues - the disputes between the single WB countries, the poor economic performance, and high unemployment, especially among the youth, the bad infrastructure, and vocational training. The use of financial aid could be understood also as offering a new carrot to

potential member States, and at the same time avoiding the stick. Additionally, the initiators have become aware of other States engaged in the region (Marciacq 2017: 5).

This is because the absence of the EU took its toll in the region. More concretely, the enlargement towards Western Balkans was rather absent from the European Council meetings between June 2014 and March 2018. The crises in the EU made an impact on the perception of the EU on the Balkan States. The image of the EU as a success story has suffered. At the same time, the “magnetism” of the EU as a transformative power has weakened. It was the absence of the Union, which sent a picture of an indecisive actor with regard to Western Balkans that contributed to the appearance of new powers in the region.

The second event that marked 2014 was the German and United Kingdom initiative for the new approach towards Bosnia and Herzegovina presented at the Aspen Institute Western Balkan Conference. The initiative was launched by the foreign ministers of the two countries, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and Philip Hammond. The idea was that the new approach should help the country to adopt and implement necessary reforms in order to achieve stability, economic growth, and functioning democratic and judicial institutions. Therefore, a new strategic approach seemed to be necessary (Steinmeier and Hammond 2014). It was emphasized by the initiators that the human rights issues in the Sejdić-Finci case remain a condition, but the emphasis is on the socio-economic reforms. As the crucial reason for the new approach has been named the violent protests in several Bosnian towns in February 2014, when also a few buildings were set on fire by the protesters in several Bosnian towns. The protests have provided a picture to the officials from the EU member States what priorities Bosnian citizens have. The main condition prior to the new approach was the constitutional reform with

regard to the human rights issue in the Sejdić-Finci case. Yet, the expected results did not occur. The representatives from the local political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina did not achieve any agreement in order to grant the same passive elections rights to those not belonging to the constituent people. In sum, due to the lack of a solution that should help the country to overcome the human rights issues, the integration process was practically dead.

The idea of the German and UK governments was that by following the preferences of citizens the process would have more legitimacy and to meet citizens' expectations – economic growth and the fight against corruption. Additionally, the German and UK initiators have emphasized that the process was stalling and a new approach is needed in order to trigger the process. The expectation from the initiators was that the EU shows its transformative power (Hammond 2014). The EU was eager to see progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the idea was to bind the reform processes to more than a single topic after years of stagnation.

As a result of the German-British initiative in December 2014 at the Council meeting, the EU adopted a new approach towards Bosnia and Herzegovina with the focus of socio-economic reforms. In its conclusions, The Council stated that:

“(t)he Council welcomes the Compact for Growth and Jobs to shift the focus towards reforms and issues of direct concern to citizens, in the wake of the widespread, citizen-led protests in early 2014 which underlined the fragility of the socio-economic situation... This agenda should include first and foremost reforms under the Copenhagen criteria (socio-economic reforms including the "Compact for Growth and Jobs", rule of law, good governance) and also agreed functionality issues (including the EU coordination mechanism).”

At the meeting, it was reiterated that the Sejdić – Finci remains a condition for the further integration process (The Council 2014). Although the Council accepted the new approach, this was mainly related to the aspiring States and it did not require the change at the EU level. The European Union aimed to present its commitment to the widening process, while the implementation remains in the Balkan States. The enlargement policy was soon moved from the agenda. This was because the crises and the new political populist actors and the public opinion constrained the decision-making process and the policies. Secondly, the representatives from the EU institutions perceived the integration process as the only choice for Bosnia and other States in the region. The actions of the competitors were to a large extent invisible in 2014 and earlier.

The new approach showed two distinctive observations of the EU policies towards BiH. Firstly, the introduction of the new approach could be seen as a policy failure in the country, because the applicant country has not made the desired progress. Put it differently, the EU did not manage to attract the local political leaders to adopt and implement necessary reforms in order to make the country more functional. Such practices of the EU institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, however, are not new (Weber 2017). This is due to bad governance and limited statehood, which “affects both the capacity and the willingness of countries to conform to the EU’s expectations for domestic change” (Börzel 2011: 5). In such a way, EU conditionality loses its transformative power due to a change in its demands. In this particular case, the EU lowered its demands.

On the other side, the impression is that the political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina have to be stubborn long enough in order to get reduced conditions for the further integration process. In particular, the “adoption costs” (Schimmelfennig and

Sedelmeier 2004: 667) for the domestic political elites in Bosnia and Herzegovina are perceived to be higher if the particular policy has been adopted compared to preserving the status quo. In this particular case, the determinacy (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004: 664) of the EU weakens, because the demands have changed, which is more likely to reduce the effectiveness. Furthermore, the process appears to be inconsistent.

Even the new approach has emphasized the Sejdić – Finci case as a remaining condition, it has allowed the country to show that there is progress, even the progress is rather limited. By lowering demands the EU loses its leverage over the enlargement process. At the same time, it weakens the conditionality of the enlargement process, which has already proven successful in previous enlargement rounds. In other words, the credibility of the EU suffers. “Credibility also depends on the EU’s coherence and consistency in applying conditionality” (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2019: 4). The consistency issue of the Union has been present in Bosnia and Herzegovina for years. As long the Sejdić – Finci case was the general condition for the further integration process, it was the main topic of discussion among the political leaders, despite the lack of an agreement. An insistence on this issue would have eventually increased the pressure from citizens to implement the required reforms. Yet, after the change of the approach, the human rights issue disappeared from the political agenda of the local political elites, which reduces the possibility of finding a solution.

However, this observation can be perceived from a different angle. The new approach allows the country to make some progress in order not to lag behind other applicant countries. Furthermore, it can be explained that the new approach could pull out the country from the stalemate in which the country is.

The second observation is that the new approach was a bottom-up initiative from two member States to the supranational institutions. This supports the rationalist argument that international policies are a result of initiatives of single units, or in this particular case from single States. The policy was later adopted by the supranational institutions. The new approach towards Bosnia and Herzegovina also indicates the power of Germany and the UK to impact decision making at the EU level. Compared to, for instance, the initiative from the Croat government in 2014 to grant a special candidate status for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the two initiators of the new approach show more leverage in the EU institutions. The Croatian initiative did not have an impact on the member State representatives in the Council.

From the German perspective, the initiative for a new approach can be seen as a part of the new German foreign policy, that was introduced by the at that time German President Joachim Gauck, German Foreign Minister Frank - Walter Steinmeier, and German Minister of Defence Ursula von der Leyen at the 2014 Munich Security Conference (Gauck 2014; Steinmeier 2014; von der Leyen 2014) (This will be further elaborated below.).

Secondly, the EU suffers from enlargement fatigue and the impacted group dynamics after the 2004 enlargement is still reflected in the decision making the process. It became questionable whether the EU has the integration capacity to accept new member States. "...integration capacity refers to the ability of the EU to prepare non-members for membership (external integration capacity) and to preserve its functioning and cohesion once they join (internal integration capacity)" (Börzel, Dimitrova, and Schimmelfennig 2017: 158).

An increased number of member States makes the EU more difficult to govern. This has especially become evident during the crises when the member States expressed

less willingness to find a common solution but rather turned to policies regarding the States they come from. The crises, the EU coped with, have resulted in the increased scepticism whether the EU is able to accept new States. Furthermore, this is emphasized by the fact that some of the new member States have seriously undermined the rule of law. This is evident in the case of Poland and Hungary. Prior to their accession, the new member States from East Europe appeared to have transformed into functioning democracies. Yet, as the two above mentioned countries show an unwillingness to conform to the EU norms, the transformative power of the Union is questioned. Or in different words, it is questionable whether these countries have been Europeanised.

“Europeanisation consists of processes of a) construction, b) diffusion and c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic (national and subnational) discourse, political structures and public policies” (Radaelli 2004: 4).

As some studies show, the incorporation of the EU legislation into the domestic legal system does not pose an issue for the new member States. It is rather the opposite. The new legislation is better incorporated in the legislation of the new member States compared to the old ones (Börzel, Dimitrova, and Schimmelfennig 2017). However, the problematic part is the “way of doing things.” Because of the character of the Union and its interdependence and interconnectedness, the membership of a State in the Union reflects its problems on the Union as such, and the problems of a State become the problems of the Union.

These examples are used by some member State officials to express scepticism (Politico 2018b) whether the Western Balkan States, with its much troubled recent past, could become full members of the Union. Namely, the WB countries express a high level of mistrust among themselves. Additionally, there is a serious democratic deficit in the countries.

4.4 German EU policy

The processes of deepening and widening of the European Union has been always a part of German politics. According to Bulmer, “Germany is the most consistently pro-integrationist member State since the 1950s” (2014: 1248). German politics is characterized by “strong integrationist rhetoric”, the consensus among political parties and public opinion and initiatives for EU policies, like the 1973 enlargement and other integrationist initiatives (Bulmer 2014: 1248).

Firstly, the European Union is a big economic success for Germany. It opened new markets for German products, while at the same time Germany has opened its market for the products from other EU member States. The EU project, along with the enlargement of the Union helped Germany to become the leading exporting country in the EU (Dreger 2017: 77), but also one of the leading exporters in the world.

Secondly, the EU is seen as a peace project that helps to maintain peace on the continent. According to Münkler, there are two imperatives in almost all European position papers – the EU as a space for peace, and space for prosperity (Münkler 2017: 104). In the case of the Western Balkan States, the security factors are the prevailing reason for the renewed approach. The economic interests play a role in German enlargement policy as well. One of the economic outcomes of the 2004 enlargement

one million new jobs in Germany ten years after the biggest widening round (Focus Online 2014). The geographical proximity of the region of Western Balkans represents an additional advantage for the German economy which is deeply embedded into the regional markets. Germany is the biggest trade partner for each of the States in the region. It is the biggest exporter to Balkan States which imports 16 percent of all EU exports, and at the same time is the biggest importer from the WB States which imports 23 percent of goods from the region (European Commission 2018b). The integration into the single market would increase the comparative advantage of German companies because the elimination of import taxes reduces the costs for the final products and the dominant position can further be strengthened. However, for the German government, the economic interests in the Balkans are less pronounced compared to the 2004 enlargement. The lower number of citizens in former Yugoslav States and Albania represents a smaller economic potential than the countries that have joined the Union in 2004. The security issues prevail. However, the economy is an important part of German foreign policy (Kundnani 2011).

The enlargement of the EU from the German perspective has been studied both as an economic, or security policy and as a reconciliation project. Some authors argue that the German striving for a deeper EU integration, during the Kohl Government, was shaped by historic memories. Recalling the historic memories was also used as a tool in order to legitimize that policy at the domestic level, and as justification to emphasize the EU as a peace project. At the same time, the interests of the State have been considered as well. The same argument has been used also to justify the enlargement of the Union (Banchoff 1997: 72–73).

Other authors emphasize the role of the EU as a tool for reconciliation, which was important for Germany during the enlargement process 2004, while at the same time

German companies have benefited from the process (Jeřábek 2011: 94–100). In a similar vein, Zaborowski argues that the German eastern enlargement policy during 2004 was rather based on cultural and normative considerations, but he does not exclude that material interests played a role as well (Zaborowski 2006). In multistate studies, the German motive to enlarge in 2004 was presented as a commitment to given promises in the past, while considering the material benefits as well (Schimmelfennig 2005). Others also have emphasized the commitments from the past given by the EU officials (Sedelmeier 2005).

Some authors explain the German decision to enlarge due to economic interests and geopolitical considerations (Moravcsik and Vachudova 2005), while others argued that the motive was the geopolitics in order to strengthen the German role within the EU, but also to prevent scenarios like in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s (Skalnes 2005). In some of the works, Germany has been labelled as the “driver”, while other States, like France, have been labelled as “brakemen” of the accession process (Schimmelfennig 2005).

Thus, as seen in the short overview, regardless of the interpretation of the motives, the German position was a firm supporter of enlargement. Indeed, the EU plays a central role in German politics, and Germany has been one of the main supporters for the widening and deepening of the Union.

What role the EU has in German politics can be well illustrated by the calls for the United States of Europe. The first one who called for the United States of Europe was Konrad Adenauer. Later the call was followed by Walter Hallstein, the first Head of the European Commission. The call has been reiterated by Helmut Kohl, although he backed off from the Statement. The European State has been mentioned also by Joschka Fischer (Große Hüttmann 2017: 34–39), and finally, it was proposed by Martin

Schulz, who suggested to do it by 2025 (Die Zeit 2017b). The idea of the United States of Europe was, however, later abandoned due to the Constitutional Court decision and its interpretation of the EU as an intergovernmental body (Große Hüttmann 2017: 39), but it was also rejected by some of the CDU and CSU members (Große Hüttmann 2017: 38). Despite the abandonment of the idea of a United States of Europe, the statements indicate the German commitment towards the EU, which is an essential part of German politics, and more concrete, of the German foreign politics.

Indeed, the European project has been supported and followed by the German officials, and there is a broad consensus among the traditional German political parties to support the EU, which was also evident during the Eurozone crisis (Wimmel 2012: 33). It is indisputable that the EU has helped to maintain peace after World War 2, but economic success cannot be neglected. The German commitment to the EU is often emphasized also by German officials. The former German Minister of Foreign Affairs Steinmeier emphasized that the EU is the “foundation of German foreign policy” (Steinmeier 2015a). In short, the EU is deeply embedded in German politics.

The enlargement of the European Union has been as well always a part of the German policies. As one of the six founding members of the Union, Germany has been involved in every enlargement round of the Union. In fact, all German chancellors since Willy Brandt have faced EU enlargement. In 1973 when Willy Brandt was the chancellor Denmark, the UK and the Republic of Ireland joined the EU, following by Greece in 1981 under the Helmut Schmidt government. During the next two rounds in 1986 when Spain and Portugal became members of the Union, and in 1995 when Austria, Sweden, and Finland joined the EU, the chancellor was Helmut Kohl. The German government led by Gerhard Schröder faced the biggest enlargement round in 2004 when 10 countries joined the Union. Under the current chancellor Angela Merkel, the

EU enlarged two times, in 2007 when Bulgaria and Romania joined, and in 2013 when Croatia has become the most recent member (Lippert 2017: 393). The fact that all German chancellors have been involved in the enlargement rounds presents a constant with regard to EU and enlargement policy. This is explained also by the fact that there was a broad consensus among the political parties in Bundestag (Lippert 2017: 397). Hence, it was easier to support the enlargement without the opposition on the issue. It is due to the fact that an agreement usually among political parties does not require for an issue to be salient in the public. Thus, there is a little space for the debate about the enlargement process between the accession rounds. Yet, the political environment in the EU has changed when it comes to the EU enlargement. The German policy is constrained by the crises which have to a certain degree impacted other States within the EU to be more reluctant towards the accession of new States. When it comes to Western Balkans, Germany plays a crucial role. Firstly, it is the German government that keeps the enlargement process “alive”. Put it differently, the initiatives started by Germany brought back the focus on Bosnia, and on the Balkans in general, although there was a reluctance to do something about the Balkans a few years before the new approach (Weber 2011).

4.4.1 German New Foreign Policy Approach

The Berlin Process, and the new German and British initiative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was taken by the Council and presented as a new approach towards BiH could be understood as an expression of the new German foreign policy. While Germany due to its World War 2 past has been less active at the international arena (Maull 1990, 2018), at the beginning of 2014 during the Munich Security

Conference at the time German foreign minister Frank Walter Steinmeier, the German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen, and at the time German President Joachim Gauck, have announced the new German policy at the international level. The new policy includes a more proactive approach in world affairs, and, if necessary, military interventions (Gauck 2014). All of the three above mentioned German officials also expressed the need for the EU, through which the proactive approach should be implemented.

The new approach can be traced back to 2011 when the German abstention in the UN Security Council from the Libya intervention caused criticism, both, at the international and the national level (Rinke 2014: 9–10; Kappel 2014: 343; Maull 2015: 324). It was expected that Germany does not remain passive, but an active player at the global level. Indeed such criticism has contributed to the changed approach. However, not only the criticism about the German abstention in the UN Security Council explains the shift in the German new active role. The growing German role to stabilize the European immediate neighbourhood after the USA increasingly withdraw as the protection power of the continent (Münkler 2017: 106) can be understood as a contribution to the more active approach, and the German role during the financial crises within the EU.

Frank Walter Steinmeier wrote that “Germany is a little too big, and economically too powerful in order merely to comment the international politics from the side-line”⁴ while announcing more German responsibility (2015b: 2–3). The wording of, at that time, German foreign minister Steinmeier shows the new self-awareness as the leading European and global power. This self-awareness is also reflected in official documents. The German government emphasizes in the White Paper on Security that: “Germany is increasingly regarded as a key player in Europe. With this new reality come more

⁴ The part translated by the author. The original wording is „Deutschland ist ein bisschen zu groß und wirtschaftlich zu stark, um Außenpolitik nur von der Seitenlinie zu kommentieren“

options to exert influence but also increased responsibility” (German Federal Government 2016: 22).

On the other hand, more important for this work, Germany has emerged as the leading EU member State after the financial crisis (Kappel 2014: 341; Bulmer 2014: 1255). Germany, namely, “was pivotal for the survival of the euro” (Schimmelfennig 2015b: 185). This role was necessary in order to protect German interests. The German government “has been perceived as imposing its policy of austerity on Eurozone States” (Bulmer and William 2013: 1388). Indeed, Germany has been the most active country in order to save the Eurozone (Moravcsik 2012; Schimmelfennig 2018), but its image has suffered among the countries in which the austerity measures have been imposed, as in the case of Greece. Angela Merkel, the German chancellor even declared that if the euro fails, the EU fails as well (Deutscher Bundestag 2010). The dramatic statement of the chancellor Merkel made in the Bundestag in order to ask for support for the Eurozone recovery package indicates the importance of the EU for Germany. On the other hand, some authors assigned to Germany the role as a semi – hegemon (Münkler 2017: 105) or a reluctant hegemon (Bulmer and William 2013: 1388). Münkler defines hegemony as an order of formal equals in which power is the *primus inter pares* – the leader among the equals (2017: 105). The role of a semi-hegemon is based on German economic power and the decreased role of France during the Euro crisis (Münkler 2017: 107–8). Bulmer’s and Paterson’s understanding of hegemony is either domination or leadership (2013: 1389). According to Bulmer and Paterson, Germany has become a reluctant hegemon because of the “eurozone crisis, where its ever-strengthening economy and principal creditor status placed it in the driving seat in relation to crisis management” (2013: 1392). Indeed, German leading role crystallized during and after the crises in the EU. The role of France, as the second

leading partner, has decreased within the Union. The decreased role of France was caused also by internal constraints and the bigger impacts of the crisis on that country. Outside of the Union, in the Western Balkans, Germany is recognized as the leading country of the EU, and the first partner to talk in terms of EU integration process, rather than Brussels. The Berlin process and the new approach towards Bosnia and Herzegovina underline the role of Germany in European politics.

However, in matters of Europe, the new German foreign policy is actually not new. Rather, the approach has changed – from a “reluctant power” (Lehne 2012) to a more active actor. Namely, as indicated above, Germany has always been a supporter and initiator of a more integrated and enlarged Union. That fact has not changed with the new foreign policy. According to Kappel, after the reunification German foreign policy was characterized by continuity, especially in matters of the EU. Just the instruments and strategies changed (2014: 345).

Thus, the support of the German government for the enlargement process is a decades-long constant. This is connected also to the fact that there was practically no opposition to this process among the political parties within the Bundestag, while the public shows little interest in the process.

The new foreign policy approach is reflected in the 2016 White Paper of Security. It is stated that Germany is at the moment the fourth-largest economy in the world, but that the position could decrease because some other States like India or Brazil are about to outstrip Germany. In order to maintain the high living standard and remain a global actor, Germany needs the EU to achieve its goal (German Federal Government 2016: 55–56). Furthermore, the EU enlargement is seen as a tool to create and maintain stability, with a clear reference to the Western Balkan (German Federal Government 2016: 30). The EU, thus, plays a central role in the achievement of German interests.

Hence, in order to retain its impact in the world, Germany can only be visible and have an impact on global politics through the European Union (German Federal Government 2016: 22). For that purpose, the EU needs to be stable and secure, because stability allows to develop multilateral framework as the basis of the German foreign policy. The region of Western Balkans is seen as unstable due to unresolved issues among the States after the bloody wars in the 1990s. Furthermore, the Western Balkans countries are characterized by weak rule of law, corruption, and poor economic performance. At the same time, the EU is facing a number of crises, which led to increased Euroscepticism and opposition among citizens to accept new member States.

4.4.2 German Government and the Enlargement

When it comes to the Western Balkans, the argumentation for supporting the enlargement process has changed, due to new global powers emerging in the Western Balkans. While in the past the rhetoric was more aimed to emphasize the historic ties of Europe and the reconciliation, after the crises that hit the EU, the explanations of the EU enlargement politics has changed. The German Minister of State for Europe Michael Roth has summarized the EU approach with regard to the EU enlargement of the Western Balkan States in an article for the German newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. Roth emphasizes that the EU “has to make smart decisions, and to consider both geopolitical and strategic questions, and to consider our economic and security interests”⁵ (Roth 2018). Furthermore, he emphasizes that if the EU is not present in the region, the empty space will be filled by other actors – China, Russia,

⁵ This part is translated by the author. The original wording is „Nun gilt es, kluge Entscheidungen zu treffen und dabei geopolitische und strategische Fragen ebenso zu berücksichtigen wie unsere Wirtschafts- und Sicherheitsinteressen“

and the Arabic countries, which contradicts the European interests (Roth 2018). Even the new approach towards Bosnia and Herzegovina was motivated by protests in 2014, the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 has convinced Germany more to be an active actor on the global stage, as the German official stated. The increased role of Russia in the region of Western Balkans has alarmed also the German Federal Government (Spiegel 2014).

Compared to the previous enlargement rounds, most notably the one in 2004, global politics has changed. While in 2004 the role of Russia and China was more passive one at the global level, a decade later this has changed. These countries are more engaged to shape world politics. Thus, the region of the Western Balkans is a place where the interests of different powers overlap. While there is still the perspective for the EU membership of the countries in the region, the achievement of that goal has become a distant one.

The extent of the crises has also been reflected on Germany. Details revealed by the magazine *Der Spiegel* from an internal report of the German Ministry of Defence indicate six possible scenarios by 2040. Some of the scenarios include the breakup of the Union, more aggressive Russia and China, the end of the enlargement process, the end of the integration process, possible confrontations at the global level, but also a peaceful coexistence in the “Global West” and “Peaceful big spaces”. The report has been drafted as a consequence of the Russian annexation of Crimea in order to predict possible developments in the future (Der Spiegel 2017: 34–35). Each of these scenarios which include the weakening of the EU would inevitably weaken also Germany and its position at the international level.

The policy of a country is under constraints. In terms of the German EU enlargement policy with regard to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and with regard to Western Balkans in

general, is under constraints from its own citizens, the political party AfD, but also from other member States in the EU, and States outside the EU.

The biggest impact on German enlargement policy with regard to Bosnia and Herzegovina have the governmental bodies. This is true, especially for the executive branch. The simple explanation is that the process is not yet in the advanced phase, and therefore there is less need for the Bundestag to cope with the question. On the other hand, the former chair of the Parliamentary group for Bosnia and Herzegovina from the German Bundestag Marieluise Beck says that Bosnia and Herzegovina is practically non-existent in the debates about the German foreign policy (Deutscher Bundestag 2017). However, the commitment to enlarge is not questioned, but a “Yes, but” approach has developed (Toeglhofer and Adebahr 2017: 525). The approach includes strict conditionality before giving any rewards. This stand is often emphasized in public documents of the German document and speeches of German officials. Similar position is also reflected in the party election manifestos of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in 2013 (CDU/CSU 2013: 73) while the commitment to enlarging the Union was not in the 2017 election manifesto (CDU/CSU 2017). The Social Democratic Party (SPD), on the other hand, had the same stand both in 2013 (SPD 2013: 110) and in 2017 (SPD 2017: 99). The sentence to support the membership of the Western Balkan countries after they have fulfilled all obligations was stated also in the Coalition Treaty of the CDU/CSU/SPD coalition in 2018 (CDU/CSU/SPD 2018: 115). By incorporating strict conditionality into the enlargement policy, it is easier to “sell” the widening to the domestic citizens as the example from the Eurobarometer has demonstrated. Thus, there is no membership as a free reward, but a strict conditionality to be fulfilled prior to any formal membership.

Theoretically speaking, the interest of Germany is to achieve absolute gains at the international level. According to German policy, the best way to act at the international level and to reach its goals is through multilateralism (German Federal Government 2012: 5). Multilateralism through the EU, and other alliances such as NATO and G-8, is seen by the German government as the best way to be and remain a shaper of global politics – *Wandlungsmacht* (German Federal Government 2012: 5). Multilateralism belongs to the DNA of German foreign policy (Steinmeier 2015a). The importance of multilateralism has been reiterated by the German Minister of Foreign Affairs Heiko Maas at the Munich Security Conference 2019 (Maas 2019). These gains are economic prosperity and peaceful coexistence. The issues in the Western Balkan countries are seen as a possible threat to the interests of Germany, and the EU in general. These threats are possible refugee flows to the EU in case of any conflicts in the region, which is surrounded by EU member States. Thus, any conflict in the region would have an immediate effect on Germany (Toeglhofer and Adebahr 2017: 4) and the EU in general. The previous migration crisis has created deep fissures in the EU due to the refusal of a significant number of EU member States to agree on a common solidarity solution.

Even the reasoning for the new approach was motivated by the protests in Bosnia, the increasing presence of other powers in the region of Western Balkans, which is by Michael Roth defined as the “European inner courtyard” (Roth 2018), has strengthened the German commitment to enlarge, due to the increased presence of Russia, that makes objections to NATO membership of the Western Balkan States.

The German public opinion towards enlargement is among the lowest in the EU. Yet, compared to France, the role of the public in this regard plays a less significant role. This is also due to the fact that all traditional German political parties express a strong

pro – European stand, and also support enlargement. While France is constrained by the constitutional provision of a referendum with regard to enlargement (see the section about French enlargement policy), there is no such provision in Germany. However, it does not mean that the role of public opinion in Germany is insignificant. As the example from Chapter 2 shows, the AfD as a part of the Bundestag has raised the question regarding the enlargement, a referendum, and the public opinion (Deutscher Bundestag 2018). Hence, it can be expected that the role of public opinion will rise in the future as the question becomes more salient due to the right-wing populist AfD. As public opinion is not a constant, it is a process that is rather subject to change, much will also depend on how the enlargement questions will be framed by the media, and the traditional parties.

4.5 Brexit and the EU Enlargement – From a Champion of Expansion to a Sideliner

The United Kingdom was one of the drivers of EU enlargement, or as Ker-Lindsay puts it „the most important champion of the expansion” (Ker-Lindsay 2017: 556). Yet, at the same time, the UK was one of the main opponents to a more integrated Union. The logic behind the country’s enlargement agenda was that a more enlarged Union means a less integrated Union (Ker-Lindsay 2017: 557), while others challenge this view and explain the motivation of the British support for the enlargement as liberal, which is more connected to stability (Cooper 2012: 1197).

Even after the migration crisis, the British officials have become more reluctant to advocate for enlargement, they continued to emphasize to support the process (House of Lords 2017), the decision of the British citizens to vote leave has caused a loss of power when it comes to the enlargement process (Ker-Lindsay 2017). In other words,

the end of British membership in the European Union pushes the country to the side-line of the enlargement process and EU politics in general. As a member of the EU, the UK was considered as one of the big and powerful States in the EU foreign policy loses its leverage to make decisions.

Throughout the history of the EU, the UK was always considered as an outlier in the Union. It was probably the most Eurosceptic Member State. Its understanding of the EU differs much compared to other States. While the Germans referred to the EU as a “community”, for the British the EU is a “common market” (Diez 2001: 89). The scepticism towards the Union is used as one of the arguments for the explanation of the Brexit referendum. The British tabloid press has for decades on a regular basis criticized the EU, which has affected the British public opinion to vote to leave the Union (Copeland and Copsey 2017). Moreover, Startin identifies also the tabloid press as the public opinion maker by portraying the EU in negative terms. Furthermore, he argues that the tabloid press also affected the political representatives in the UK to have a more Eurosceptic stance out of fear from negative headlines (Startin 2015: 316–17).

Additionally, the lack of information about the EU serves as well as an explanation for the increased Euroscepticism. As the media is the main source of information for citizens, they rely on information they receive from the media. Media with larger circulation usually reach more people, and the information from these media are likely to have a greater impact on citizens. In fact, the tabloid media usually have a larger circulation, and therefore a greater impact on a larger group of citizens. As the outcome, they have more ability to steer the reader in a specific direction.

Important political figures from Great Britain have also contributed to the Euroscepticism in Great Britain. In her famous Bruges speech, the, at that time, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher called for a Europe as a “family of nations”, a less

integrated Union with strong cooperation. Furthermore, perhaps the better explanation of the relations of the UK towards the EU is expressed in the sentence from the same speech "If you believe some of the things said and written about my views on Europe, it must seem rather like inviting Genghis Khan to speak on the virtues of peaceful coexistence!" (Thatcher 1988). The sentence from the speech reveals to a great extent the reluctance of a more integrated Union from the British side. The exceptions for Britain in some crucial EU policies, like the introduction of Euro or Schengen, is one of the most prominent examples that explains the reluctance towards a deeper Europe. The position of Great Britain towards the Union did not change over time. In fact, the Brexit referendum was not the first one on the same issue. Two years after the EU accession, UK organized in 1975 its first referendum about membership in the EU (at that time the European Economic Community). Whilst the first referendum was not a success, or failure, depending on the perception, the second one was a success from the Eurosceptic perspective. The vote to leave was to a large extent an outcome of the crises within the EU that have contributed to rising Euroscepticism (Nugent 2018: 59). The crises led to increased questioning of the EU, which gave a voice to the adherents of Euroscepticism. Among the most vocal Brexit supporters was Nigel Farage, a former member and the head of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), and the former mayor of London and member of the Conservative Party Boris Johnson. The groups advocated to leave have used topics of immigration, free movement, and possible EU enlargement as the mobilizing factors for the support, while those advocated to stay in the EU have underlined the economic consequences as the reason to remain part of the EU (Clarke, Goodwin, and Whiteley 2017: 440). While UKIP could be described as a single-issue party with the clear goal of leaving the EU, the latter was divided on the issue. The conservative Prime Minister David Cameron,

who initiated the referendum as the result of the success of UKIP in the 2014 European elections, resigned from his position after 52 percent of those who participated in the referendum voted to leave. While the UKIP had moderate results in the 1990s the popularity of the party increased in the 2000s (Smith 2015: 216). The lack of success in the national parliament is also a consequence of the majoritarian political system in the UK.

The outcome of the referendum was rather unexpected for the prime minister and the party. This is well illustrated by the discussions within the British Parliament and in the public. It showed that there is no agreement about how the formal relations towards the EU should be established after the country leaves the Union. This is due to the deep division among the biggest parties in the country on this issue. While some members of the Conservatives have actively participated in the Brexit campaign, the Labour was rather silent on the issue. More concrete, there was no clear party-based policy that was followed by all members of the biggest parties, and the parties have been divided on the issue (Clarke, Goodwin, and Whiteley 2017: 446). On the other hand, UKIP showed consistency during the campaign. The consistency is an important input for the voters with regard to the expectations of the party, while on the other hand, when the party does not provide a clear message to voters, it might lead to confusion. Studies have shown that people tend to support the policies of the parties they vote for (Slothuus and de Vreese 2010). As there was no clear input it was more difficult for the citizens to decide to vote leave or stay.

Moreover, there was no plan on how to continue after the country leaves the EU. The public, on the one hand, was not prepared to the shocking economic forecasts for the British economy, and on the other, the political representatives did not have a plan how to deal with possible security threats if there is a hard border between Northern Ireland

and the Republic of Ireland. Furthermore, the increased demands for a new referendum about Scottish independence after 2014 will likely increase the political crisis within the UK.

The public discussions about the future relations of Britain with the rest of the world and possible economic consequences have dominated the public debates. In fact, the announcement of catastrophic economic outcomes has turned the wheel in the opposite direction. The support for staying within the Union has risen, while the support to leave the EU has fallen, and the percentage of those who responded do not know has fallen (NatCen Social Research 2019). This can be explained by the fact that the EU as a topic in public debates has become salient. The bigger exposure of more information to British citizens about the EU and the economic benefits of the EU membership has provided more information to them, and thus affected their opinion. The fallen number of those who are undecided shows also that provided information leads people to adopt a clearer position. Such development has constrained the political parties to find the best solution, yet the internal divisions within the parties, and among the parties have not provided an agreement.

Secondly, the interconnectedness among the members of the EU has made it difficult to leave. Strong interdependence shows how much the UK is bound to the EU. This was visible when people and companies started to stockpile different products out of fear of no-deal Brexit which would stop imports for a certain period (The Guardian 2019b) which is also connected to newly gained knowledge about possible consequences of Brexit.

But what does the decision to leave the EU means for the enlargement process? First of all, the enlargement process has lost one of the main advocates within the EU. Still, the official policy of the UK is to support the EU expansion on Western Balkans. Boris

Johnson, then British Foreign Minister, visited BiH in 2017 and committed the British support for the country in fulfilling necessary reforms (Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2017). The UK Government also hosted the Western Balkans summit in 2018, as a part of the Berlin Process. Furthermore, the UK has announced to increase its financial aid in the countries in the region until the end of 2020. The reason for supporting the membership of Balkan countries is the assumption that the accession brings peace and stability, which is an interest of the UK (Kemp 2018). As one of the three biggest and powerful countries in the EU, the United Kingdom was able to lead processes and propose policies. It had the power to impact and shape decisions at the EU level. A good example to illustrate this argument is the UK and German initiative for a new approach for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The new approach was adopted in less than two months by the Foreign Affairs Council of the EU after the ministers of foreign affairs have presented the idea of a new approach. On the contrary, the Croatian initiative presented at the beginning of the same year did not come to fruition. The new “champion” of the enlargement process has become Germany (Ker-Lindsay 2017: 561). Considering the growing Eurosceptic, and especially the right-wing, political parties in the EU, the enlargement policy has become a far more difficult task. Secondly, the loss of power within the EU means that the UK cannot be actively involved in the process. Britain can merely support the process from the side-lines. At the same time, the decision to leave the EU means also less credibility for Britain as an enlargement advocate. Simply, why would a country advocate for membership of other States in the Union, and at the same time leave that same organization? Finally, the period after the referendum in the UK in 2016 has been marked by disputes and debates on how or whether there will be a formal connection to the EU after Britain leaves the Union. The debates were focused to a large extent about the economic

consequences in the case of a “No Deal” and less to the security question in Ireland. In different words, the economic forecasts about the British economy in the near future look rather gloomy if there is no agreed connection, formalized in a customs union or a free trade agreement. Thus, the decision to leave the EU occupies the most public debates in the UK and leaves less space for the EU foreign policy. Moreover, the lack of willingness to make a compromise in the House of Commons between, and within, the parties have emphasized the unpreparedness of the political actors for such a move. In sum, the focus of the UK is likely to be to “de-Europeanise” in the following period.

Some authors expect the Brexit will affect the enlargement process because the EU is likely to devote more attention to the Brexit negotiations than to the enlargement process (Butler 2016). This was evident in the case of negotiations about the extension of the deadline for leaving the country when the French president has shown less commitment for further expansion of the deadline. In the end, a compromise in the form of an extension was found.

4.6 French enlargement policy

The French enlargement policy could be well described as the opposite of the British enlargement policy. While the British have supported the expansion of the continent in order to prevent a more integrated Union, French authorities have favoured a more integrated and less enlarged EU. This was also continued with the election of Emmanuel Macron as the French President in 2017. In his pro-European agenda he emphasizes the importance of a more integrated Union (Macron 2017). In fact, the argumentation of the need for a more integrated Union before enlargement was used

earlier in the 1990s, when the French officials have explained their position on accession of new member States (Sjursen and Romsloe 2006: 149).

Throughout the enlargement history of the European Union, France has played the role of an enlargement sceptic. In particular, France has, more than any other EU member State, raised objections towards the accession of new countries in the Union. It started already in the 1960s when the, at that time, the French President De Gaulle rejected the accession of Great Britain in the EU. The policy changed eventually when the new President was elected (Krotz and Schild 2013). The French enlargement policy has been labelled as the “brakemen” (Schimmelfennig 2005: 144) or “reluctant follower” (Krotz and Schild 2013: 152). In fact, the only time France did not object to the accession was in the case of Greece, a country that joined the EU in 1981 (Lippert 2007: 428). However, in the end, France did support enlargement in order to prevent isolation from other countries (Krotz and Schild 2013) and to avoid to be shamed after being rhetorically entrapped (Schimmelfennig 2005: 161–62).

Rieker explains the French reluctance as the expression of the low public opinion support among the French citizens. The low support led eventually to the failed 2005 referendum about the European Constitution since the reasoning for the adoption of the document was connected to the 2004 enlargement that should enable to govern the EU more successfully with the increased number of member States. Moreover, Rieker points also at the statements of French officials who have raised objections for further enlargement as the consequence of negative public opinion towards enlargement (Rieker 2005: 16–17). Others indicate the lack of strategic or economic interest and the low support of the French citizens for further expansion of the Union when it comes to Western Balkans (Wunsch 2017: 550).

In fact, France has one of the lowest support rates for further enlargement of the Union. The support has declined during the times of crises but has slightly increased after the crises. The following chart shows the support and rejection of French citizens for enlargement. The lowest support was in 2013, a year ahead of the 2014 European elections in which Front National was the most successful French party, but at the same time the most successful right-wing populist party in European Parliament.

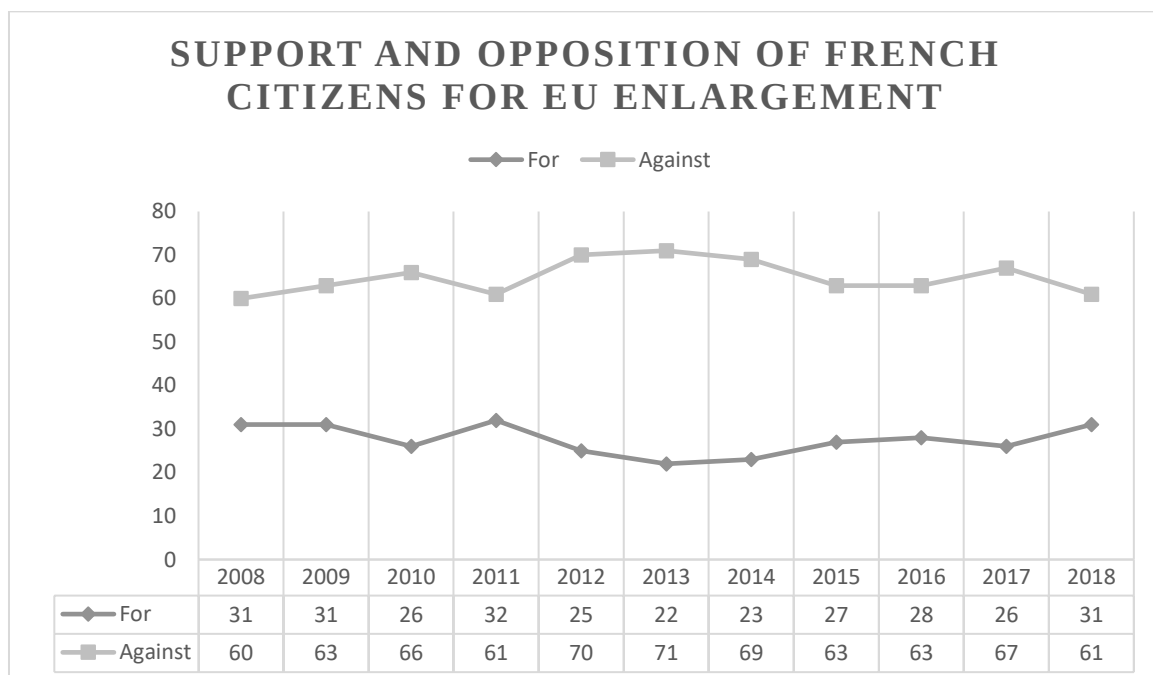


Figure 4: The support and opposition of French citizens towards enlargement. The data used are from the Standard Barometer reports 69, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, 83, 85, 87, 89.

The data from the table illustrate a bigger opposition for enlargement compared to the support in a ten years period. In 2008 and a decade later the result changed only by one percent, while meantime the change was significant. The low support has a more constraining effect in France than in Germany. This is connected to the internal political divisions. While the French political landscape shows signs of Euroscepticism among some of the traditional parties, there is also a strong anti – EU party Front National. An

additional factor is that the French political elites failed to communicate the enlargement in a more positive way (Dursun-Ozkanca 2013).

Sjursen and Romsloe argue that the French enlargement policy and its insistence on institutional reforms are based on the idea of France as the “guardian of the idea of a political Europe” (Sjursen and Romsloe 2006: 144). According to that approach, the decision of France cannot be explained by strategic or economic interests, nor does the “rhetorical entrapment” argument holds (Sjursen and Romsloe 2006: 145–47). Put it differently, the French politicians should be taken by their word, when they express the intention firstly to integrate the Union prior to enlargement.

Some authors explained the French reluctance as the unwillingness to lose its impact on the decision making within the EU (Krotz and Schild 2013; Dursun-Ozkanca 2013: 253). In a similar vein, Skalnes argues that French reluctance to accept new members from the CEEC is connected to the fear of losing its impact within the Union, which would enable Germany to increase its power (Skalnes 2005: 215). The concern of losing leverage within the Union has been raised also by the French Prime Minister in the 1990s Édouard Balladur (Sjursen and Romsloe 2006: 149).

An additional factor is the constitutional setup of France for the enlargement. As of 2008 in the changed constitutional amendments, there is the provision of a referendum to accept new member States. The referendum can be overridden if three-fifths of the members of both chambers of the French legislative branch vote for the accession of a new country (Wunsch 2017: 545). In fact, the formal procedure for the accession of a new member State is the same as in case of a constitutional change. Thus, the threshold for the accession of new member States is very high in both cases. It is a very difficult task to convince the legislators to support further expansion, considering the tradition of questioning the enlargement since its beginnings. Firstly, it is due to a

lack of interest in France for the region of Western Balkans. The economic ties are at a very low level, and the question of security or geopolitics in the region does not play an important role in France.

Secondly, the reluctance of the accession of new member States reflects the overall political situation in the country. Put it differently, besides the Front National, the Republican Party has raised objections for further enlargement of the EU (Rieker 2005: 16–17; Wunsch 2017: 545). Furthermore, both candidates of the second round in the French Presidential elections in 2012, Sarkozy from the Republican Party, and Hollande from the Socialist Party have widely used Eurosceptic topics in their campaigns (Vassallo 2012). In different words, Euroscepticism has reached the mainstream political arena and has become a socially accepted topic. Furthermore, Front National has become a part of the political mainstream (Bastow 2018). This was also evident in the 2017 Presidential elections when Marine Le Pen won 5.5 million more votes compared to the 2002 Presidential elections in which her father Jean Marie was in the second round, of which 15 percent were Sarkozy supporters and 9 percent voters of the left (Backes 2019: 295).

Following the pattern that political parties use topics that appear unfavourable for the ruling parties, and use them to blame the ruling ones, it is more likely that the governing party will try to avoid these policies. Thus, the winning party is under constraint from other parties, because the opposition parties can publicly raise the issue, and try to capitalize on the issue that does not enjoy greater popularity among the population and other political parties. The changed political environment in the EU, with an increased number of the right-wing Eurosceptic parties, puts an additional constraint on the ruling parties, due to their ability to raise an issue.

The former French minister for European Affairs Nathalie Loiseau reiterated the French position in 2019 that the EU is not ready for enlargement until the EU is reformed. Furthermore, she underlined that the European elections in May 2019 could be crucial for the future of the EU (N1 2019a). Loiseau emphasized a few days before the 2019 European elections that she prevented the accession of the Macedonia and Albania into the EU (Süddeutsche Zeitung 2019), even though it was about the start of accession negotiations with these two countries and not the accession. The question of the future of the EU and the European elections is connected to the success or failure of the right-wing Eurosceptic parties. According to different polls, the right-wing Eurosceptic parties are expected to achieve a better result compared to the 2014 elections (Politico 2019; Euractiv 2019b). An increased number of the MEPs from the right-wing Eurosceptic parties would make the functioning of the EU more difficult, due to their ability to raise an issue in public. To put it another way, every policy that appears unfavourable to the Eurosceptic parties could become a salient one. This leads to the Münkler prediction (Chapter 2) of France being constrained by Front National when it comes to EU related topics (Münkler 2017).

On the other hand, the low support of the French citizens for the accession makes it practically impossible to accept new member States in the Union when asking them in a referendum whether they support further expansion of the EU. According to Yves Bertoncini, the President of the European Movement-France, “this reluctance to enlargement has become a dominant and almost neurotic trend in France, to the point of being in contradiction with our strategic interests” (Bertoncini in Mirel 2018b: 8).

Hence, the question of public opinion support for further enlargement is of greater importance in France, compared to Germany and the UK. In different words, an eventual enlarging agenda in France would rest on the Parliament. Considering the

increased Euroscepticism in France, the question of accession of new member States is a difficult task.

The already-mentioned decision of France to postpone the start of the accession negotiations with Albania and Macedonia are to be understood from all of the above-mentioned factors – the lack of strategic interest in the region, the reluctance of the citizens to accept the new member States, and the constraints from other political parties to support further expansion of the Union. The explanation of Macron to postpone the negotiations was based on the lack of the implementation of reforms (Politico 2018b). Yet, the unfavourable domestic politics make it difficult to “sell” the enlargement of the Western Balkans countries to the domestic audience. The decision to postpone the decision was made about a year ahead of the 2019 European elections, which is a relatively short period in which the opposing parties could blame the governing party for not following the will of people. This is especially the case compared to his 2017 speech at the Sorbonne University when he emphasized the importance of enlargement (Macron 2017), which is also underlined by the French political scientist Loïc Tregoures, who argues that the public opinion is the main reason for the ruling party to reject further enlargement (Tregoures 2018). Yet, the constraints from the domestic political arena do have an impact on decision making.

In sum, the rise of the Front National makes it difficult for the ruling parties to follow politics and to set certain agendas.

4.7 Chapter conclusions

This chapter has examined the EU enlargement policy in times of crisis with regard to Bosnia and Herzegovina. As BiH cannot be observed isolated from other Western Balkan States, and the EU enlargement policy is to a large extent aimed at the Balkan, the chapter often referred to the region as a whole. It was argued that the EU enlargement policy was “on hold” because it was constrained by the increased Euroscepticism and the internal crises. In 2014 the EU enlargement policy gradually started to be back on the agenda of some member States, and in 2017 it was back on the agenda due to increased impact of Russia and China in the region, and the democratic backsliding in Bosnia and other States in the region, which is by the EU Commission and some member States are seen as threatening of the member States interests.

The initiative for a new approach towards the region came from the member States, most notably Germany, and to a lesser extent from the UK. These two countries have proven throughout history as firm enlargement supporters, while some other States, most notably France, have expressed concerns with regard to enlargement. The internal perception of the enlargement policy has proved to be an obstacle for the EU institutions for an effective enlargement policy. In fact, the internal perceptions about the necessity of the widening of the Union send a signal to BiH, and other States in the region, of the reluctance towards enlargement, which opens the space for other actors to be more active in the region.

5 Bosnia and Herzegovina

5.1 Chapter introduction

The main foreign policy goal of Bosnia and Herzegovina is membership in the European Union. There is a broad consensus among political parties in BiH to achieve this goal, and the majority of Bosnian citizens support the EU integration process.

One of the six republics of former Yugoslavia, which became independent in 1992, is coping with several issues that are halting a faster integration process. The Constitution of this country is an annex of the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) that stopped the bloody war in the 1990s. The political system is highly complicated and provides a substantial amount of built-in blocking mechanisms that are frequently used by the political parties in order to achieve party-specific goals. Another specific part of Bosnia and Herzegovina is the High Representative (HR), a foreigner who is responsible for the civic implementation of the DPA. The High Representative was provided with the so-called Bonn Powers in 1997, enabling the High Representative to impose law and sanctions (Office of the High Representative 1997). Due to the powers of the High Representative, some commentators label BiH as an “international protectorate” (Parish cited in Banning 2015: 262). Indeed to a large extent political elites, primarily Bosniak ones, have insisted on the role of the HR to impose sanctions and decisions when there was a stalemate in the country. Yet, as time passes, an active role in the political life of the OHR has decreased significantly.

Furthermore, there is no consensus among the members of the political parties on how the State should be built. At the moment there are two entities and one district, and one of the entities is divided into ten cantons. Each of these entities and the cantons has their own constitution, which makes it 13 constitutions, and a statute of the district,

in a country that has a territory slightly bigger than Slovakia, and a population of 3.51 million.

According to Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), every European country that complies with the values the EU is based on, is eligible to apply for membership (TEU). Bosnia and Herzegovina submitted its official request for the membership in February 2016, yet it is still questionable to what extent Bosnia complies with the values the EU is based on. Still, the status of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a potential candidate for full membership in the EU. The following subsection will make an overview of the EU-Bosnia relations. The chapter will proceed with a short discussion about the democratic deficit in Bosnia and Hercegovina. It follows then with a discussion about nationalism and Bosnian relations to its neighbours.

5.2 Bosnian and EU relations

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a potential candidate country for membership in the European Union. Its closer relations have started two years after the end of the war. In 1997 the EU has established the political and economic conditionality for the development of bilateral relations with the Western Balkans States. Two years after the first step, in 1999 the EU has proposed to start the new Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) with the Western Balkan States (Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina 2017). This was an introduction of giving a membership perspective to the Western Balkan States, which was officially announced in 2000 when the European Council concluded that all SAP countries are potential candidates for full membership in the EU (European Council 2000). The

membership perspective for all WB States was confirmed in the 2003 Thessaloniki European Council summit (European Council 2003). Later that year the EU has produced a Feasibility Study to assess the capacity of Bosnia and Herzegovina to implement the SAA, where 16 key priorities were identified to be solved. The SAA negotiations have started in 2005 and have been completed in 2006, but it did not come into force due to a lack of progress in BiH. In particular, the police reform was one of the major conditions to be fulfilled by Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to sign and ratify the SAA (Pejanović 2015: 116).

In 2007 the European Commission assessed that there is sufficient agreement to implement reforms in BiH, and thus SAA was initiated. In the following year, the EC and Bosnia have signed the SAA and the Interim agreement on trade. Yet, the SAA did not come into force until 2015 due to a lack of progress in the Sejdić-Finci case. Namely, the European Court for Human Rights decided in 2009 that the “Others,” as defined in the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, are discriminated, because they cannot run for State Presidency and cannot be delegated to the House of People of the Parliament of BiH. These positions are reserved for the members of the three dominant ethnic groups – Serbs, Bosniaks, and Croats. The reasoning behind the decision of the EU to postpone the entering into force of the SAA is based on Article 2 of the Agreement, which refers to the respect of human rights as defined by the European Convention on Human Rights, on which the Court based its decision. In the following years, two more decisions of the European Court of Human Rights have been made related to the discrimination of Bosnian citizens regarding passive voting rights. The second precondition for further integration process was the Law on Population Census. The Law was adopted and implemented in 2013. Yet, the results from the

State Agency for Statistics are not recognized by the statistical body of RS, as they claim there are fewer inhabitants in that entity than the census results suggest.

However, the decision in the Sejdić-Finci case has not been implemented yet, but the new approach of the EU, introduced by Germany and UK, puts economic reforms as the main goals to be implemented, while the human rights case was not the decisive factor for further integration, but it remains as a condition. Officially, the decision behind the new approach was the stalling reform process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the violent protests in 2014 when citizens in several Bosnian towns demanded the improvement of the overall economic situation in the country. Based on the new approach, the State and the entity governments in BiH have agreed to implement the Reform Agenda, which should create a more suitable legislative framework for better economic performances. Such development has decreased the power of conditionality in BiH because the demands have been changed.

The new approach was preceded by the Berlin process in August 2014. The goal of the process was to improve the cooperation and economic performances among the Western Balkan States in order to increase stability in the region and to solve unresolved issues. The Berlin process is followed by annual multilateral meetings in which all Western Balkan States and several EU member States participate in order to agree on new regional projects to enhance regional cooperation. The former German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel has proposed the Berlin Plus programme, that should follow the Berlin process. The programme should include more financial support for reforms and infrastructural projects for the countries of Western Balkans. Some media referred to Berlin Plus as a “Marshall Plan” for Western Balkans. Yet, the programme was not presented in detail.

In 2016 BiH has submitted its official application for the EU membership. The precondition for the application was an agreement on a coordination mechanism that should enable Bosnia to speak with a “one voice”. The “one voice” is a frequent expression used to describe the necessity in Bosnia and Herzegovina to find a common solution – a compromise. It refers to the need to adopt and legitimize specific policies with regard to the EU integration process among the political actors. However, the divisions within the country prove to be an obstacle for an effective “one voice” approach. It reflects also the different understandings of the political elites for the State architecture.

The negotiations to reach an agreement proved to be very difficult. The final document reflects the complicated constitutional framework of BiH, with numerous blocking mechanisms. This was evident in the “real” first test of the mechanism during the negotiations on the questionnaire from the European Commission, the so-called *acquis*, after the submission of the membership application. After the agreement between different governmental bodies for more than 3000 questions, the government of the Republic of Srpska on the one side, and the State government on the other side struggled to agree on a number of questions due to different perceptions on several issues, including terrorist threat and the results of the population census. The Commission asked for clarification for several hundred questions, which is the usual procedure. After the final provision of questions in 2019, 22 questions remained unanswered due to the inability to reach an agreement. Some of the questions are related to education and why 13 Constitutional Court decisions remain unimplemented. The lack of compromise is evidence of the ethnically-divided society, but also evidence of strongly opposing views of the nature of the country.

When it comes to popular support for accession in the EU, some data suggest that 56 percent of citizens support that goal in 2018 (Nezavisne novine 2018), while in 2016 the support was 76 percent (Directorate for European Integration 2016: 6). Yet, there is a significant difference between the two entities. While the support in 2016 in the Republic of Srpska is slightly over 50 percent, the support in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is 91 percent (Directorate for European Integration 2016: 6). The big difference between the attitudes is the result of the more critical authorities within the RS with regard to the EU, questioning from time to time the integration process, while the authorities in FBiH have shown more commitment towards the EU integration process. However, there is also a decline of the support for the EU membership in BiH, which can be led back to the crisis in the EU (Segert 2013: 226).

5.3 Democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The analysis in this subchapter is following the argument that a country, which is committed to liberal norms and values, is more likely to join the EU (Mattli and Plümper 2002; Schimmelfennig 2005). Furthermore, it is more likely to cooperate in an organization, such as the EU if there is compliance with common rules.

It will be examined to what extent BiH is a democracy, even there are democratically elected representatives, democratic institutions and clear division of powers. It is argued that BiH suffers from a democratic deficit. Hence, the democratic practices are an important element of democracy, since democracy extends beyond formal institutions, and norms as will more be elaborated below.

Four arguments will be used to support the claim. Firstly, the lack of civic participation in decision-making processes. Secondly, the undermining of institutions while

discussing legislative proposals, and authoritarian leaders whose power exceeds the power given by the official position they held. Thirdly, the lack of the rule of law will be presented by using the case of the Day of RS. Finally, the socialist tradition has to be considered as well as a factor that can partially explain the democratic deficit. A few months after the first democratic elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina in November 1991, a war broke out that has caused deep ethnic tensions that prevented a democracy's learning process in the country. In the end, possible consequences caused by the democratic deficit will be discussed.

According to the Freedom House Report Nations in Transit from 2017, Bosnia is a partially free country that has a score of 4.54 on a scale between 1 and 7, where 1 is the highest score of democratic progress, and 7 is the lowest. Following the data from 2008, when the score was 4.11, democratic progress has worsened every year (Freedom House 2017: 1). However, it has to be noted that the scores do not consider the “legacies of the predecessor regimes” and therefore these scores have limitations for the explanation (Džihic, Segert, and Wieser 2012: 89). Thus, due to war, there was no democratization process in the country.

It is argued that Bosnia and Herzegovina has a democratic deficit, due to a lack of democratic practices in which the official institutions are undermined. Mujkić (Mujkić in Džihic and Wieser 2011) calls these practices illiberal, while Džihic and Wieser define it as “Ethnocracy” or “ethnopolitics”. “Ethnocracy’ or ‘ethnopolitics’ finally refer to a system where political elites use fear as a ‘political principle’ to maximise their power and leave aside the interests of citizens” (Džihic and Wieser 2011: 1811). This can be well perceived from the perspective of Mudde’s understanding of populism. As already noted in Chapter 2, Mudde defines populism as an ideology that divides the society into two parts – the ordinary citizens versus the corrupt elites, and the politics should

be the “expression of the will of the people”. Yet, contrary to the “traditional” populism in which the populist parties are mostly in the opposition, the ruling parties in Bosnia use the populist strategy to divide the society along ethnic lines. Thus, it is the elites that push the citizens into specific ethnic groups in order to gain or stay in power, and other ethnic groups are perceived as the threat.

These practices have their roots in the Constitutional framework of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was designed to stop the war and to ensure governmental participation of all ethnic groups. Although the DPA has ensured peace after the bloody war, which is an often-overlooked fact, the provisions remain to a large extent unanswered what kind of democracy Bosnia should be (Keil and Kudlenko 2015). This fact leads to different interpretations under which conditions Bosnia can sustain.

The constitutional setting provides numerous blocking mechanisms which are used frequently in order to achieve party-specific goals. These goals are justified as the protection of the ethnic group the party is claiming to represent. Thus, the leadership of State institutions is also divided along ethnic lines. It has to be ensured that members of all ethnic groups, or constituent people, and “other citizens”, as it is defined in the Constitution, work in the institutions. Yet, the “other citizens” are to a large extent marginalized from the political life in Bosnia. As dominant, the leaders of ethnic political parties did not show much willingness to make a compromise which would lead to power-sharing of an additional group of actors.

These practices are evident through discussions about the adoption of new laws or discussions with regard to constitutional changes. The involvement of citizens in the process of public consultations is limited (Ministry of Justice of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2012), and to a large extent also of the parliaments, because important issues are discussed among party leaders behind closed doors and these are given to the

parliament just to vote on the issue (Pejanović 2015: 117). A reason for such a development could be found in the relations of the EU and BiH, when the EU was interacting with Bosnian political elites, without the involvement of citizens (Džihic and Wieser 2011: 1804).

There are several examples to support the argument. The EU approach was very much evident when the negotiations about the implementation of the Sejdić-Finci case were held under the leadership of the, at that time, EU Commissioner for Enlargement Stefan Füle. The public did not receive any relevant information about the proposals, while the negotiations were held behind closed doors in diverse Bosnian restaurants, Hungarian and Czech capitals, Budapest and Prague, and even in EU Delegation in Sarajevo, but not inside the State parliament, which was harshly criticized by the civil society (Koalicija Jednakost 2013). Furthermore, the information provided by the BiH participants of these meetings was contradictory to a large extent. Thus, it was not very much clear what was proposed. The decision of the European Court for Human Rights in the Sejdić – Finci case in 2009 was that Bosnian Constitution is violating the rights of “Others”, as they are defined in the Constitution because citizens who do not belong to any of the constituent people cannot run for office in the Presidency.

This was the crucial condition set by the EU to progress in the integration process until the new approach of the UK and Germany has started in 2014. The new approach emphasized the economic reforms, rather than human rights issues. Moreover, as the Sejdić – Finci case was the condition to proceed with the process, the Bosnian political elites have emphasized this question as crucial to continue towards EU integration, rather than emphasizing the importance of equality of all persons, as one of the cornerstones of democracy.

More examples that concern important questions without citizens' involvement are other initiatives about the constitutional reform in BiH, such as the internationally led Butmir process, or the domestic initiative such as the Prud process. Furthermore, the lack of civic participation was also evident in the Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where to a large extent the laws from the so-called reform agenda were adopted either in the urgent or short procedure. For example, since the beginning of the mandate 2014-2018, and until the end of 2017, the urgent procedure was used 43 times, and the short procedure was used 36 times (Parlament Federacije BiH 2018). By definition, these procedures are used when there is a concern that lack of a legal act, or when the existing legal acts that should be amended, could cause harm to the State. Thus, these procedures give a little or no possibility to be discussed or to propose amendments either in the public or within the parliaments, while at the same time it gives the ruling majority the possibility of defining the threats that could harm the State. However, the idea behind using these procedures is to send a signal to the EU of a highly efficient legislative body, and it makes it far simpler to adopt the laws without or with limited space for discussions. The EU, on the other hand, was satisfied that the legal acts have been adopted, rather than questioning its procedures.

The consequences of these practices have a negative impact on the democratization process of Bosnia and Herzegovina, because such practices create a standard which is the opposite of the one desired, or required in the EU. Furthermore, these practices undermine the official State institutions. The understanding of the democratic process is, *inter alia*, civic engagement. Namely, in the ideal case citizens' role in the democratic process goes beyond elections, i.e. citizens should play an active role in the legislative process.

“Democracy consists of much more than elections of a certain procedural quality. The level of participation (not only in elections) as well as the practice of representation are crucial indicators for the responsiveness of the whole political system and the durability of democratic order” (Džihic, Segert, and Wieser 2012: 89).

Such procedures discourage civic engagement and could have long-term consequences. The democratic deficit is also evident through the authoritarian leaders of the ruling political parties (House of Lords 2017: 31), who in most cases hold relevant political positions. However, often their real power exceeds the power given by the official position they hold. They have a significant impact on the governmental politics, reaching from approving or rejecting legislative and other official proposals of the legislative and executive government, to the work of public companies. In case of changing the official position, the change does not cause any loss of power of the party leader, as long the party is in power. These persons have significant media exposure, and the impression is created that the whole system relies on one person. They are the referral point for citizens to solve problems, rather than the responsible persons or institutions. Bieber calls these political systems competitive authoritarian regimes, which are combined by institutional weakness, and authoritarian political actors (Bieber 2018: 338).

A good example is the President of the Republic of Srpska Milorad Dodik who was called by protesting workers from the Public Railroad Company of RS to solve their problems – to ensure they receive their salaries. After his visit and the promise for solving the issues, the workers ended the protests. Thus, a great number of citizens are not aware of the importance of institutions, and the competences of persons holding offices. Similar practices can be also observed in Serbia and Montenegro.

Thus institutions, which are essential for democracy (Dahl 2001: 3407), seem not to matter, but rather a strong person. This is due to the framing of a person in public. Citizens have little information about the competences of specific political positions and they rather rely on information they receive from the statements of the politicians who hold office and the interpretation of loyal media. The self-presentation as the defenders of the specific ethnic group, rather than referring to competences given by the legislation, become a dominant paradigm in the public. More concrete, this is very much evident among the members of State Presidency, when they refer to themselves as Bosniak, Croat or Serb members of the Presidency, rather than members from the Bosniak, Croat and Serb people, as it is defined by the Constitution. In their speech acts, they go beyond the constitutional competences and present their positions as ethnic defenders. This has to be understood as strategically use of crises, and self-presentation as crisis managers (Bieber 2018: 345–46). Furthermore, it is often very difficult to understand if they act as party politicians or as members of the Presidency. The rule of law, “as a part of wider concept of democracy” (Lautenbach 2013: 200), remains a critical issue in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is evident through weak judicial institutions. The best-known example to illustrate the weakness is the referendum about the January the 9th, the Day of Republic of Srpska, after the Presidency member from the Bosniak people Bakir Izetbegović made an appeal to the Constitutional Court claiming that the holiday is also a Christian Orthodox holiday, and it is discriminating those not belonging to the Serb majority in RS. Namely, that day in 1992 the Assembly of the Serb People in Bosnia and Herzegovina⁶ declared the independence of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

⁶ The Assembly was established at the end of 1991 by Serb MPs in the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina, after they adopted the memorandum “Platform for Reaffirmation of the Sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina”

The Constitutional Court has decided in November 2015 that January the 9th is not in accordance with the State Constitution and therefore it is discriminating non-Serbs. The RS Assembly made also an appeal to the Court in 2016, but the Court decided in September 2016 not to review the case, because no new evidence was presented and suspended temporarily the holding of the referendum. Yet, the referendum was held, despite the calls from the Bosniak political parties, the Office of the High Representative (Office of the High Representative 2016) the Western powers (European Union External Action 2016; State Department 2016) not to organize it, while the referendum was supported by the Russian Federation (Faktor 2016).

There were no legal consequences for the organizers of the referendum, despite the hearing of several officials, including Milorad Dodik, in the State Prosecutors Office. Nevertheless, the case was closed after the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina rejected the indictment of the Prosecutor (N1 2018).

The only consequence is that the US Government imposed sanctions on the President of Republika Srpska, because “Dodik was designated for his role in defying the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina in violation of the rule of law, thereby actively obstructing the Dayton Accords; Dodik was also designated for conduct that poses a significant risk of actively obstructing the same” (U.S. Department of the Treasury 2017).

This example illustrates well the weak judicial system in Bosnia and Herzegovina that could have far-reaching consequences. The judicial branch of power is undermined, and it seems that the State does not have the instruments to impose sanctions on those violating the legally binding decisions of the Constitutional Court, which is already above mentioned as one of two explanations for authoritarian regimes in the region. The initiative of the European Union to reform the judicial branch in 2011 has failed so

far (Džankić and Keil 2019: 190). The rejections of the political elites to implement judicial decisions are undermining the State institutions, and it could lead to legal anarchy. Furthermore, it opens the possibilities of new, already announced, referendums from RS, or another action violating the law. New referendums would lead to new crises within the country.

However, the democratic deficit cannot be led back only to the EU and its member States, but also to domestic political actors. The socialist tradition has to be considered as well (Segert 2013: 164-165). To put it differently, Bosnia, like other Western Balkans States, has no democratic history. During the socialist times, the communist party that was in power controlled nearly every sphere of the State, from politics to media, freedoms, and the economy. Similar patterns can be observed in today's' BiH. Even there is a party pluralism, politics tends to control nearly every sphere of life. The situation very much applies to what Bönker, Beichelt, and Wielgoths have identified as “cultural pessimism.”⁷ That pessimism includes nationalism, lack of a culture of compromise, an orientation towards leading figures, lack of trust in institutions, ideological vacuum, egalitarianism, etatism, and lack of a self-initiative (Bönker, Beichelt, and Wielgoths 2004: 5).

Carothers calls this democratic deficit as a “grey zone”. The political system of Bosnia and Herzegovina is well described as “feckless pluralism” (Carothers 2002: 10).

In Carothers' words:

“Countries whose political life is marked by feckless pluralism tend to have significant amounts of political freedom, regular elections, and alternation of power between genuinely different political groupings. Despite these positive features, however, democracy remains shallow and troubled. Political participation, though broad at

⁷ The wording “cultural pessimism” is translated by the author. The original wording in German is *kulturalistischer Pessimismus*”

election time, extends little beyond voting. Political elites from all the major parties or groupings are widely perceived as corrupt, self-interested, and ineffective. The alternation of power seems only to trade the country's problems back and forth from one hapless side to the other. Political elites from all the major parties are widely perceived as corrupt, self-interested, dishonest, and not serious about working for their country. The public is seriously disaffected from politics, and while it may still cling to a belief in the ideal of democracy, it is extremely unhappy about the political life of the country. Overall, politics is widely seen as a stale, corrupt, elite-dominated domain that delivers little good to the country and commands equally little respect. And the State remains persistently weak” (2002: 10).

Indeed the citizens of BiH tend to have little trust in the institutions and perceive the political actors and State institutions as corrupt. In particular, the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Barometer from 2017 indicates that 88 percent of Bosnian citizens perceive political parties as corrupt, 85 percent the parliament as corrupt, and 83 percent perceive the judicial institutions as corrupt. Furthermore, the least perceived as corrupt is the military, for which 59 percent of the respondents believe it is corrupt, while 61 percent believe that the religious bodies are corrupt. According to the same report, BiH “leads the corruption perception charts with a high proportion of respondents reporting corruption across the institutional landscape” (Regional Cooperation Council 2017, 132). The institutional setup is fragile, and the political elites do not make efforts to strengthen it. Furthermore, the institutions are undermined. As a consequence, citizens have little trust in institutions. Thus, democracy implies democratic practices that go beyond normative acts. Consequentially, the State and its institutions are not legitimized by a large part of citizens. This also leads to the slowed democratization process.

In short, there are four major issues concerning the democratization process of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Firstly, there is a lack of civic participation in public discussions with regard to important questions. This participation was discouraged both, by the internal and external factors, when citizens were circumvented in the discussions. Secondly, authoritarian political leaders and negotiations about important issues outside the institutions are stalling the democratization process in the country. Thirdly, the weak judicial institutions open the path to undermine the State and to deepen the existing political crisis. Finally, the lack of democracy learning process remains an issue.

Such developments could have far-reaching consequences not only for Bosnia and Herzegovina but also for the EU. Assumed, once Bosnia joins the EU, it brings its issues within the Union and automatically these issues become a shared problem of the Union, while at the same time the institutional setup of the EU makes it difficult to impose sanctions in a State that violates the rules. In terms of democracy, Bosnian understanding of that governance model does not match the understanding of the desired model of democracy.

The international actors have contributed to this development by accepting to negotiate with party leaders outside the institutions and circumventing the citizens. In her study on Macedonia, Richter also holds the EU responsible for stalling democratic processes due to the EU's emphasis on security issues rather than on the democratization of the States in Western Balkans (Richter 2012). Due to its internal problems, the EU policies towards Western Balkans are described to be "on an Auto-pilot mode" (Kmezić and Bieber 2017: 5). Thus, the relations between the EU and the Western Balkan countries have continued on a technical level, while at the political level the EU showed fewer incentives to cope with Western Balkans, due to crises and rising Euroscepticism. The Western Balkan countries lacked a real commitment from the EU during that period.

The democratization of Bosnia and Herzegovina remains a crucial issue to be solved prior to accession negotiations. The conditionality seems not to work in the Western Balkan States, as it did with the CEEC, even some new member States express also a different understanding of democracy more than ten years after the accession. Also, considering experiences with some States from the previous enlargement rounds, most notably Poland and Hungary, the EU has changed its approach towards the Balkan States. The emphasis is more on the rule of law (Börzel 2014). Therefore, the first chapters to open in accession negotiations, and the last ones to close, are the chapters concerning the rule of law. This was necessary, as the rule of law is essential for democracy. Democracy cannot work, as long the rule of law does not apply to every person. The identified deficiencies regarding the rule of law in the new member states have contributed to this decision.

The MPs from the European Parliament have already tasted the bitter taste of Bosnian elites' understanding of democracy, when a group of the MPs from the Parliament of BiH demanded that for all decisions within the Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee (SAPC), that consists of members of the European and the Bosnian Parliament, there should be a consensus among the three dominant ethnic groups to make a decision. More concrete, the MPs from the entity Republika Srpska demand that there should be entity voting in the common body (Klix 2016). In fact, the idea is to copy the model of decision making from the State parliament and to paste it in the common body. On the other hand, such a proposal is not accepted by the European MPs, and the body never started to work. This would also eventually make an exception for other aspiring States to impose their domestic political practices into the EU legal framework.

Furthermore, the political elites in Bosnia and Herzegovina did not support fully the democratization process because these elites make cost benefits calculations. Simply, if the costs exceed the benefits, it is more likely that the elites will not support a policy (Freyburg and Richter 2010; Richter 2012). Thus, in order to achieve political change and make progress, the pressure from the EU must be followed by the domestic pressure of the applicant country (Börzel 2016: 101). Yet, the pressure from within the country remains weak, but also the pressure from the EU remains weak as well. As already argued in the previous chapter, the internal divisions within the EU with regard to the enlargement policy towards WB in general, and BiH in particular, reduces the scope of the EU to act in Bosnia. The Union appears to be indecisive, and its commitment to integrate the Balkan States into the EU is under question.

5.3.1 Nationalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The political situation in BiH is complicated to a large extent. Due to its constitutional setup and ethnic divisions the country is in a constant crisis, especially since 2006 when the Office of the High Representative decided to not use the Bonn Powers, which gives the possibility to the High Representative to impose laws or sanctions, such as banns to hold an office. On the one hand, the idea was to enable local political elites to take responsibility (Schwarz-Schilling 2006), and on the other hand, there was no consensus among the foreign powers to support the daily interference into the local politics. The international actors decided the year as the momentum for BiH to be the main decision maker in regarding its own affairs led by the EU in order to make progress in the EU integration process.

The decision to hand over the responsibility to local political elites in 2006 marks an important turn in Bosnian politics. Because of the new passive role of the OHR, the nationalism was rising. Simply, there was no fear of a sanction for the political elites. “The announcement that the Bonn Powers would no longer be used except in narrow circumstances, the “rehabilitation” of some of BiH’s more infamous political actors, and the tacit message to Milorad Dodik that he could threaten an independence referendum for RS so long as he didn’t organize one, further diminished the credibility of the international community” (Democratization Policy Council 2007).

The nationalistic rhetoric started in 2006 when, at that time, the Head of Party for BiH (SBiH) Haris Silajdžić announced his plans to abolish RS. At the same time, the Head of SNSD Milorad Dodik revealed the intention to organize an independence referendum for that entity (Toal 2013). However, none of these intentions have been realized. There was no support from the international powers for both of the ideas, nor to change the political structure of Bosnia, nor to allow the independence of RS, which is the crucial step (Ker-Lindsay 2016). Later that year, both parties came into power. Nationalism proved to be a recipe for a successful election campaign. As none of the political actors faced any sanctions but was rather rewarded in the elections, the nationalistic rhetoric became the dominant one in the public sphere in the following period. The defence of ethnic interests became the primary goal of the nationalistic political parties in BiH. Some authors use the prisoner’s dilemma to explain the prevailing ethnopolitics in BiH. The logic is that people vote for nationalist parties due to the fear of others to vote for nationalists parties. Hence, in order to protect themselves from others, they are likely to support “their” own politicians, instead of candidates from multi-ethnic parties (Mujkić and Hulsey 2010).

The ethnic divisions in the country revealed the different ideas about the political structure of the country. While Bosniak political parties favour a more centralized State, Serb political parties favour a stronger entity or independence, Croat political parties favour the third entity with a Croat majority. In different words, Bosnia and Herzegovina with its Dayton constitution are not legitimized by the political elites. The different views led the country into a stalemate since 2006, with limited success in the reform processes. Important reforms, such as the introduction of the Value Added Tax, or the defence reform in which a common State army was established, were only possible by the intervention or pressure of the OHR prior to 2006.

5.4 Regional relations

The relations to neighbouring Serbia and Croatia have also a significant impact on Bosnian politics. The politics of Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot be observed without looking at its relations with the neighbouring countries – Croatia and Serbia. This is due to the population of BiH – which dominantly consists of Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats. The political elites from Croatia and Serbia have an impact on the political elites in Bosnia. More concrete, the political elites from Zagreb have close ties to Croat political elites in BiH, in particular to the dominant Croat nationalist Party Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ). The Serbian political elites have close ties to the ruling political parties in the Republic of Srpska. Besides the close ties with political parties, these two countries are signatories of the Dayton Peace Agreement which ended the war in the 1990s. The signature of the Dayton Agreement and the ethnic structure are used as the arguments of Serbia and Croatia for interference in the political life of BiH,

while Croatia additionally refers to their constitution that foresees the care about Croats outside Croatia.

5.4.1 Serbia

The relations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia can be described as complicated. It is rather difficult to speak about relations to a single State, but rather to entities, as the Dayton Peace Agreement defines the possibility to have special relations of the Bosnian entities towards the neighbouring States (Mladenov 2014: 163). Despite the official statements from both States about friendly relations, there are repeating setbacks in the relations of both countries. These setbacks are mainly due to different interpretations of the Bosnian war in the 1990s and the occasional questioning of the Bosnian Statehood by high officials of Serbia.

Different views about the nature of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina between Bosniak and Serbian officials are still a topic of dispute among the countries. This rhetoric evolves especially during the commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide. The attack of the visitors at the 2015 Srebrenica genocide memorial on Serbian, at that time, Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić is still a topic of dispute between the two countries. On the other hand, the failed unilateral action in 2017 of the member of the Presidency from the Bosniak people Bakir Izetbegović with regard to the appeal to International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the case against Serbia has created a crisis, which eventually ended after the ICJ revealed that BiH did not officially appoint a legal representative (Balkan Insight 2017a).

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled in 2007 upon the Application from BiH versus Yugoslavia that there was genocide committed in Srebrenica (International

Court of Justice 2007: 127), and that “It has not been shown that the FRY army took part in the massacres, nor that the political leaders of the FRY had a hand in preparing, planning or in any way carrying out the massacres”. At the same time, the ICJ Stated that “there is much evidence of direct or indirect participation by the official army of the FRY, along with the Bosnian Serb armed forces, in military operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the years prior to the events at Srebrenica” (International Court of Justice 2007: 163).

However, the ICJ ruled that Serbia failed to prevent and punish genocide (International Court of Justice 2007: 190), but Serbia officially refuses to name the Srebrenica massacre a genocide. The Parliament of Serbia adopted in 2010 a Resolution apologising for the massacre, yet avoiding the term “genocide” (BBC News 2010), while Tomislav Nikolić during his Presidency avoided the term genocide as well (Deutsche Welle 2012a). This stand has also continued from the executive government of Serbia.

The governments of Serbia legitimated the endeavours of SNSD, which is in power since 2006. The former head of the Democratic Party in Serbia (DS) and the former President of Serbia Boris Tadić had regular meetings with Milorad Dodik and has supported him during elections and other public events, and vice versa. However, Boris Tadić emphasized on a regular basis the support for the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The relationship between the authorities of Serbia and RS is reported in the WikiLeaks documents from the US Embassy in Belgrade.

“Although Bosnia’s State-level ministries have some necessary contacts with Serbia’s, the fact that Belgrade has continued to develop close ties with the RS via the 2006 bilateral Framework for Special Parallel Relations between Serbia and the Republika Srpska may help the RS undermine Bosnia’s State institutions legitimate efforts to

exclusively exercise State-level competencies – not least foreign policy...” (cited in Bassuener 2011).

More intensified policies towards Bosnia and Herzegovina continued also after the change of the Government in Serbia in 2012 when the Serb Progress Party (SNS), led by the current Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić, came into power. The meetings with officials of the entity are on a more regular basis, compared to those on the State level. The relations have worsened when, at that time, Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić stated that “Bosnia and Herzegovina is fading away”, which was in Bosnia understood as undermining of the State (Deutsche Welle 2012b). In other words, there is a lack of legitimacy of the Serbian officials for the Bosnian State. This was also evident in the case of the Kosovo independence declaration when high officials from Serbia, such as at that time the foreign minister Vuk Drašković, made a link between Kosovo and RS (Maksic 2009: 49). In short, Serbia challenges Bosnian sovereignty (Huskić 2014: 132).

The Serb political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the other hand, identify themselves rather with Serbian Government than to the one at the State level of BiH. More concrete, the SNSD is aiming to harmonise its policies to the ones of Serbia, while neglecting already agreed reforms in BiH. An example that illustrates these practices is the in 2017 adopted Declaration on Military Neutrality in the People’s Assembly of RS (NSRS), following the Serbian official policy of military neutrality. The Declaration foresees coordination with Serbia in every future endeavor with regard to military cooperation (Narodna Skupština Republike Srpske 2017).⁸

Although BiH has submitted its formal request to enter the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) in 2009, which was signed by the, at the time, member of the State

⁸ The text of the Declaration is available only in Cyrillic

Presidency Nebojša Radmanović from SNSD, this obligation is neglected by the ruling political parties in RS (Balkan Insight 2017b). This is one the one hand connected to the Russian support for RS, but also it serves for domestic purposes in order to gain support from the citizens, as RS was bombed by NATO in 1995 (more in detail in Chapter 5). The weak, and at the same time complex institutional setup prevents the institutions to take a more proactive step towards respecting the rule of law.

The border dispute between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia remains an issue to be solved. The demarcation agreement has not been ratified yet. The border disputes are among the goals to be solved prior to accession in the EU, as announced by Jean Claude Juncker. The Juncker statement was made due to the unresolved dispute between Slovenia and Croatia. This issue has been tackled prior to the Croatian accession in 2013 as Slovenia insisted to solve the issue (Šabić Šelo 2014: 79–80), yet after the accession, it remains still open. The issue has exposed the EU as powerless after the accession of Croatia. However, the powerless role of the EU is well extended also to other cases, and not only to border dispute. While the Serbian President proposes an exchange of territories, which is supported by Dodik, the Bosnian side urges Serbia to ratify the demarcation agreement prior to any negotiations about a possible exchange of territories. The logic behind the proposal is Serbian hydro-plants on the Drina River, which is to a large extent the border between two countries but both sides of the river are flooded. The flooded areas are subject to compensation for the local communities. Yet, the Bosnian government emphasizes that there are no payments for decades to the local communities on the Bosnian side. Although this issue has not been salient in the recent past, it is more likely that this issue will become in the following years, due to the announcement of the Head of

European Commission Jean Claude Juncker that any border dispute must be resolved prior to accession to the EU.

5.4.2 Croatia

Croatian politics towards Bosnia and Herzegovina should be perceived prior to and after the EU accession in 2013. While prior to accession the focus of the Croatian Government was to prepare the State for the EU membership, after the accession the country has become more engaged towards BiH. The justification of Croat officials for the active approach towards BiH is justified by the Croatian constitutional provision to protect Croats outside Croatia (Šabić Šelo 2014: 80). The less active approach prior to accession can also be understood as avoidance of any potential political conflicts that could threaten Croatian EU aspirations. Simply, Croatia was insecure about how the EU would react to its eventual interference in Bosnian politics.

After the accession, the first big step was made in 2014 when the Croatian Government, led by the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and Croatian People's Party (HNS), made a proposition to grant BiH a special status in the EU integration process. The initiative was welcomed by Bosnian authorities, but it was not supported by other EU member States. This fact should be perceived in light of the crises in the EU and the little impact Croatia has in the Union. The enlargement policy was undesirable due to the crises, but also because the aim of the EU was to manage the issues related to economic growth. Simply, there was no consensus for such a policy. The enlargement agenda was part only in a small number of countries, as explained in Chapter 3. Secondly, such a scenario would create a precedent in which the conditionality would weaken, or even diminish. As a consequence, the initiative was soon off the table.

The change of the government in Croatia, when HDZ took power, changed also its policies towards Bosnia. Namely, the Croatian government has become more engaged to promote the interests of Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a member of the EU Croatia gained new leverage and was able to present its policies more openly, without the fear that their policies could have a negative impact on the Croatian EU path. Such practices have already been used by some member States to block the accession process of other States, like in the case of the name dispute between Greece and Macedonia, or the above-mentioned case of Slovenia and Croatia over the Bay of Piran. The issue of bilateral disputes was also recognized in the Berlin process initiative at the Western Balkans Summit 2015 in Vienna when the participating countries committed themselves to abstain from “misusing outstanding issues in the EU accession process” (Western Balkans Summit Vienna 2015: 2).

The most vocal Croatian actor was the former President of Croatia Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, who actively lobbied among the big powers to put pressure on Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to adopt a new Election Law that was proposed by the HDZ in BiH (Balkan Insight 2018). The proposal foresees territorial areas from which the member of the State Presidency from the Croat ethnic group and the members of House of People would be elected. Yet, the initiative failed due to Bosniak demands to solve the European Court of Human Rights cases which are all connected to the passive voting rights of Bosnian citizens, but it caused a political damage between, on the one side Bosniak elites in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and on the other side, the Croat elites in Croatia and Bosnia.

The issue over the Election Law became significant in 2006 when the, at that time, member of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) Željko Komšić was elected as a member of the State Presidency from the Croat People. Komšić was elected mainly by Bosniaks

(Bosnian Muslims), which was problematic for all of the Croat ethnic parties, by claiming that he is not a legitimate representative of the Croat people within the Presidency.

In his defence, Komšić emphasized that the members of the Presidency do not represent specific ethnic groups, but the State. In 2010 he was elected again as the member of the Presidency, following a political crisis. The question of legitimate representation remains the basic and main argument of HDZ to question his election, even in 2018 when Komšić defeated the HDZ President Dragan Čović in the presidential election. The pressure from Croatian officials continued also within the EU bodies, which led to a conflict between Croatia, on the one side, and all other EU member States, on the other, during the 'Committee of the Permanent Representatives of the Governments of the Member States to the European Union (COREPER) meeting in July 2017. The meeting was held ahead of the Second Stabilization and Association (SAA) Council meeting between BiH and the EU when Croatia "...forcefully resisted mentioning "equality of citizens" in the joint EU SAA meeting position of the Commission and the member States. Instead, Zagreb insisted on inserting the term "equality of constituent peoples." This position, consistent with certain Croatian ethnonationalistic views on BiH, meant a de facto rejection of the *acquis*" (Weber 2018: 30). This is also a stand that is emphasized by HDZ and backed by Russian officials in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Večernji list 2019). However, the main concern of Russia is less the equality of the constituent people, but rather following their own interests (Chapter 5).

The endeavours of the government officials from Croatia are also supported by the Croatian MPs in the European Parliament, who are calling for equality of the constituent people and most notably for the Croats, "who don't enjoy the rights that

were given to them by the Dayton agreement”, as one of the MPs Stated (European Western Balkans 2017). In short, there is an active approach of Croat officials at the international level in order to get support for constitutional changes that would pressure the political actors in Bosnia to change the constitution in a way that would entrench the ethnic divisions even more. As a consequence, the already complex institutional setup would, even more, aggravate decision making.

As with Serbia, BiH and Croatia did not ratify the demarcation agreement. The demarcation has been agreed between the former presidents of the two States, Franjo Tuđman and Alija Izetbegović, however, there is no agreement on the Croatian side to ratify it. The issue has become vocal when Croatia announced to build a bridge to connect the South Dalmatia to the Pelješac peninsula, while the Bosnian side rejects the project before the demarcation has been defined and ratified. The argument of the Bosnian side is that the bridge would violate the right of Bosnia to have access to the open sea. Namely, BiH has a 12-kilometer short stripe of land at the Adriatic Sea and the planned bridge is in front of the land stripe. The Bosnian Government is divided along ethnic lines on this particular issue (Balkan Insight 2019). The Croats in the Bosnian Government support the decision of Croatia to build the bridge. The internal divisions over the course of foreign politics within the country hinder Bosnia to have an active foreign policy. It is rather constrained by the internal issues, which are reflected as well at the State level (Huskić 2014).

There is also a dispute about the flooded area in the south of BiH for a hydro plant in Croatia. As in the Serbian case, there is a claim that compensations are non-existing or insufficient.

Finally, there are different views over the war in the 1990s in Bosnia and Herzegovina. After the final judgement was pronounced in the case *Prlić et al.* in November 2017

and the political and military heads of the so-called Croat Community Herceg Bosna (HZHB) were found guilty, there have been massive disputes between the two countries. Namely, the judges also highlighted the involvement of the political and military heads of Croatia in the war in Bosnia and declared it as a joint criminal enterprise. The judgment was firstly rejected by the Government of Croatia, and the Croatian leaders in BiH. The Croatian Prime Minister called the judgement “deep moral injustice” (Government of the Republic of Croatia 2017), while the President of Croatia Kolinda Grabar Kitarović stated that the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) failed to fulfil its role to bring justice to the victims (Dnevnik.hr 2017). However, after massive critiques from international media (The Guardian 2017; Süddeutsche Zeitung 2017; Spiegel Online 2017) and EU officials (e.g. Associated Press 2017), the heads of the Croatian government stepped back in its official Statements. As reconciliation has been named as one of the elements of the Berlin Process, and the new enlargement strategy, this is a question that will likely be hard to solve, as none of the countries is ready to take a step forward.

5.5 Chapter conclusions

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a deeply divided country along ethnic lines that has its roots in the complicated constitution which is a part of a peace agreement. There is a broad understanding that BiH suffers from a democratic deficit and that the EU was unable to promote democracy in a similar vein as in CEEC. The reward, eventual membership in the EU seemed not to be attractive for the political elites. Nationalistic rhetoric proved to be a better strategy to stay in office.

The division of the country is visible in the case of the lack of an agreement on important reforms, and the different perceptions with regard to neighbouring Serbia and Croatia. While Croatia as an EU member State gained leverage by becoming a member of the Union and it performs its role openly, Serbia is retaining itself from more openly intervening within Bosnian politics, or at least at the rhetorical level. The relations of BiH with Serbia and Croatia have a strong impact on Bosnian political life, and it hinders also the full democratization process of the country.

In addition, one of the biggest disputes between Bosnia and its neighbouring countries is the different perception of the wars in the 1990s. The rejection of the political leaders to accept the verdicts of the international courts hinders the countries to build better relations. The reasoning behind these developments is twofold. The first one is to comply with the domestic pressure from their citizens, and the second one is to maintain or to build a more positive image in the international environment.

6 The role of other actors

6.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter will analyse the roles of Russia and China, two countries considered by the EU as competitors in the Balkans (Munich Security Conference 2019: 32–35). As the roles of these countries have been identified as one of the reasons for the “restarted” EU enlargement policy towards Bosnia, this chapter seeks to explain the presence of these States. However, as already Stated in Chapter 3, some officials from member States assume additional actors for being active in the region (Roth 2018), the main European competitors are the two mentioned countries. In particular, it is the role of the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey as new actors in Bosnia. The role of other States is not neglected in this work, yet, it is argued that their impact is less significant compared to the two above mentioned countries.

The EU has entered a field of a geopolitical battle with other States in the Balkans. What is different, however, is that the EU aims to act as a main political power in the region, but the internal divisions, increased Euroscepticism and the lack of a common solution makes it more difficult to act as a single actor (Akbulut, Dzihic, and Günay 2018: 10). The announcement that if the EU is absent from the region, other actors will fill the space that could be described as too optimistic. The other actors have already started to fill the gap as the EU enlargement policy was on hold. The crises within the EU have damaged the Union, but have also revealed the difficulties with regard to decision making. Additionally, the open-ended integration process (Reljić 2013: 17) has contributed to the emergence of the States. The role of the EU has gradually decreased during this period, although the membership in the block remains the main political goal of the Western Balkans countries.

Furthermore, the analysis is continued by the USA, as the traditional ally of the EU and an official supporter of the EU accession process of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The devotion of space is in favour of Russia. This is done for a simple reason. The role of Russia is more active, and its role is more visible compared with the role of the Chinese. The chapter ends with a short explanation of the role of the USA. The role of that country is crucial for ending the war in Bosnia. Yet, due to new policy priorities, that role of America has decreased after 2004. However, after the perception that Russia is more active in the region, the US Government has started to pay close attention to the region.

6.2 The way of making an impact

The EU membership of Bosnia and Herzegovina is the main political goal of the country. Yet, some other countries might have an impact on the country – such as Russia, China, United Arab Emirates, and Turkey (Huskić 2020). The role of UAE is performed through the economy, and the role of Turkey is mainly related to the identity-based approach (Huskić 2020). The role of the latter two is not neglected, yet is it perceived as less significant as the former two, and therefore it is not included in the analysis. The readiness of the domestic Bosnian political elites to incorporate the policies of non-EU actors in the official documents of Bosnia and Herzegovina, or the representation of the political attitudes in the policies of governments from non-EU actors could be described as the impact of Russia and China in the country. In different words, the impact of external actors can be perceived by adapting specific positions by the political elites and changing of attitudes of citizens towards negative with regard to the EU. This can be well described by the decreasing support for the EU integration,

as it was presented in the previous chapter, and some public opinion data will be presented below. The changing position of citizens could in the long-term pose a constraint for the domestic political actors in the EU integration process. The presence of other actors can be also explained by the fact that the States in the region are not only objects of external actors, but rather subjects at the international level, who create their own decisions (Keil and Stahl 2014: 3). In different words, the local actors make cost-benefit calculations. If the presence of non-EU actors are perceived as to be beneficial, the readiness of the local political elites to engage with other actors is more likely to occur. The benefits could be explained as the use of the support of great power to maintain the power in the government, as in the case of Milorad Dodik and the Russian support. However, the EU membership perspective remains the main goal of the governments.

It is not only the lack and indecisiveness of the EU a reason for opening a space for the engagement of Russia and China. It is also the absence of United States engagement. Until 2004, the role of the USA was emphasized in the region, and it was the US-led initiative to end the war in Bosnia in 1995 after several failed EU and UN-led policies. Yet, the priorities of the USA have shifted towards tackling terrorism and later the Asia - Pacific region (Clinton 2011). However, the increased presence of Russia in the Balkans has also alarmed US officials as well. The US Congress adopted in 2018 a bill that foresees to “execute enhanced military-to-military engagement between the United States and the militaries of the countries of the Western Balkans to promote interoperability with NATO” and “develop and implement a comprehensive security cooperation strategy that integrates support for allies and partners in Europe, especially the allies and partners most directly threatened by Russian aggression and malign influence” (US Congress 2018). The bill was adopted after the Committee on

Armed Services of the House of Representatives issued a report in which they warned about the Russian efforts to impact the Western Balkan States and the information campaign. The following subsections will present the roles of the States in more detail.

6.3 Russian Impact

The Russian role in the Western Balkans has been an active one. The State has close relations to Serbia, in which the active presence is perceived as a positive feature. A more active approach has been perceived in Montenegro where Russian citizens, along with Serbian ones, have been accused of the attempted coup. In Macedonia, Russia has been active in anti-NATO and EU propaganda, while they supported former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski who is faced with accusations related to corruption.

The presence of Russia in Bosnia and Herzegovina is perceived as a threat to EU interests, and for some EU member States. As has been noted in chapters 2 and 3, the crises within the EU have caused an enlargement slowdown. This has opened the space for other actors to take a more active approach towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to be more present in the region. Although Russia is present in BiH since the end of the war as a member of the Peace Implementation Council in earlier periods it was not perceived as a spoiler. In 2003 Russia also withdrew militarily from Bosnia and the Balkans in general. The withdrawal can be understood as giving consent to integration processes into Western-dominated organizations. Or put it differently, Russia did not raise any objections towards the West led policies. In more recent years there is a visible split in the relations among the PIC members, while Russia on the one side, and the other States on the other. This is not the case for every question, but rather concerning the sensitive issues. The sensitive issues are the

issues related to rhetoric about the protection of the own ethnic group. This has been more observable since 2007 when there is an increased role of Russia in PIC when Russia took side with RS and Dodik (Huskić 2014: 129).

So, a few questions arise. First of all, what has changed in Russian relations towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Western Balkans in general, and how are these changes pursued? Secondly, what are the reasons for the policy change, and, finally, what are the consequences of the change for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EU?

This analysis will follow the questions in order to identify the concerns for the EU.

After the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992, a war broke out that lasted for more than three years. It was the period after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Although Russia backed to a certain extent the western powers in their policies towards Bosnia, they have tried to have a balanced approach towards all sides in the war.

In words of Dimitar Bechev: “The Balkan crises of the 1990s illustrated the limits of Russia’s diplomatic strategy. So long as Moscow was not in a position to use military force to balance NATO, it would not be treated as a co-equal player by its Western interlocutors, or indeed the local powerbrokers” (Bechev 2017: 49). The position of Russia at that time was understandable. Firstly, the country in which Russia was the largest of the republics collapsed, but also many countries of the block of other allied States have changed the political system and turned to the West. Secondly, it was seen as the defeated side of the Cold War, and thus, was to a large extent ignored by the US-led Western powers. And, thirdly, it had to cope with the challenges of transition. In other words, the question was how to find its role in the post – Soviet period (Lo 2002: 13). Thus, there was little space left to be a world politics shaper, as was the later policy goal defined (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation 2013; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2016). On the other

hand, the role of some Russian nationalists during the war in Bosnia was an active one. There has been a number of Russian citizens fighting on the Serb side. The most prominent one was Igor Girkin (Strelkov), the minister of defence of the self-proclaimed Republic of Donbas, and the main suspect for downing the civilian Malaysia Airlines MH17 with several hundreds of dead people.

The raised interest of Russia in Western Balkans started in 1999 when NATO conducted airstrikes on Yugoslavia (at that time consisting of Serbia and Montenegro) because of the Kosovo war. Unlike a few years earlier when NATO attacked the Bosnian Serb military, and the airstrikes were under the UN Security Council mandate, which will be shortly elaborated below, the 1999 strikes were the sole decision of NATO. During the airstrikes the Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov was on the plane to visit the USA, not knowing in advance about the strikes, so he ordered the pilot to fly back to Russia. For Russia, this was an embarrassing moment in which the State was circumvented, as it was not seen as relevant to be included in the decision to start the strikes (Bechev 2017: 40; Bieri 2017: 9; Maass 2017: 8). This is contrary to the Russian official position to be a global policy shaper, instead of being ignored by the West (Moniz Bandeira 2016: 92).

Secondly, the Crimea annexation in 2014 was the other turning point that has contributed to a more active approach of the Russian Federation in the region of Western Balkans. The relations of the USA and the EU were understood as meddling in the interest sphere of Russia (Stronski and Himes 2019). Furthermore, the formalized relations of the EU and Ukraine was also seen as a representation of a threat to the Russian economy because of the gas export infrastructure, and its ability to “project economic power” (Schubert, Pollak, and Brutschin 2014: 4). The change of the Russian position was also emphasized by German officials after the Crimea

annexation (Blome et al. 2014). As a consequence, Russia decided to interfere in a region that has been considered as the interest of the EU and the USA.

There appears to be no Russian grand strategy, but rather the exploitation of the weaknesses in respective States, or as a title of a Dimitar Bechev's text about Russia and Balkans says, they are "playing the weak hand well" (Bechev 2020). Russia uses whatever appears to be a driving element within a specific society. It engages both on the political left and right, depending on what appears to be more beneficial (Galeotti 2017: 2). Russia has a great advantage over the EU when it comes to foreign policy. With its highly centralized power within a relatively small group of decision-makers, they can make decisions quicker and easier without much opposition from their own country. The public support for their own conduct is easier to reach due to the control over the media. On the other hand, the EU institutions rely on the support of the member States. The different views of member States on how to deal with specific issues make the decision process of the EU much more difficult and slower. This leads eventually to compromise solutions that are much weaker in the outcome.

Bosnia presents a fertile ground for the influence of foreign powers, due to the along ethnic lines divided country. In sum, Russian politics in Bosnia is tailored to the specific demands of political actors they support. Russia plays often the card of ethnic divisions by supporting the demands of specific ethnic political parties for more autonomy or more collective rights. Secondly, they seek for the closure of the Office of High Representative and support party-specific policies.

The media widely report the support and interpret it in the way as it suits certain political groups. The main Russian "client" in the country is Milorad Dodik, the head of the SNSD. The second one who appears, although to a much lesser extent, is Dragan Čović, the head of the dominant Croat nationalistic party HDZ.

Russian policy in the Balkans is supported by the rhetoric of Pan – Slavism and Orthodox brotherhood, and the historic ties. In fact, the religious bonds of Russia and the Serbian Orthodox Church are strong, as there is strong support for Russian politics in the local church (Bechev 2017: 230). Although the religious connection is emphasized, the connection should be understood as a tool to achieve specific interests. These specific interests should be understood as an attempt to create an unstable political and social environment in the region of Balkans.

There are three channels in which Russia can exert direct influence. The first one is economic, and it relies mainly on gas imports from Russia. The second one is propaganda, and the third is the political channel through PIC and other international organizations. Not all of these channels can have equal effects. The economic one is the least effective due to underdeveloped economic ties. Or put it differently, the economic ties of Bosnia are stronger to other States, mainly from the EU. What is more emphasized is the propaganda and the political channel. The latter two are interconnected and should be perceived interchangeably.

6.3.1 The economic channel

When it comes to economic relations between Bosnia and the Russian Federation, the connecting economic element is natural gas. Russia is the only gas supplier in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Russian – Ukrainian gas crisis in 2009 has shown how Bosnia can be vulnerable to Russian gas when there was no supply for several days during wintertime (Dickel et al. 2014: 9).

“At that time, Russia halted its gas export to Europe due to a dispute with Ukraine: BiH was the only country in Europe which was left with no gas reserves. Those households

and businesses with no other sources of energy supply were hit hard, especially considering the fact that the event happened during the wintertime” (Pašić 2012). Although the example from 2009 shows that Bosnia, or at least, some of the Bosnian towns can be hit hard by the halt of the gas supply, the overall energy consumption of gas is about two percent. The crisis between Russia and Ukraine was solved shortly after, and the gas supply was not interrupted after that period.

Secondly, Russian State-owned Company NeftegazInKor has privatised in 2007 two refineries in Bosnia, both located in RS. The refineries were privatised in a disputable procedure as Transparency International claims the process was conducted illegally while giving the new owner a preferential status (Transparency International in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2007). The refinery in the town Brod is making business with losses. In particular as the call for the shareholders meeting in 2019 reveals the total losses of the company, including earlier years, at the end of 2018 of 318 million Euros (Rafinerija nafte Brod 2019). More specific, the losses of the company are constant since its privatisation in 2007. After an explosion in October 2018 in the refinery, the company announced in January 2019 that they will stop the production for a year. How the refinery will later operate remains to be seen.

Also, the Bosnian foreign trade statistics indicate the relative little foreign trade with Russia. According to official statistics for 2017, Russia imports 5 percent of the overall imports, while Germany is the biggest trading partner of Bosnia, with which Bosnia has a positive trade balance. Furthermore, the biggest trading partners of Bosnia are EU member States, including Italy, Croatia, Slovenia, and Austria, and neighbouring Serbia (Agencija za statistiku Bosne Hercegovine 2018: 19).

These data show relatively little dependence on Russia when it comes to the economy and a bigger dependency and connection with the EU member States. Thus, the

chances of Russian interfering through the economic channels are smaller, except in the gas supply, as long Bosnia does not have diversified sources.

Secondly, there have been some negotiations about possible imports for Russian gas in the Aluminij factory from Mostar. The company struggles for years to stay competitive in the international market due to high electricity prices from domestic production after the electricity producers refused to continue providing lower prices. Yet, besides the idea, there were no additional negotiations.

Additional space for eventual economic impact is the supermarket chain of Konzum, which belongs to the biggest Croat Company Agrocor, with over 160 stores in Bosnia. The issue spread from Croatia when the company struggled both to repay the loans to the Russian banks and the products to be sold in the stores. The inability of Agrocor to repay the debts to Russian State-owned banks Sberbank and VTB Bank has resulted in the transfer of 39 percent of ownership to Sberbank. Yet, an eventual impact on domestic politics in Bosnia is not visible. It is also less likely to expect any potential use of this particular case for political purposes because it would inevitably affect the loan providers as well.

Other Russian economic actors are Sberbank and Gazprom, which has a chain of gas stations. Yet, these companies do not have a dominant position on the market, and the possibility to exert influence is less limited.

In sum, there is some space for Russia to exert economic influence in Bosnia, mainly through natural gas supply, which can affect the households, since the industrial dependence on gas is little, and it is mainly used for heating. The foreign trade between the two States does not give any leverage to any of the sides. The main trading partners are the EU member States, which is also the focus of the domestic companies. A serious problem that can occur is an eventual closure of the refinery in

Brod due to possible massive loss of jobs. The market, on the other hand, does not depend on the refinery products. In other words, gas prices depend on the global market.

6.3.2 The political channel

While Russia was to a large extent supportive of the EU integration process of Bosnia and Herzegovina after the country officially received the signal for a prospective membership (Huskić 2014: 132), in a more recent period it has changed its stand towards BiH and has become more supportive for the Bosnian entity Republika Srpska. The Head of the ruling party in the entity Milorad Dodik has close ties to the Russian State. In fact, on several occasions, Milorad Dodik made visits to Russian president Vladimir Putin just days or weeks before elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Prior to the 2018 General elections, Dodik visited Putin eight times in three years (Salvo and De Leon 2018: 2). After a visit in 2014, weeks before general elections Dodik announced that Russia will provide a loan to RS of 500 to 700 million Euros. The loan was never provided, nor was it confirmed or denied by the Russia government (Reuters 2014). A denial of the information about the possible loan was less likely to expect, because of the possibility to expose an economic weakness of the Russian Federation. Put it differently, the economic sanctions after the Crimea annexation have impacted Russia and the recession since 2013 (Trenin 2016: 40) have constrained Russian economic powers. Furthermore, a denial of the information is not desirable as long it holds the Russian position of a presence in the public.

The news about a possible loan was spread while Bosnian entities have waited for a positive signal from the International Monetary Fund. As the procedure with the IMF

lasts, the announcement of a loan from Moscow was used to send a message about the unconditional support from Russia for RS. That the loan was never provided is of a lesser significance. It is the impression of Russia as a caretaker that matters.

The intention of the visits is to present the close ties between Dodik and Putin. In different words, the main reason is the usage of short meetings with the Russian president for domestic purposes – to be re-elected. What matters is the impression which in turn has the potential to mobilize voters to support a specific candidate or party. This is a strategy that suits both sides. Behind the brotherhood rhetoric, there is an interest of the Russian government, and the entity RS to achieve their interests. The interests of Dodik include a weakening of the State and eventual secession of the entity from Bosnia and Herzegovina as he has declared numerous times, and to stay in power. The interest of Russia, on the other hand, is to interfere in domestic political affairs in order to spoil the Western powers. In other words, Russia does not offer any alternative to the EU membership to the States in the region.

The policy of support for the SNSD declared goals is supported also by other high officials from the Russian Federation. In March 2018 the Speaker of the Russian Federation Council, the upper house of the Federal Assembly, Valentina Matviyenko visited Bosnia. During her visit, she delivered a speech in the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has become a scandal when she backed the position of Milorad Dodik to close the Office of High Representative and to hand over responsibility to domestic actors while emphasizing that Bosnian people are humiliated by the OHR presence. She also criticized the EU for forcing Bosnia to choose between Russia and the EU, and criticized the USA as well “for trying to establish leadership at all cost” (Ibna News Agency 2018). What was more understood as a provocation is her Statement that the Prosecutor’s Office of BiH and the Court of BiH have no basis in

the Constitution, some of the Bosniak MPs left the session (Ibna News Agency 2018). The delivered speech represents the stand of Milorad Dodik and his political party. He is calling for years to close the OHR, and for the abolishment of the State judicial institutions by arguing that these institutions have not been mentioned in the constitution. The demands for the closure of the judicial institutions started after a news agency reported about an investigation related to possible corruption during the construction of the Government building of RS in Banja Luka (The New York Times 2009). Eventually, after the political pressures, the case was handed over to the Prosecutor's Office in Banja Luka. After a while, the Office decided not to follow the case, because as they reported no evidence of any crime. The decision of the prosecutor was understood as the meddling of Dodik into judicial processes, and it was difficult to explain to the broader public why there was no corruption, due to the multiplied costs of the building compared to the initial plan. The weak rule of law in the country provides few possibilities for judicial institutions to work independently. The political actors, on the other hand, show little incentives to strengthen the judicial branch.

The support of the Russian Federation comes with a cost for the democratic transition of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The acting of Russia undermines the democratization of the country.

This was evident in the case of the illegal referendum about the Day of RS that was explained in the previous chapter. The Constitutional Court of Bosnia has decided that the 9th January as the Day of RS was not in accordance with the constitutional provisions Dodik organized a referendum. He was condemned for the action by the EU, and the USA imposed sanctions on him, while Russia backed the decision to organize a referendum (Faktor 2016).

The involvement of Russia is more visible through the Peace Implementation Council, where a clear split is observable, as already mentioned above. The split among the foreign powers in the PIC is reflected in the work of the High Representative, who is practically powerless due to lack of support to create pressure on domestic political actors, as it was elaborated in more detail in the previous chapter. Different approaches among the PIC members weaken the pro-Western actors in the body, which on the other hand can be better exploited by Russian representatives.

The changed political position of Dodik shows the pragmatism of both sides. While Dodik firstly came into power in 1998 as the prime minister of RS, less than a decade later in 2006 he changed his political stand. In fact, he came into power for the first time with the help of international forces, and only two members of his party in the Assembly of RS out of 83, and with the strong support of the USA. Dodik was described in 1998 by the, at that time, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright as a “fresh breath of air” (Clapp 2017: 2). The “fresh breath of air” phrase was used to describe a new type of politician from RS who was willing to abandon the nationalist rhetoric that dominated the discourse and to start to work with politicians from Sarajevo. This policy was followed for several years. Yet, as a Bosnian journalist explained in his private meeting with Dodik, voters are more likely to react when he called for the defending of RS, even the phrase is undefined, rather when he mentions EU integration (Toal 2013: 171).

Hence, the nationalist rhetoric proved to be more successful in the elections. Moreover, as time passes it is more difficult to step back from its positions. As Dodik is already seen as the main spoiler of the democratization process of the country, the stepping back from his positions would eventually mean the loss of political power, because the Russian side would withdraw its support.

When the UK Government proposed in the UN SC to adopt a declaration with regard to the Srebrenica genocide in 2015, it was Russia who did veto the document. The minister of foreign affairs Lavrov said after a meeting with Dodik that:

“We have discussed with President Milorad Dodik the situation that is taking shape in the UN Security Council, where certain forces are attempting to promote an absolutely anti-Serb resolution dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the events in Srebrenica, a resolution that provides an incorrect—even legally incorrect—interpretation of what had occurred and what had already received an assessment by the UN Security Council. This resolution will certainly provoke more interethnic frictions in the Balkans instead of promoting reconciliation between all resident ethnic groups” (Lavrov 2015).

The Russian veto was welcomed both by the RS officials and the Serbian as well, as Serbia was found guilty of not preventing the Srebrenica genocide. The adoption of the declaration would have weakened the Serbian position, as it refuses to admit there was a genocide in Srebrenica in 1995, which is the official position of the country. Furthermore, the Resolution would have been eventually used to state demands for the abolishment of the RS. This is also connected to the willingness to create a more positive image of Serbia at the international level. Moreover, the position of Russia with regard to the proposed declaration undermines further the reconciliation process within the country, but also to neighbouring Serbia. As reconciliation is one of the flagship projects, presented in the 2018 EU Enlargement Strategy, the Russian veto de facto means a great hurdle for the process and the declared EU interest.

On the other hand, the support does not come for free. Dodik is expected to ensure that Bosnia and Herzegovina does not become a formal member of NATO, which is also a goal defined in the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation 2013). The NATO enlargement as a threat

was reiterated three years later in the new Concept, even the Balkans was not mentioned in the new document (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2016).

The stand of Dodik, however, and his party has changed over time. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, the Assembly of RS adopted a declaration to stay military neutral, which is non – binding to the State level. On the other hand, the Law on Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina foresees the membership in NATO, and the formal request to join the alliance was agreed at the Presidency level of Bosnia, where the member of the Presidency from SNSD was the one who sent the request. Also, in 2005 the Assembly of RS adopted the *Declaration about the strategic commitments of RS in the Defence System of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Deklaracija o strateškom opredjeljenju Republike Srpske u sistemu odbrane Bosne I Hercegovine)* in which the full support for Bosnian NATO accession is emphasized, including demilitarization, but at the same time, it proposes the establishment of several NATO bases on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Narodna Skupština Republike Srpske 2005). The Declaration was already proposed in 2003 by the Dodik party SNSD, yet it was rejected by the parliament majority which was led at that time by the Serb Democratic Party (SDS).

The justification for the new position to advocate for military neutrality is to follow the Serbian official position and NATO airstrikes against the Republic of Srpska in 1995. Indeed NATO did attack the positions of the Army of RS in 1995 after the Army took UN soldiers hostage and after the fall of Žepa and Srebrenica, and the second Markale massacre (Bechev 2017: 37). The NATO attacks were conducted under the mandate of the UN Security Council (UNSC) after the UNSC unanimously adopted Resolution 958 on November 19, 1994 (United Nations Security Council 1994b). Five days later

the NATO made the decision about the airstrikes recalling the UNSC meeting held a few days earlier (NATO 1994). The current Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov, who was the permanent representative to UN in 1994, said during the meeting on November 19 that:

“The Russian delegation voted in favour of the draft resolution that has just been adopted because we hold the position that the order which has been established for the use of air power in Bosnia and Herzegovina and surrounding areas and which has now been extended to the territory of Croatia, with a view to ensuring the protection of the Bihac safe area, fully corresponds to the rules for the use of air power in the other safe areas” (United Nations Security Council 1994a: 5).

However, the fact that Russia voted in favour of military intervention against Bosnian Serbs is not emphasized by the members of the SNSD and their coalition partners. The explanation is simple. The unfavourable facts are not represented to the people, but rather one-sided information. This is used strategically in order to create a picture of a long-lasting friendship and alliance in which Russia is a country that supports the efforts of the entity. This is done on the one hand, through the public media in RS, and, on the other hand, through Russian and Russian friendly media. These media present the West and the EU, and NATO as threats (Stronski and Himes 2019: 8). Considering the habit of people to rely mostly on media that match their preferences (Hirschmann 2017: 202–9), the increased number of these media represents a significant power to exert influence.

6.3.3 The results of Russian propaganda

The impact of the pro-Russian reporting is reflected in some public opinion polls in Serbia and Bosnia. The polls show the extent of the success of the media supporting Russian views. A public opinion poll in Serbia shows that 74 percent of the respondents would support an alliance with Russia, while 77 percent would support the adoption of the Russian political system, and even 80 percent would support the establishment of Russian military bases in Serbia. Moreover, nearly 80 percent would support Russian foreign policy. However, the majority would prefer to migrate to the EU or the USA. Finally, 26 percent of respondents think that Russia provides more financial aid to refugees than the EU and 49 percent that Russia provides more aid than the USA (Centar za evroatlanske studije 2016b). Even these data refer to Serbia, there is a link to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and its citizens who are exposed to the same messages, especially the ones residing in RS, and the effects could be very similar as can be seen from the two following examples. The results of the data show the success of Russian propaganda. In another public opinion poll, 21 percent of respondents believe that Russia is the biggest donor, while 24 percent think it is the EU (Sputnik 2018).

Public opinion polls in Bosnia and Herzegovina show similar attitudes towards Russia and the EU among ethnic Serbs but also split among the ethnic groups. In fact, most respondents in a report support the membership in the EU and NATO. The support for the EU is 72 percent, the support for NATO membership is 59 percent. However, when looking at specific entities the picture becomes clearer. While the majority of respondents from the ethnic Bosniaks and Croats dominated Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina supports the EU membership by 89 percent, and 85 percent supports the NATO membership, the Serb dominated entity RS largely rejects the NATO membership with only 15 percent of respondents supporting the accession to the

military alliance, and only 41 percent supporting the EU membership. Compared to the previous year, the support for the EU membership in RS declined, while the support for the NATO and EU membership increased in the Federation (Čaršimamović Vukotić et al. 2017: 16–18).

Data from another poll suggest similar attitudes towards the EU, NATO, and Russia. When it comes to foreign donors in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 22 percent of respondents believe Turkey and the EU are the biggest donors, followed by 8 percent of respondents who believe it is Russia. While the majority of Bosniaks believe it is Turkey, following by the EU, the Croats believe it is the EU. Among Serbs, 22 percent of them responded that Russia is the biggest donor. For the question to assess the role of the USA, Russia, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia either as positive or negative, the results differ between ethnic groups. Firstly, the Bosniaks and the Croats see the role of the US as positive, and Serbs as negative. In the case of Russia, the answers are the opposite. For a great majority of Serbs, the role of Russia is positive, and for 43 percent of Croats, and 29 percent of Bosniaks it is positive. The roles of Turkey and Saudi Arabia, the Bosniaks perceive as positive, and the Serbs and Croats as negative. The responses about the NATO membership are similar to the previous poll. The majority of Bosniaks and Croats support it, and three-quarters of Serbs oppose it. The support for the EU membership is also stronger supported by Croats and Bosniaks, and to a lesser extent by Serbs, although the majority supports the EU accession. The economic support of Russia is as well perceived by 91 percent of Serbs as positive, while among Bosniaks and Croats it is perceived as negative (Center for Insights in Survey Research 2017: 24–45).

The views about the Union is torn in the eye of the EU. The former German minister Sigmar Gabriel was surprised during a visit to Belgrade when he saw billboards

promoting Serbian and Russia friendship and the EU was not visible (Slobodna Evropa 2017). While the EU provides more aid than Russia, this is less visible. In particular, when speaking about Serbia, the EU provided 2.96 billion Euros of financial aid, which is around 60 percent of all aid in the period between 2000 and the end of 2016. This does not include the member States, which have also additionally provided aid. For Russian donations however, data do not exist (Slobodna Evropa 2018). Russia, in fact, successfully pursues a cheap approach in the Balkans by effectively using propaganda tools. The Belgrade think tank CEAS has identified 104 pro-Russian structures in Serbia. These include media, such as Sputnik, but also political parties, non – governmental organizations, political movements, branches of Russian organizations and foundations, and student organizations in Serbia (Centar za evroatlanske studije 2016a: 175–98), of which many cooperate with organizations in RS. The media messages are also spread in the Bosnian entity. The report of the Bosnian civil society organization “Why not” found out that the Russian owned news agency Sputnik has extensively published articles with regard to Dodik in positive terms. Many of these cases include an anti-NATO, and several EU countries and a strong pro – Russian stand. It has as well been reported about “colour revolutions” planned in the EU or the NATO countries (Cvjetićanin et al. 2019: 57). Furthermore, the report also indicates large disinformation spread from the public TV station from RS, and the RS owned news agency SRNA, but also connections when it comes to spreading the news with Sputnik. It also identified these media as the sources of a large number of political disinformation, and the connection between Serbia and the RS (Cvjetićanin et al. 2019: 45–54). These data can be well understood as a campaign with a specific goal to undermine the EU and the West efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Russian Federation. This matters specifically because it creates a specific picture. The reports

about the EU are mostly presented neutrally (Cvjetičanin et al. 2019: 45). As some studies suggest, the more a person is exposed to positive reporting, the more likely the person is to support a specific policy, and vice versa. Neutral reporting does not change the support of people (de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006).

There is also a number of extreme right-wing nationalist NGOs in RS who cooperate with Russian nationalists, and those who have been involved in the Ukraine conflict and the Crimea annexation (BIRN 2019). The weak rule of law of Bosnia presents a fertile ground for all kinds of nationalism, and it appears that there are no capacities to fight these organizations. Furthermore, the lack of legitimization of the country from inside makes the Russian involvement easier.

Finally, there is support from the Russian government representatives to the nationalistic Croat ethnic party HDZ. In particular, the demands of the party leader Dragan Čović for, what he calls equal rights of Croats, are backed up by Russian officials in Bosnia (Večernji list 2019). To be more specific, the demands of HDZ are that all positions should be exclusively divided along ethnic lines and that the collective rights should have primacy over individual rights. This practically leaves little space for those who demand more individual rights.

6.3.4 The outcome of Russian politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The fear of the EU and its member States officials was to lose its impact in the region of Western Balkans has become more realistic. Other actors are filling the gap that existed while the EU was more reluctant to pursue the enlargement policy. Meanwhile, the Russian impact has increased, but the EU membership is still on the agenda. The one-sided support of Russia through the entity of RS and its leading politician

undermines the efforts of the country to democratize by supporting agendas of some political actors. In fact, Russia supports nationalistic agendas of certain political parties, which then contributes to deeper ethnic divisions. The ethnic issues are among the most pronounced in the country by the political leaders, and it is one of the main obstacles for further development of the country. The more the ethnic issues are pronounced, the easier is it for the nationalistic political leaders to underline their role as the defenders of the specific ethnic group. The EU was engaged in the State building process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Yet, the Russian policy affects also the processes that have been conducted under the Union leadership.

The role of Russia also undermines the efforts of the EU to exert its influence in the region. This is also visible through the support of the closure of judicial institutions at the State level, but also by supporting the unconstitutional decisions related to the Day of RS. As time passes, the positions of the political elites will become more entrenched and more difficult to change. Due to its geographical position which is surrounded by EU member States, any instability would eventually affect the EU. In particular, after the migration flows in 2015 there is a fear of new waves of refugees.

The security situation in the Western Balkans has worsened, and the role of Russia has contributed to the process. This happened also because of the absence of the EU from the region for several years when clear commitments with regard to the accession process were missing. The developments in Bosnia should not, however, be understood as the sole responsibility of the EU, but rather as the lack of willingness of domestic political actors to put efforts to achieve the goals. Put it differently, the widespread corruption and the ethnic divisions in BiH made it easier to interfere in political life. For an impact of a foreign State to interfere there has to be a fertile ground that includes foremost political actors who are ready to engage.

6.4 The Chinese role in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Chinese strategy One Belt One Road has reached Bosnia and Herzegovina and other Balkans States as well. Chinese steps into the region affect also EU member States, such as Greece. The Chinese investments and loans are focused primarily on infrastructural and energy projects and the country has already acquired some important companies such as ports and electricity producers in Greece. In Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Hungary there are projects related to transport infrastructure (Bastian 2017). A Chinese company builds the disputed bridge (Chapter 4) in Croatia that is largely funded by the EU.

The role of China differs, however, from the role of Russia. In the case of China, their role is more connected to economic interests, which could also turn to political leverage. These interests are perceived by EU officials as threatening for the interests of the EU. This is also connected to fears of Balkan States of becoming “Trojan Horses”, as the EU Commissioner for Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn has explained it (Politico 2018a). The Trojan horse analogy implies a possible dependency of the Balkan States from China. Assumed, the Balkan States once become full members of the EU, this would help China to exert influence in the EU due to the complex decision-making processes which often include unanimous votes.

The core of the Chinese global grand strategy is to build ways from the Pacific to the Mediterranean. It refers to the old traditional ways used for trade, including Asia, Europe, and Africa. It includes more than 60 countries with a population of over 4 billion and around a trillion US Dollars for infrastructural projects (Ferdinand 2016: 949–50). In practice, China provides loans under favourable conditions for infrastructural projects also to countries with difficulties to repay the loans. Yet, contrary to Western-dominated financial institutions, the Chinese loans are not bound to strict conditionality

including reform processes and strict and unpopular austerity measures in the receiving States, which in practice means cuts in public spending. The unconditioned support for infrastructural projects opens the space for the receiving States to be “trapped” into Chinese debts. Such a scenario leads to increased political leverage in the respective countries. This is already evident in some Asian countries, where a Chinese operating company gained 99 years lease of the port Hambantota in Sri Lanka (Brakman et al. 2019: 10). Furthermore, an analysis has identified 16 possible countries trapped into, what the authors call, the “debtbook diplomacy” (Parker and Chefitz 2018). One of the 16 identified countries is Montenegro, an EU candidate country that already started accession negotiations, and it is the leading country in the process among the Balkan States.

For the receiving countries, the loans under favourable conditions are welcomed to foster important infrastructural projects and to improve the economic situation (Akbulut, Dzhic, and Günay 2018: 15). Moreover, the infrastructural projects are among the most favourable ones for local political actors to be used during election campaigns.

The Western Balkans countries are part of the 16+1 initiative under the One Belt One Road initiative. Besides the countries from southeast Europe, other States under the initiative are also 11 EU member States from Eastern Europe (Kavalski 2019). The 16+1 initiative was firstly established in 2012, and since then there are annual conferences in which new projects are discussed and agreed upon. It has become a part of the OBOR initiative.

6.4.1 Chinese investments in Bosnia

Chinese investments are existing in Bosnia for several years. The private thermo plant in Stanari has already been financed by a Chinese loan. Also, there is an agreement to provide a loan for a highway in RS, and in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, so far, two thermo plants are planned. The most pronounced project is the new block of the thermo plant in Tuzla.

There is an agreement that Chinese CEXIM bank provides a loan and constructs a new thermo block in the coal power plant in the North – East. The estimated costs of the project are around 800 million Euros, of which 85 percent are supposed to be financed from the Chinese loan (Elektroprivreda BiH 2019). It is one of the biggest infrastructural projects in post-war BiH. The company that receives the loan is the public electricity producer company Elektroprivreda BiH from the Federation entity. The project as such is questioned by the EU. In particular, the concern of the EU is that the Parliament of FBiH has voted in favour to be the guarantee of the loan because as they put it the procedure breaches the State Aid Law. The State Aid Law foresees an equal treatment of all companies regardless of the company ownership. In different words, the guarantee of the State, or of an entity in the State, puts a specific company in a more favourable position, because an eventual issue regarding repaying the loan will be paid from the entity budget.

In March 2019 the Energy Community has started an infringement process against Bosnia with regard to State aid after two non – governmental organizations have failed a complaint to the Community (Bankwatch Network 2019). The Energy Community is an international organization consisting of the EU and the neighbouring countries that was established in 2006 in order to create a pan – European energy market. With the

accession to the Community, each State has obliged itself to respect the EU norms with regard to energy.

The concern of the Community is, however, not related to China as the loan provider, but rather the fact that the State is the guarantee of 100 percent of the loan because the rules foresee a maximum of 80 percent of State guarantees. The outcome of the infringement procedure remains open.

The conditions under the agreement include Chinese insurance in the first 15, out of 20 years, and in the last five years mortgage of the block. This fact puts additional risk on domestic actors to lose political leverage in case the repayment of the loan is not possible. This could be understood as the story of “Trojan horses,” because there is a concern that the arrangement could turn to political leverage and affect the EU. On the other hand, the additional risk is that the EU is not “the only player in town.” The EU, in fact, aims to set the rules for the Western Balkan States by providing a possible membership as the desired goal, yet other actors appear with a different set of rules that undermines the efforts of the Union to transform the region into the desired way. With the acceptance of Chinese rules, the States of the region reject de facto the way of doing things of the EU, and it undermines further Europeanization.

The second concern is the air pollution that, according to a Greenpeace report would affect several countries for decades, including Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Albania, and Italy (Myllyvirta 2019). This issue is not salient yet, besides a few local NGOs which are connected due to a massive project that is seen essential for energy production.

In the case of the highway that should connect Prijedor and Banja Luka, the government of RS asked the Chinese to postpone the project due to priority to build a highway that should connect Banja Luka and Belgrade, yet the proposition was

rejected by the Chinese company (Capital 2019). The agreement was signed under unfavourable conditions for RS, however, what was important in this particular case is the timing of the signature which is a few days prior to general elections in 2018. As already mentioned in the previous section, infrastructural projects are an important pre-election tool as it serves to signal the voters about improved economic conditions. And, secondly, the example shows the lack of conditionality while providing loans, which increases the danger for countries to be trapped.

6.4.2 The Outcome of Chinese Politics

As in the case with Russia, China has an advantage over the EU with regard to decision making. The power is concentrated within a single political party which can make decisions easier and quicker. Due to different views among the EU leading countries about the EU enlargement process, it opens further the space for filling the gap by actors other than the EU. Contrary to Russia, which uses the present divisions and pursues a further societal divide, the Chinese do have a specific strategy that targets the economy. More specifically, the Chinese government targets the fundamentals of economic life – the energy, and the transport infrastructure. In terms of propaganda, the Chinese government does not pursue strong propaganda, compared to the Russian government.

An outcome that is more visible is the undermining of the role of the EU as the agenda setter. It directly challenges the EU “way of doing things” in the region, and the legislation that the regional States have committed to adopt and implement as the part of the integration process.

6.5 The Role of the USA

The role of the United States of America has been a crucial one for the ending of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was the Clinton administration that took the crucial steps to find an agreement, which resulted in the Dayton Peace Agreement after three years of struggle to convince the EU partners to take necessary steps (Serwer 2019: 17). Although the DPA is far from perfect, and it lacks to a large extent the legitimacy among the political actors, its main and most important feature is the end of the war. On the other hand, the EU and the UN-led initiatives with the goal to stop the atrocities did not come to fruition (Leigh-Phippard 1998: 306).

However, nine years after the war, the US presence was reduced, both militarily and politically. After the agreement at the NATO Istanbul summit in June 2004, the UN Security Council decided in December to hand over the NATO-led SFOR military presence to the EU led EUFOR (United Nations Security Council 2004). The USA did not end its engagement in Bosnia, yet the visibility decreased significantly. The direction was defined also earlier in the decisions of the EU to give a membership perspective to the States in the region. Thus, in 2002 when the UK politician Paddy Ashdown took office as the High Representative he was named also as the EU Special Representative.

This handover of the policy leader was done because of two reasons. The first one was the shift of the US foreign policy from the Balkans to the War on Terror after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks (Weber 2011: 15), and later to the Asia – Pacific region (Clinton 2011). The second one was the EU and NATO membership perspective was given to the Balkan States (Tuathail 2005). The accession to the EU and NATO was frequently used as a part of the strategy of the international representatives in Bosnia, but at the same time, it was presented as an indivisible process, as it was

emphasized by the then High Representative Paddy Ashdown (Office of the High Representative 2003). Hence, the accession to both of these bodies has been assumed and perceived as a simultaneous process that was not, at that time, questioned by Russia, as it has been later.

Yet, the EU engagement did not provide the expected results, when the situation worsened, as already explained in the previous chapter. The lack of a common strategy of the members of the Peace Implementation Council, and among the EU members within the PIC, did not provide the desired outcome – to make the country more functional and to help it on the EU path, and the closure of the OHR (Bassuener and Weber 2010: 8–9). Hence, the lack of agreement on common policies remains an issue the EU is coping with, also in a more recent period with regard to enlargement policy, because it reduces the leverage of the EU as an actor, but at the same time, it leads to confusion for the acceding country, because of lack of information how to interpret the conditions to be fulfilled in order to make progress.

On the other hand, the advantage of the USA over the EU is similar to that one of Russia and China. The USA is a single actor, although as a democratic country it is constrained by media, different interest groups and opposition and often by the own political party, it can make decisions easier. Furthermore, the policy is more recognizable compared to the EU policy. At the same time the EU, consisting of many States with different interests and views about possible solutions on how to improve the stalemate in which the Balkans exist. The issue of how to act in a specific situation is not new, as, for example, the experience from the Contact Group plan to stop the war in Bosnia shows (Leigh-Phippard 1998).

Thus, after more than a decade after the handing over the leading position to the EU, the US became more interested in the region, and Bosnia in particular. This was

observable after the Crimea crisis when the US government has become more interested in the region. It was to a large extent the Russian presence and the fight against ISIS that alarmed the US officials about the region (Hoyt Yee 2017). Consequently, the US government adopted the National Defence Authorization Act in which there is an announced increased political engagement towards Bosnia and the Balkans in general (US Congress 2018). The official goal of the US government for Bosnia and Herzegovina is the EU and NATO membership (N1 2019b). Yet, there are disputes between the US on the one side, and the EU on the other, which, as some authors argue have opened the space for other actors in the Balkans (Flessenkemper and Kmezić 2019). The view about the absence and the fissures among the traditional partners is shared also by some EU and EU member States officials when the Head of the European Council Donald Tusk spoke about the Donald Trump administration as of “capricious assertiveness” and „with friends like that who needs enemies“ (European Council 2018b). The cracks are mainly related to Trump's support of the Brexit process and undermining the role of the Union.

The cracks in the relations of the allies have an impact on Bosnia and Herzegovina as well. The division within the EU, and additional division between the EU on the one side, and the USA on the other, reduce the leverage of the Western block with regard to Bosnia and the region of Western Balkans.

However, the absence of the Union cannot alone explain the successful impact of China and Russia. In order to have an impact on a country, there must be responsiveness by political elites, or among some of the elites, towards the actors trying to impact the specific country. In other words, the countries in the region should be perceived as subjects of foreign policy, and not merely as objects (Keil and Stahl 2014: 3). The weak institutional setup of Bosnia and Herzegovina makes the country

more vulnerable to foreign impacts. In different words, the absence of the EU and the USA opens the space for other actors to be involved in national politics and to undermine the interests and policies of the EU and the USA. Yet the involvement does not take place automatically, but there has to be the willingness of, at least a part of the political elites to involve other actors into national politics. The reliance of Milorad Dodik on Russian politics and support for his politics can be understood as the willingness of a part of the elites to provide access to foreign actors into domestic political affairs. The success of the foreign policy, thus, depends on the foremost the Union, but also to the USA. More concrete, the ability to find an agreement with regard to Bosnia, between the EU on the one side, and the USA, on the other, increases the leverage for the integration of Bosnia into Western-led bodies, and at the same time, it reduces the ability of other actors to be involved in the domestic politics and to “spoil” the interests of the Western actors.

6.6 Chapter conclusions

This chapter aimed to present the roles of Russia, China, and the USA in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the presence of the former two countries in the Balkan region has been identified as a reason for the new EU enlargement policy. This does not neglect the role of some other States, yet this work emphasizes the two countries as the main competitors for the EU.

The roles and interests of the two countries differ to a large extent. While Russia has some economic leverage, its politics and propaganda are the main policy tools. The role of Russia is described as a spoiler due to the interest to prevent the NATO accession, and the challenge the role of the EU and the USA, as the Western

involvement in Ukraine was perceived as meddling in the interests of Russia. That country uses the weaknesses of the respective countries in order to achieve their goals. In Bosnia, it is, in particular, the ethnic divisions that are used to interfere in politics.

China, on the other hand, uses economic policies to exert economic influence. It targets the basics of economies – energy and transport infrastructure. Even China does not question the European perspective of Bosnia, and other regional States, their set of rules undermines the efforts of the Union to be the main player in the region.

The lack of EU engagement in the region, which is a reflection of the Euroscepticism and internal different understandings of the priorities within the EU prevents a more active role in the EU. The reluctance has been used then by other actors to exert influence in the region.

The role of the USA was crucial to stop the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but due to the EU membership perspective of Bosnia and new priorities of the American government, the leading role as an international actor was handed over to the EU in 2004. The divisions within the EU and the crises in the Union have caused a decreased engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, there is a renewed interest of the United States related to BiH which was caused by the appearance of Russia in the region, and to a lesser extent China. The interest resulted in some adopted acts in 2018 in which a more active approach towards the region is announced in 2019.

7 Conclusion

The aim of this work was to examine to what extent the internal crisis within the EU has impacted the EU enlargement policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was hypothesised that the financial, economic, and the Eurozone crises have caused a re-order of the policy and that they moved the enlargement at the bottom of the priority list. The group dynamics of the European Union has been affected and the enlargement process has slowed down. However, the enlargement process has been revived after the initiatives of member States.

The financial crisis in 2008 and the following years, which started from the USA and spread globally, has turned into an economic one. It was followed by the Eurozone crisis, further to the migration crisis, and finally the Brexit crisis. All of these crises have affected the EU in a relatively short time. The crises the EU coped with have damaged the EU, but it also changed the political landscape. It contributed to the rise of the Eurosceptic political parties, especially the right-wing ones, which have existed also before but were to a large extent marginal.

Before the crises, the European Union served as a success story that was able to transform countries to democratize and to adopt its rules. This was especially visible in former communist States, which have transformed from single-party systems into functioning democracies by giving a perspective of membership in the EU. Yet, the picture has changed.

The first aim of this thesis was to examine to what extent these crises have affected the EU enlargement process towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, and how it was affected. And secondly, the aim was to examine the roles of three member States in the enlargement process in times of crises and after. The EU was used to look at its enlargement policies and the changes concerning the policies. There have been two

distinct periods with regard to enlargement during and after the crises. The first one was from 2008 prior to 2017 when the enlargement was not on the EU agenda, and since 2017 when there is a revival of the enlargement policy. This was more visible in 2018 when a new enlargement strategy has been presented by the Commission and confirmed by the European Council. Yet, there was a limited success due to the roles of some member States, which show less commitment towards widening, compared to other member States.

In particular, the roles of Germany, the United Kingdom, and France have been used. This was important for several reasons. The European Commission, as the only official policy proposer at the EU level, is also an agenda-setter when it comes to decisions with regards to enlargement. Its success or failure depends on the member States and their willingness to support or oppose the proposed policies. Secondly, as Germany and the UK have proposed a new approach towards Bosnia, and Germany has also started a new approach towards WB, their roles and motives behind the policy are useful to understand the support for the enlargement. The policies of these proposals have become official policies of the EU. Although British citizens have voted to leave the European Union in a referendum in 2016, this work has included that State as well into the analysis because of their formal policy to support the widening process also as a “sideliner” outside of the formal EU framework. The United Kingdom will remain a Western-oriented country with strong ties with the EU. Finally, two years after the 2016 referendum it was the UK that hosted the Western Balkans summit within the Berlin Process.

On the other hand, France is chosen due to its reluctance to enlargement policies. This is not only the result of the crises but rather several decades’-long constant, yet the impression of France as an enlargement sceptic has strengthened after the rise of

Euroscepticism. Thus, the aim was to look beyond the reasoning for the opposing enlargement policy in a more recent period.

In order to examine the mentioned aims of the work, the methodology used in this work is process tracing. Collier compares this method to a puzzle that should be put together in order to get a picture (Collier 2011). The picture that should be put together in this work is the enlargement policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina in times of crises in the EU and how it changed. The pieces used to put the puzzle together were public opinion; Euroscepticism, expressed mainly through the right-wing parties; the roles of three member States; the EU level actors; the democratic deficit in BiH, and its relations to the neighbours; and the foreign powers Russia and China, who have an active role in the region of Balkans, and in BiH in particular, and finally the USA as an active actor and the partner of the EU. These pieces are represented in the chapters of the work.

The basis for the theoretical approach is liberal intergovernmentalism, a rational bottom-up approach that assumes the international politics of a State as a reflection of the internal struggles among different groups. It includes a public opinion as a constraint, but also actors such as political parties, the government, and different interest groups. Additionally, this work looks as well on other States as the possible impact of changed policies. The government, which is understood as an actor, decides based on all different interests what path it will take, by following the logic of consequence. Thus, the governments choose rationally what they expect is the least costly action, or in different words, they calculate what policy has more benefits and decide based on that calculation. The policy is then presented at the international level, where also other States following the same logic present their interests and they bargain. The supranational institutions are assumed in this work as the reflection of the

member States' interests. They have only as much power as it was given to them by the member States. Although this work follows the rationalist approach, the constructivist approaches have been presented as well in the theoretical chapter. The aim of including constructivism is to present the other side of the medal.

It is argued in this work that there has been enlargement fatigue after the 2004 enlargement and that the group dynamic of the EU has been affected when it comes to decision making. The decision-making process has slowed down (Hertz and Leuffen 2011). Moreover, a split between the old and the new member States has become visible. In different words, the EU has become more difficult to manage due to the increased number of member States, yet, it was not proven the EU is unmanageable, as the number of adopted acts did not decrease with a greater number of member States (Toshkov 2017). The difficulties in decision making were also an outcome of the lack of a suitable institutional and legal framework after the French and Dutch citizens rejected the European constitution in referendums in 2005.

However, the affected group dynamics were less visible, as the accession of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007 has proven. The situation changed after the EU had to cope with the financial, economic and Eurozone crises. These developments have affected the dynamics of the EU. A new political landscape has been created, that has contributed to the rise of Euroscepticism in general and right-wing Eurosceptic parties in particular, and an unfavourable public opinion with regard to the EU and the enlargement. The right-wing Eurosceptic parties have proven the ability to attract the voters to support them, as the success in the elections has shown.

Several conclusions can be made in this work. The crises have caused a policy shift in the EU. The public opinion with regard to the EU enlargement has declined. This is connected to the negative reporting about the EU during times of crises, but also due

to enlargement fatigue that has been present in the EU since the big enlargement round in 2004.

However, the decline of the public opinion was stronger after the crises started when the media started to report more extensively about the crises. The EU as a topic was among the dominant ones during the crises, and thus, it gained importance among citizens. The way of reporting about the EU steered a large number of citizens in a specific Eurosceptic direction. Additionally, the member States have become more concerned about national politics, and less to the EU. This was to a certain extent the outcome of the negative perception of the EU, as some of the traditional pro – EU political parties showed signs of Euroscepticism.

The public opinion in this work has been perceived as a constraint on political actors, and EU policies have become unpopular among citizens. The importance of public opinion is mainly related to the right-wing populist parties, as these parties use strategically the public opinion as an agenda-setter for their own policies, but then also use the increased visibility to be the agenda setter for the citizens. A factor that has contributed to the rise of the right-wing political parties is also the fact these parties use topics that are traditionally “owned” by the political and right and the left, which has increased the number of potential voters.

The success of the populist parties was mostly achieved by blaming the government, and as a consequence, the support for the governing parties decreased (Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese 2017). This has contributed to the rise of right-wing Eurosceptic parties, who have used the anti – EU agenda in order to gain support during elections. The consequence of this was close to one-third of Eurosceptic members of the European Parliament in 2014 from 23 out of 28 member States, including both ends of the political spectrum – right and left, and soft and hard Eurosceptic parties as well. In

the elections 2009, the Eurosceptic parties had less than 20 per cent of support (Treib 2014: 1542–43).

The success of these parties has increased their visibility, and accordingly their ability to raise issues and become a politics shaper. The increased visibility is one of the key factors related to the success of the right-wing Eurosceptic parties. This has become a constraint for the EU institutions, but also for the member States, as the right-wing political parties have gained a new role as an explanatory factor who tells people what is wrong, and who is to blame. Hence, the EU has become a scapegoat for the right-wing populists. This led to an increased group cohesion among the supporters of the Eurosceptic parties as there was a common “enemy.” Such development has reduced the scope of the EU to act in unpopular policies among citizens, such as enlargement. In other words, putting on the agenda unpopular policies would give the populists new fuel to blame the EU and eventually ensure higher support in the elections. The higher support in the elections would further reduce the scope of the EU to act. Thus, the question of enlargement has declined on the priority agenda (Reljić 2013: 12), and the crisis management has climbed up.

This was visible from the absence of the enlargement policy from the European Council meetings for years, but also from the Commission priorities expressed in the State of the Union speeches by the heads of the EC, and the first visit to the Balkans of the High Commissioner for Foreign and Security Politics 30 months after taking office. The enlargement policy was eventually revived in 2017 after some initiatives from the member States, and after the EU has concluded that there are competing countries in the region of Western Balkans that could affect the EU as well and that the disputes among the States in the Balkan region harm the integration process. The perception of the EU was that some other actors might jeopardize the Union’s interests and

overtake their place as the leading actor of, what the German Europe minister calls, “the inner courtyard of the EU” (Roth 2018).

The EU policy, however, was also constrained by the member States. In this work, the role of France as the most vocal opponent to enlargement has been used to present one of the main obstacles for the Commission. It was argued that France is constrained mostly by the internal Euroscepticism, and to a lesser extent due to lack of interest in the region. In France, the importance of public opinion is of greater importance, compared to Germany and the UK. When it comes to enlargement, there is since 2008 a constitutional provision of organizing a referendum for accepting new member States in the EU, or three-fifths of both houses of the French Parliament have to vote to accept new member States in order to circumvent the referendum. As France has one of the lowest support rates for further enlargement, and the members of traditional political parties have already expressed Eurosceptic ideas, the enlargement is a difficult task. The right-wing Eurosceptic National Front has contributed to a large extent to this opposing view towards the Union. As a result, the policy of postponing the decision to take further steps in the enlargement process has also continued under the recent President Macron. The decision of France to postpone the accession negotiations process, however, is explained by its officials as the need firstly to reform the EU. Moreover, economic relations with Bosnia, and the region of WB, is underdeveloped, and, thus, the French government lacks an economic motive to be more active in the region.

On the other hand, the UK and Germany are firm supporters of the enlargement process. While the citizens of the UK voted in 2016 to leave the EU, the public opinion is of lesser importance for the enlargement policy in Britain, but the issue could become more important in Germany when the enlargement as a topic becomes more salient.

This is connected to the right-wing political party AfD. The members of the party have already adopted a stand which includes a referendum when it comes to the widening of the Union, and they will likely use the issue to express it more openly when the enlargement policy is on the agenda because the impact is greater when the issue is more salient. Germany has as well among the least supportive citizens for further enlargement, which is a constraint that likely to be used by AfD. The main motive for Germany to pursue a more active enlargement policy is connected to security. It is assumed that any insecurity in the region would affect Germany as well. Hence, bringing the “problematic” countries in the region under the EU umbrella is assumed to reduce the risk of instabilities and, furthermore, that it will reduce the impact of the competitors such as China and Russia. Cooperation within the EU is also summery of the German foreign policy approach. Hence, multilateralism is emphasized by the German officials (Maas 2019), because it is perceived as the best way to preserve German long-term interests to have an impact on the global level.

An additional motive for Germany to pursue an active enlargement policy is the economy. German economy relies to a large extent on foreign trade, and Germany is indeed the main trading partner of the countries in the region. The 2004 enlargement proved to have a positive impact on the German economy (Focus Online 2014).

While the UK was labelled by some scholars as the “champion of enlargement” and at the same time opposing the deepening (Ker-Lindsay 2017), the result from the 2016 referendum about leaving the European Union has changed the role of the country completely. The outcome of the referendum is a consequence of decades-long Euroscepticism. The referendum results indicate leaving the EU, but at the same time, the official policy is to support the EU enlargement process of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, as the UK will stay outside of the Union it loses its leverage to impact EU

policies. At the same time, the country loses also the credibility to advocate entering a political block, while leaving at the same time. Finally, the internal struggles on how to organize the post-Brexit era has become the crucial policy, because the result of the referendum was unexpected. The argument is well supported by the fact the government did not adopt a policy on how to act if the citizens' voted to leave. Furthermore, the post-Brexit period was overshadowed by discussions about whether there will any kind of formal relations to the EU.

Different perceptions from the member States have affected the enlargement policy of the EU. While the Commission proposes an active approach, the increased reluctance from some member States hinders the EC to follow consistently the policy. The consequence of the inability to reach an agreement has an impact on Bosnia and Herzegovina. What appears is that the EU is indecisive, which further opens the space for new powers to interfere in the country and the region. Other actors have the advantage that these are single States, rather than organizations of many States, and the ability to make decisions is easier. An additional fact is that the decision making in these States is in the hands of a small group of people.

Moreover, the reluctant enlargement policy affects the democratization of Bosnia and Herzegovina towards liberal democracy. It is argued that Bosnia and Herzegovina has a democratic deficit. There are four arguments used to support this argument. The first argument is the absence of civic participation in the decision-making process, which is discouraged by the ruling political elites. The role of citizens in a democracy should ideally go beyond voting. In other words, the citizens should participate in public debates related to proposals of new acts. Hence, as a report of the Ministry of Justice of BiH suggests, most State-level ministries did not implement legal provisions with regard to citizens' involvement (Ministry of Justice of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2012).

Secondly, the circumvention of relevant institutions, mainly parliaments, in the decision-making process results in undermining of official institutions. Hence, a number of important decisions are discussed and agreed among a small number of political leaders instead in the parliaments which is also encouraged by EU officials. The most prominent case is the negotiations in the Sejdic/Finci case regarding the human rights issues in the Constitution. The negotiations were held among EU officials and Bosnian party leaders outside the country in Prague, Budapest, Brussels, and diverse Bosnian restaurants, but outside of respective institutions with the mandate to amend the constitution. The negotiations failed, but it was not clear what was proposed, because no proposal was published. This also reflects the “way of doing things” in Bosnia, but also in other Balkan States. The main political actors are the leaders of the ruling political parties whose power is to approve or reject legal acts. Their power is not bound to a specific official position within the State apparatus, but rather to the party leadership. As long the party is in power the heads of the parties have also the power to make decisions regarding adoption of laws and other acts.

Thirdly, the weak rule of law is one of the main issues the country is coping with. The case of Day of RS, as the best known example, is used to support this claim when the authorities in RS rejected to implement the decision of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Constitutional Court decision about the illegality of the Day of RS and the referendum regarding the Day was ignored by the authorities of RS. The referendum was held and the Day of RS was celebrated, but at the same time the State Prosecutor’s Office stopped the investigation due to lack of evidence. This move can be well described as the consequence of political pressure on the prosecutor. The outcome is that strong political figures stay out of reach of the judicial institutions and the State appears to be too weak to impose sanctions to responsible ones. There was

only consequence for Milorad Dodik, the President of the SNSD, who was the main proponent of the referendum who was sanctioned by the US Government (U.S. Department of the Treasury 2017). The fourth argument used is the socialist tradition. Less than two years after the first democratic elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina the bloody war broke out, which eventually ended with the imposition of a new political system that contradicts the liberal understanding of democracy. In different words, Bosnian citizens did not have the opportunity to learn what democracy is. The term cultural pessimism describes well the outcome of the socialist legacy. It includes nationalism, lack of a culture of compromise, an orientation towards leading figures, lack of trust in institutions, ideological vacuum, egalitarianism, etatism, and lack of a self-initiative (Bönker, Beichelt, and Wielgohs 2004: 5). The politics is also the main shaper of life. A parallel can be well drawn between the current and the previous political system which is that politics controls nearly every aspect of life. The first three arguments are significantly slowing the learning process. Such a development creates a certain understanding of democracy which is far from the understanding of the liberal democracy. Consequently, the integration of the country under the EU umbrella becomes a more difficult task to achieve. This is also because of the democratic (un)development in some of the new member States, because the EU is eager to see stronger institutions and the strong rule of law. This is also why the negotiations chapter with regard to rule of law and judiciary are the first ones to be opened and the last ones to be closed in the accession process.

This further leads to slowing down the Europeanization process. To put it another way, the role of the EU as a transformative power has suffered. This is also visible in the case of mutual relations within the countries in the region. There are still unresolved disputes among the States, and the main political actors show little incentives to solve

it, as it was declared as one of the six flagship projects from the new enlargement strategy. Neighbouring Croatia and Serbia have a significant political impact on Bosnia and Herzegovina through the ethnic political parties in Bosnia. One of the outcomes is the lack of legitimacy for the country among the political elites and among a large number of citizens. Bosnia and Herzegovina is due to their different ethnic groups a fertile ground for interference of the neighbouring States in the politics of Bosnia. The opportunity to interfere is very much used by Croatia and Serbia to represent specific party politics of the Croat and Serb ethnic parties in BiH. Croatia engagement is more open due to the fact that Croatia has become a member of the EU, while Serbian policy is less open due to the fact that any open interference could harm the Serbian EU path. The ability of the EU to impose sanctions or to use conditionality decreases significantly after a country becomes a member. This explains why Croatian officials openly support a party specific policy rather than a balanced approach.

The absence of the EU from Bosnia, and the willingness of a part of the political elites in Bosnia to accept “alternatives” has opened the door for other actors to step into the political process. The intended role of the EU was also to be a State builder in the Balkans, which is more pronounced compared to previous enlargement rounds (Keil and Arkan 2015: 6). The crises within the EU have to a large extent stopped the process of State building in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is a difficult case, firstly because of the mistrust among the ethnic political elites, but also because of the lack of legitimacy of the political elites for the State. It seems that everyone is equally unhappy with the State architecture, but the demands of the different actors have little in common. Consequently, such a situation reduces the scope to find a compromise. This is also a case among a large number of citizens. Hence, the decreased attention for Bosnia in the EU has caused a question that still remains unanswered. What kind

of a State does the European Union want to built-in Bosnia and Herzegovina, considering different demands of the domestic political elites? It is likely that the question will remain unanswered, at least in the near future, due to different understandings about the priorities. Secondly, the political situation is often perceived as the lack of political will to change something. This is also an additional argument that can be used to explain the stalemate in the country. The adjustments of political elites to Western standards would reduce the scope of these elites to operate and consequently increase the political costs for them. Put it differently, a more stable political and social environment removes the main tool to exert influence, which is raising fears from other. In this sense the definition of populism provided by Mudde was used in the chapter on Bosnia in order to explain the *modus operandi* of the political elites – which is the division of the society among ethnic lines.

Another issue the region is coping with are other actors. The most active foreign actors in the region are Russia and China, although the role of other States can be considered as well, who have an impact on domestic policy, such as Turkey or the United Arab Emirates. Bosnia and Herzegovina is especially vulnerable to foreign influences due to internal ethnic divisions. The deeply divided political elites seek external actors in order to pursue specific goals. Hence, as it is often claimed that the absence of the EU from the region will be filled by other actors (Politico 2018a), it is only partially true. There has to be an internal willingness in order to allow other actors to act within the country in order to have an impact on domestic politics. The willingness can be described as the readiness of local political elites to integrate policies and positions of the external actors into the domestic policies that contradict the agreed policies between the impacted State and an external organization with which there is a formalized agreement. In the case of Bosnia, it is the Stabilisation and Association

Agreement with the EU which came into power in 2015. The source for the willingness of domestic political actors to include policies and positions from the external, and at the same time competing, countries, can be understood as a win-win situation for both, the external actor, and the domestic political elites. The external actors are used as support for domestic politics, while at the same time the domestic political elites represent official stands of the external actors. This is the case with the relation with Russia. In the second case regarding China, it is the domestic perceived economic gains that are the driving force for the cooperation. The absence of the EU weakens the European transformative power and it opens the space for competitors to have an impact. This is also due to the perceived indecisiveness of the EU to pursue a more active role in the region. Prior to crises, when the EU exerted significant pressure on domestic political elites, the Union was an agenda-setter in the domestic politics. This was observable, for example, while the human rights issue with regard to Sejdić/Finci case was the main condition to move forward in the EU integration process, the constitutional changes dominated the discourse. After the pressure decreased, there was also a change. In different words, as long the European Union shows consistency and sets specific policy as a condition for further integration, it is the main player in the State. On the contrary, as the EU is less visible, the visibility of the competitors increases. The increased visibility of Russia and China reduces the scope of the EU to act. A devoted EU enlargement policy on the other hand would increase the odds to be “the only game in town.” The devoted enlargement policy implies a unified and credible stand of the EU that shows no scepticism about the intentions to expand in a foreseeable future. While Russia exploits the divisions and contributes to its deepening by supporting single political actors, China, on the other hand, follows the economic goals. Bosnia and Herzegovina is part of the One Belt One Road strategy that covers

more than half of the world's population and more than 60 countries. What is seen as problematic in the case of China is the way of doing things, by undermining the rules which are agreed in the EU integration process. The agreed loan from a Chinese bank to build a new thermo block in a coal plant in Tuzla undermines the settled policies in the European Energy Community, a body that consists of the European Union and the Western Balkan States. It is the State aid regulations that are argued to be violated by Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Chinese approach suits well for economic developing countries, as the loans the Chinese banks provide, are not bound to strict conditionality, and therefore these loans are much quicker agreed, compared to long negotiations with the Western-dominated financial institutions which usually include unpopular austerity measures. Large infrastructural projects are used frequently as an active part of election campaigns in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The case from 2018 when a few days ahead of the General elections an agreement about building a new speedway was signed between the Government of RS and Chinese investors can be explained as such. Although this was done under financial unfavourable conditions for RS, it is the impression of an active government that is emphasized. The intention of the RS government to change the agreement due to financial conditions was rejected by the Chinese investors.

Russian motive for being an active actor in the region is to prevent or to slow down the Western-dominated integration processes, but in general, there is no grand strategy. This is due to European involvement in Ukraine and the given European perspective, which is by the Russian government understood as meddling into the Russian sphere of interest. There are three channels through which Russia can exert its influence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The first one is economic, the second political, and the third the use of propaganda. The first one has the least potential for impacting domestic

politics, and it relies more on gas exports and investments in the oil industry and banking. The trade between the countries is also less developed compared to neighbouring countries and the EU member States. In short, the Bosnian economy is not Russia dependant, but rather EU dependent. The political channel has more potential. This channel is related to the support of Russian officials for party-specific policies of the Milorad Dodik party in Bosnia which contradicts the already agreed policies between Bosnia and the EU and NATO. This channel also includes the meetings of the Russian president Putin with Dodik days or weeks prior to elections in Bosnia. This is used intentionally in order to impact the results of the election. As Russia is traditionally seen as an ally of Serbs, the meetings represent an important input for the citizens to support a specific politician or party.

Thirdly, Russia has a cheap approach that uses propaganda tools to improve the image of itself and to provide a more negative image of the Western powers. The results of the Russian propaganda are observable in various public opinion polls. In particular, data from several public opinion polls from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina were presented in the work. The reasoning of including the results from Serbia is the impact Serbian media and other actors have on ethnically Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The poll results suggest the perception of Russian involvement as positive among ethnic Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while, for example, NATO among the same group of respondents is perceived as negative. Furthermore, the support for the EU membership has decreased among the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The State-owned media in RS and the Russian news agency Sputnik are the most important public opinion shapers and, according to some reports (Cvjetičanin et al. 2019), the main source of disinformation. Considering the reliance

of people to gain information from the same media (Hirschmann 2017: 202–9), their impact is significant.

Russian-Dodik relations should be perceived as a win-win situation for both actors involved. While the Russian support of certain political actors sends a picture of “doing the right thing” of the domestic politicians, the Russian government in return receives the opportunity to “spoil” the West.

The role of the United States of America in Bosnia was presented. This State has launched the initiative to stop the bloody war in Bosnia and Herzegovina which resulted in the Dayton Peace Agreement after some failed UN and EU led initiatives. The role of the US has become a more passive one after 2004 when the EU was planned to be become the main policy shaper, because of the 2003 Thessaloniki Summit and the EU perspective, and the new priorities of the American government after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. After the 2014 Ukraine crisis and the increased presence of Russia in the region, the US government has started to show increased interest. The official policy of the US is the EU and NATO membership of Bosnia, yet the leverage of the West has decreased because of the cracks in the US and EU relations (Flessenkemper and Kmezić 2019). Hence, as long there are policy fissures with regard to Balkan in the USA-EU relations, and among EU members, the policy will be weaker in its outcome.

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