

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, ARTS, AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

THESIS TITLE

The Implications of the Foreign Powers' Foreign Policies in Ethnic Conflicts of Serbia and Kosovo

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This thesis was submitted for a postgraduate degree in International Relations, Strategy and Security at Neapolis University

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The Denotation

Lobna Osama Hany

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 - Introduction **7**

1.1 Aim and Significance 7

1.2 The Methodological Approach and Literature Review 8

1.3 Order of Chapters 11

Chapter 2 – Literature Review **16**

2.1 Literature Addressing the Role of Foreign Powers in Ethnic Conflicts –Serbia and Kosovo Case 16

2.2 Literature That Tackles Roots of Violence in Ethnic Conflicts 23

2.3 Literature That Tackles Roots of Violence in Ethnic Conflicts - Part II 27

Chapter 3 - Research Methodology **32**

2.4 Objectives and Approaches 32

2.5 Methods, Timeline, and Study Limitations 33

Chapter 4 - Presentation of Data **36**

4.1. Serbia and Kosovo Conflict and Normalization of Relations 36

4.2 The International Level - The European Union, United States, and Turkey Versus Russia 41

4.3 The Serbia-Russia Relation During the Ukraine War 49

Chapter 5 – Results of the Foreign Policies and Recommendations to the European Union **52**

5.1. The European Union Enlargement to the Western Balkans 52

5.2 The Economic Situation 59

5.3 Serbia in the EU-Kosovo Liberalization of Relation and Kosovo Recognition 61

Conclusion **66**

Bibliography **73**

Appendices **78**

Table of Figures

Figure 1- Numbers of Illegal Border Crossings Through the Western Balkans Route *54*
Figure 2 - The Western Balkan Refugees' Route *55*
Figure 3- Attitudes Towards Individual Western Balkan Countries Joining the EU *57*
Figure 4 - Unemployment Rates in the Western Balkans *60*
Figure 5- Unemployment Rate in Serbia and Kosovo *61*

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Abstract

This thesis examines the implications of foreign powers' policies in ethnic conflicts. The European Union, the United States, Turkey, and Russia will be studied in ethnic conflicts, particularly Serbia and Kosovo. The thesis has been written in 2023 (started in 2022), with a lot of events surrounding it: the EU and US initiatives in taking the ongoing war in Ukraine to reduce Serbia's dependency on Russia, as well as decrease the Russian influence in the region. These events in Ukraine have been affecting the development of relations between Serbia and Kosovo. In addition, the internal crisis in the European Union has been paralleled with those initiatives for Serbia's and Kosovo's integration and future enlargement. All of these aspects are to be tested in a larger context that considers the historical and current economic, political, cultural, and security elements of the situation: the Turkish foreign policy in Kosovo and its contribution to the rise of radicalization and extremism and the Russian role in Serbia and how it affects the future of normalization between Serbia and Kosovo. The study will highlight the role of populism in Europe and the far-right wing in Serbia in supporting Russia; thus, threatening the EU internally and externally. The thesis uses the economic, domestic, and international levels of analysis in examining the issue for understanding the implications of these foreign policies on the future of relations as well as on the EU's security and stability.

Keywords: populism, nationalism, irredentism, radicalism, extremism, Islamism, foreign policy, ethnic conflicts, multi-ethnic, the European Union enlargement, strategic depth

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Aim and Significance

The thesis aims to address the implications of foreign powers' policies (the EU, the USA, Turkey, and Russia) in ethnic conflicts (Serbia and Kosovo). The thesis focuses on studying the impact of these foreign policies on Serbia's and Kosovo's relations and the possibility of normalizing those relations, particularly after the recent agreements in March 2023. This study aims to highlight the foreign powers' involvement in multiethnic conflicts as part of their foreign policy interests, thus, leading to more violence as each group fights in the lines of foreign supporters. Nonetheless, the thesis also sheds light on the adverse outcomes of this involvement in foreign powers, especially during a crisis when the foreign power itself cannot contain its internal or external threats.

The significance of this study is in providing an analysis that shows how the West (the European Union and the United States) and Turkey have contributed to fueling ethnic tensions between Serbia and Kosovo to serve their foreign policy interest in encircling Russia. Accordingly, this study suggests that the West used to raise false claims regarding its involvement in the Western Balkans for peacebuilding and security. The data suggest that since the US and the EU gave an opportunity for Turkey as a NATO member to get involved heavily, a massive increase in radicalization and extremism has been witnessed. The study will focus on addressing the adverse outcomes of the European and the long-term American policy in Serbia and Kosovo on the European Union with its existing conflicts among its member states. The European Union is trying to implement more policies, believing that the Ukraine war is an opportunity to gain a long-term Russian ally like Serbia; however, the union is passing through severe economic, energy, political, ideological, and security crises that threaten its continuity.

The thesis will address how the current internal factors of political cleavage in the European Union are not aligning with its initiatives and foreign policies in the Balkan, with the rise of populism and several disagreements among the member states regarding coordinating their conjoined foreign policies. The European Union's engagement in ethnic conflicts to integrate those foreign societies within the European community will have more negative outcomes than any foreign non-involvement. The European Union is continuing on a path that seems the best because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, but neglecting the internal issues within the EU will threaten the whole union.

1.2 The Methodological Approach and Literature Review

The methodological approach will be political discourse analysis to study and analyze the foreign policies of the EU and the US, Turkey, and Russia comparatively in order to understand the tools and methods used by each of them in serving their interests in Serbia and Kosovo. This will be studied using dissertations, scholarly works, suggestions over the course, theses, books, reports, and policies and strategies. The literature review period is from the 1990s until the year 2023. The terms that will be used in the literature review are nationalism, populism, irredentism, and trinity. These terms are particularly focused on the third category of literature that aims to explain the roots of violence in ethnic conflicts, and how they relate to this study. Addressing the foreign policies of the EU and the US, Turkey, and Russia today is significant and will have serious outcomes for the future of the European Union, particularly in the wake of the Ukrainian War.

The European Union and the United States are taking the same stance towards Kosovo's recognition claiming to protect the region from potential future violence and instability between Serbia and Kosovo. The thesis will examine whether the EU enlargement in the Western Balkans, in order to include Serbia, will have a positive or negative outcome on the

European Union internally and externally. The EU's long-term policies in enlargement eastward to encircle Russia, or even referring to it without taking action, will possibly cause more violence. The ongoing war in Ukraine is a clear example of the possible consequences of Serbia's proposal for EU membership. However, Serbia is not as important as Ukraine, but Russia considers itself the protector of its Slav brothers and Christian Orthodox of Serbia. Therefore, the study is testing the consequences of the European Union's initiatives in using the Ukrainian crisis to reduce Serbian dependence on Russia. Thus, integrating Serbia with the European community is essential to highlight the possible outcomes and results of these actions.

Populism in the EU has accomplished massive success in several countries, such as Italy, Hungary, and many others. The EU also found support in public opinion, which shaped the member states' stance in several international files, particularly those with high populism, such as Italy and Hungary. The populists' view threatens the unity of the whole union due to their ideology, policies, and their relations with Russia, which will be tackled in the following chapters. In addition, the recognition of Kosovo led to disagreements among EU member states because of the differences in interest. Five member states refused to recognize Kosovo; Cyprus, Greece, and Spain were among the five rejecting states as this may trigger more success of secession of other territories across the continent according to the Domino effect theory.

The long-term Russian relationship with Serbia is one of the most influential factors that will be tackled, especially the use of Russia's historical, cultural, and religious ties in its foreign policy to strengthen its public and leadership relations. Moreover, it is essential to closely study the support of the Serbian right wing, particularly during the Ukrainian crisis. The resistance of the Serbian public against their leader's rapprochement with the West will be analyzed in accordance with the literature on memory and culture, which suggests that people's memory, particularly in multiethnic conflicts, shapes the culture and attitudes, and how

generations from the same group will still react toward each other. The NATO air bombing of Serbia during the war and the Russian support remains in the Serbs' memory that the West was the reason behind the secession of their lands, 'Kosovo', and the fear and killings of their families. On the other hand, the Serbs saw how Russia supported them against the West. All of these factors are highly influential when addressing a multiethnic conflict due to its complexity and the involvement of multiple aspects, such as culture, history, and religion. Foreign powers have long used these aspects to serve their foreign policy interests in the Western Balkans, especially in Serbia and Kosovo.

The Turkish role in supporting Kosovo and its impact on the stabilization of the whole region is analyzed by addressing the Turkish acts in accordance with its doctrine and its foreign policy that has long been supporting Jihadism and Islamism. The use of religion by the Turkish side is one of its foreign policy tools in the Kosovo case. It works on enhancing the Turkish position, thus, improving its relation and connection to Kosovans, claiming to be the protector of Islam and Muslims. The Turkish foreign policy will be examined following the strategic depth doctrine, the AKP and Erdogan doctrine, and its economic involvement and control in the main sectors of the Kosovan economy. Moreover, Turkish minorities in Kosovo, as well as education and religion, have been used to support Turkey’s presence there. In addition, this research will also examine the relationship between the Turkish presence in Kosovo and the rise of radicalization and extremism.

The study will be based on the levels of foreign policy analysis, as it will include addressing the economic level of analysis to understand the dynamics of relations between the EU and Kosovo, Turkey and Kosovo, and Russia and Serbia, as well as the current European actions in gaining Serbia as an economic partner. This level will also address unemployment, the energy crisis, and how the EU reacted to Serbia, the leading exporter of Russian oil. On the domestic level, the study will tackle the domestic situation within Serbia and Kosovo to explain

how the public reacts on each side. The role of the far-right in Serbia and the rest of the public in foreign matters will indicate whether the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo on the actual ground will be possible or not, particularly on the public level. The domestic level focuses on understanding and analyzing highly influential factors in foreign policy. Nonetheless, the use of foreign powers in deploying these internal factors is one of the critical determinants of the success or failure of their foreign policies. For example, the Russian reliance on the support it gains from the Serbian public does not lead to any worries resulting from any action by the leadership; in fact, the Serbian president fears the public categorizing him as a traitor if taking any action not aligning with Russia.

The International level of analysis will be used to analyze the differences in foreign policies of the EU and the US, Turkey, and Russia towards Serbia and Kosovo. This level will focus on how each of those actors uses all the means to produce the most output and label it as involvement in peacekeeping and security to guarantee the stability of the region; hence, it is all about interests and guaranteeing regional influence.

1.3 Order of Chapters

Chapter one of this study starts with the Introduction, which introduces the topic's main objective and significance. This chapter highlights the purpose of the paper and why that topic particularly needs to be studied and requires close attention. It also includes the methodological approach of the study, the literature review period, the literature terms that will be used, and the relevance of the topic to today's needs. In addition, the chapter mentions the methods of analysis that will be used in the thesis and the levels of depth in the chapters. As previously mentioned, the study goes deeper into the topic by using several foreign policy levels of analysis. The study is not limited to the analysis based on the international level of analysis,

but it also includes the domestic and economic levels. Furthermore, the study considers the cultural, psychological, and religious elements as influential factors in the case being studied.

Chapter Two is about the literature review. It is divided into three main categories; the first one is about literature that tackles the role of the Western Powers in ethnic conflicts – the Serbia and Kosovo case. This part includes the strategic depth doctrine of the EU and the US, as well as Turkey in Kosovo. The EU and the US fall in the same category as Turkey because, as a NATO member, Turkey is granted involvement based on support from the EU and the US. Turkey is also taking their stance in the Kosovo case. In contrast, the second category is literature which tackles the Russian role in the Serbia-Kosovo conflict. This category shows how Russia's long-term foreign policy is still serving its interests in Serbia today through its cultural, historical, ethnic, and religious ties to the Serbs. Though this might not seem enough for a foreign policy to succeed, this study focuses deeply on the impact of these foreign policies on the Serbian citizen, and how it shapes their stance in dealing with Kosovo and the West.

The third and last category in this chapter is literature which tackles the roots of violence in ethnic conflicts. There are five subcategories related to one another, each trying to explain the roots of violence in ethnic conflicts differently. The first subcategory is the realist approach to understanding ethnic conflicts, which is the primary approach adopted and suggested in this study. Then, this subcategory is followed by nationalism, populism, and irredentism. Next is memory and cultural identity. This part uses several historical incidents between Serbia and Kosovo and their role in shaping the identity and fueling violence towards one another, as well as the use of a study that was conducted on the Serbian's younger generations to understand how the generation that did not witness torture is still able to find reasons to engage in violence with the other side, which is Kosovo. Lastly, Clausewitz's book *On War* is one of the remarkable works that aimed not to understand the causes of war but rather the dynamics and the driving forces of it. The concept of the Trinity and its relation to

violence is the main idea addressed in this part, particularly through connecting how Turkey and Russia used the 'people' to generate more violence.

Chapter three, the research methodology, will address the methods used in the study for data gathering. It provides the reader with the purpose of the study, its significance, why it is being examined today, and its relation to today's events. This chapter also focuses on providing the reader with the methods used throughout the research to guarantee satisfactory results. Accordingly, several methods and approaches are adopted to have comprehensive data, and thus, complete results. The methods used in data gathering are both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative data included studies, articles, reports, books, and political doctrines. The quantitative data used are based on numerical secondary data surveys and statistical data. The sources of these data are based on a diversity of reliable institutions to guarantee high-quality and non-biasedness of the results. The approach used is political discourse analysis to conduct a deep analysis using thesis books, reports, and policies. The approach will apply desk analysis as a comparative foreign policy analysis tool. The levels of analysis will include economic, domestic, and international levels of analysis. It will also highlight the scholarly work and insights into the literature being used and its relevance to the case as a method of approaching it.

Chapter Four examines the Serbia and Kosovo conflict and the normalization of their relations. This chapter focuses on presenting the data and results of the study. It starts with a brief explanation of the nature of the relations between Serbia and Kosovo using historical events, such as the war in the 1990s, and current events as the gradual development in relations until the normalization agreement reached in March 2023. This chapter shows the data needed to assess whether these countries will be able to normalize relations on the ground or not, as well as the implications of each scenario over the stability of the region. The first part of the chapter uses the domestic level of analysis as an assessment tool that considers the influence

of nationalism over these multiethnic conflicts, and how they can affect the development of relations. This part discusses the political parties of Serbia and Kosovo, their long-term doctrine, and the implications of any possibility of change for understanding the extent of violence these groups might be able to engage in.

The second part involves the international level of analysis that includes the European Union, the United States, and Turkey versus Russia. This part tackles the foreign policies of each actor involved in Serbia and Kosovo through the tools being used, the multiple purposes as the competition between the East and the West, and the outcomes of their political and security matters. This includes the economic, cultural, and political engagement of Turkey and the EU. In comparison, the last part of this chapter focuses on the Serbia-Russia relationship during the Ukraine war. This part involves a deep analysis of the recent EU policies and initiatives towards Serbia, including energy security.

Chapter Five provides an interpretation of results, comments, and recommendations for the European Union and the United States. The chapter starts with the European Union enlargement in the Western Balkans, particularly Serbia and Kosovo. This first part of the chapter explains why the EU enlargement policy threatens the integration of the whole union and will have internal and external adverse outcomes. The comments and recommendations are based on analyzing the current situation in the European Union, considering the rise of populism, economic grievances, and mass strikes for various reasons across Europe, leading to political instability. This chapter also interprets graphs, secondary data surveys, and statistics to measure the outcomes of the EU foreign policy. It includes the number of illegal migrants through the Western Balkan route, the attitudes of the Europeans, particularly the French people, towards individual Western Balkan countries joining the EU, and the unemployment rate in both Serbia and Kosovo. These data are provided to help assess the EU's cost and benefit if Serbia joined the EU. This has also provided the opportunity to assess the extent of the

economic integration success through project funds and investments in Serbia and Kosovo. Nonetheless, tackling the role of nationalism and the differences in ideologies in both Serbia and Kosovo, because of the Turkish and Russian involvement and contribution in shaping the belongings of these people, will be an essential pillar in addressing the future of relations between these countries and the EU.

Lastly, Kosovo's recognition and the issues arising from it will be the focus of this part. It discusses the debate between the two main international relations principles and the disagreement among the EU member states over the recognition of Kosovo, and how the recognition of Kosovo may motivate other secessionist movements across Europe that already exist and may trigger a lot of instability. Based on the domino effect theory, Kosovo's recognition will highly affect other states. It also stresses the Cyprus and Greek issues with Turkey and highlights the type of relations between Greece and Turkey as two NATO member states.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Literature Addressing the Role of Foreign Powers in Ethnic Conflicts –Serbia and Kosovo Case

The Role of the European Union and the United States in the Serbia-Kosovo Conflict

Since the Balkan War in the 1990s, the United States and the European Union have been involved in the region to prevent the escalation of the conflict to the rest of Europe. The US and the EU have fought against any Russian-supported forces (Grimm & Mathis, 2015). The declared claims of the US and the EU for any efforts in the Balkans have always been under the pretext of 'protecting human rights' air and minorities from the violence of the Serbs supported by Russia. The EU's and US's first involvement was in the NATO air bombing that took place for two months over Serbia (Arbatov, 2000). They claimed that they avoided repeating the Bosnia-Herzegovina massacres and protected Muslims from Slobodan Milosevic, the Serbian leader who was Pro-Russia (Nation, 2003). Milosevic was accused by the West of committing war crimes during this era against Muslims across the Western Balkans. Therefore, NATO's involvement has always been justified in protecting human rights. Later, their role did not end but started to include other aspects that justified their presence as establishing post-war peace and preventing any possibility of future violence between Serbia and Kosovo (Grimm & Mathis, 2015). The Western Balkans are in southeast Europe; therefore, their security and stability highly affect European stability. Since the war broke out, the EU and the US have supported the Kosovan side. They are taking the Albanian Muslim side against the Kosovo-Serbia minority, supported by Russia and Serbia (Arbatov, 2000). Accordingly, the EU member states, except for a few states, have recognized Kosovo's independence. However, they have diplomatic and economic relations with Kosovo as part of the integration plan (Joseph et al., 2022).

The region's current American and European rule was not limited to peacekeeping. However, it included funding projects, investments, and several other steps that allowed Serbia and Kosovo to be integrated into the European Community (Conley & Saric, 2021). Letting Serbia-Kosovo integrated into the European community is conditional to enhancing their relations. As Kosovo was part of Serbia and called for independence, Serbia was forced to recognize Kosovo as fully independent in exchange for better status in the European Union, accelerating its chances of being accepted as an EU member (Conley & Saric, 2021).

The role of the US and the EU cannot be understood as something that stands alone in the international arena. It has to be acknowledged within the context of the long-term Russian influence and role in the Western Balkans through using the Serbs and Serbian minorities in every republic to push for violence (Nation, 2003). Nonetheless, the US and the EU have seized the opportunity of the Russian invasion of Ukraine to gain a long-term Russian ally, Serbia. The US and EU have managed to conduct a dialogue and pressure Serbia and Kosovo to sign agreements that aim to normalize their relations (Vasovic, 2023). Moreover, the energy crisis threatening the whole continent allowed Serbia to reduce its reliance and dependence on Russian energy imports. It started the construction of pipelines from Belgrade to Sofia in Bulgaria (Directorate-General for Energy, 2023). These steps aimed to reduce the Russian influence; and, thus, increase the Serbian dependence on its European neighbors and start adopting a more Western stance towards Kosovo (Zawadewicz, 2023).

Turkey's "Strategic Depth" Doctrine in Kosovo

Turkey's involvement in Kosovo is part of its strategic depth doctrine. The Strategic Depth, written by the Foreign and Prime Minister of Turkey Ahmet Davutoğlu, was published in 2001. In this book, Davutoğlu provided his own theoretical framework for Turkey's foreign policy both in the near land (Middle East and Balkans) as well as in the sea (Eastern

Mediterranean and Black Sea) (Vogiatzis, 2022). In this book, Davutoğlu suggests creating a theoretical framework that will fully allow Turkey to assert its foreign policy in the international environment. He identified three categories. According to him, belonging to one of these categories will determine the role of a state in international events. "The first category includes states that adopt a 'static attitude,' an inactive behavior, without personality and self-confidence" (Vogiatzis, 2022, p.25), while the second category encompasses "the states that are drawn to the flow of international dynamism" (Vogiatzis, 2022, p.26). The third and last category contains "the states that are constantly trying to turn their capacity into a great power in the international dynamic" (Vogiatzis, 2022, p.26).

Turkey has succeeded in passing through the first two categories and is currently facing one of its main opportunities: to enter the third category. The ultimate goal of Turkey is to be treated as a satellite or regional power and not just as an independent world power (Vogiatzis, 2022, p.25). The geographical location of Turkey has played a huge role in explaining Turkish foreign policy since Turkey is "a country surrounded by the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East needs to develop a policy that will allow it to control all sea routes and crossings in the surrounding seas" (Vogiatzis, 2022, p.31). Turkey's foreign policy has always revolved around maximizing its benefits through using its surrounding areas to control all the sea routes and crossings; by doing so, Turkey will be able to dominate, and thus force any power to abide and accept its policies. The former Prime Minister of Turkey referred to the Dardanelles Straits, the Aegean Sea, and the Black Sea as important regions of dispute with Greece. Another focus of the current government is the South Eastern Mediterranean whose importance Davutoğlu stressed as it will lead Turkey to the Red Sea and from there to the Indian Ocean (Vogiatzis, 2022, p.25).

In the Neo-Ottoman aspirations of both himself and Turkey as he makes a historical review of the conquests of the Ottoman Empire in the Mediterranean, the Aegean, and

> the Black Sea, characterizing his ancestors as owners of a world state as they had maintained complete control over both the sea and land route. (Vogiatzis, 2022, p.31)

There is a significant Turkish obsession with the Ottoman Empire and the desire for the birth of the once-powerful empire; this has been highly witnessed in Turkish political discourse and foreign policy. This is more clarified by the Former Turkish Prime Minister's willingness for close cooperation between Muslim and Turkish minorities in the Balkans and Turkey (Vogiatzis, 2022). Almost all of the Balkan countries have Muslim and Turkish minorities living within their borders, which is an important pillar in the Turkish foreign policy in the Balkans.

According to Davutoğlu, Turkey has two main goals in its foreign policy in the Balkans. The first goal is to strengthen Bosnia and Albania within a framework of stability due to the high percentage of Muslims living in both countries (Vogiatzis, 2022, p.25). The second target is to create a legal framework that suits Turkey and protects the Turkish minorities in the Balkans. In this case, a suitable environment and a legal framework will grant Turkey the right to intervene in issues in the Balkan related to minorities (Vogiatzis, 2022, p.25).

> Turkey is to keep the dynamic flame from the Muslim minorities alive so that the hope of spreading is alive as Davutoğlu himself considers the minorities as Ottoman remnants, which is another proof of the expansionist policy of Davutoğlu's doctrine and 'Strategic Depth'. (Vogiatzis, 2022, p.38)

Turkey's perception that it is the legitimate inheritor of the Ottoman Empire is one of the reasons behind adopting its assertive policy, imagining that it can restore these borders. One can notice some similarity between today's Turkey and the Ottoman Empire which is the deployment of Islamists to serve geopolitical purposes and aims (Hoti et al., 2022). The use of religious ties in Kosovo or any former Ottoman colony is not limited to fostering relations between the two countries. However, it includes a wider plan for training armed groups

claiming to defend Islam in any country (Shtuni, 2016). Turkey has been known for using this strategy in several areas, such as in Kosovo, leading to increasing radicalism and extremism (Shtuni, 2016). Kosovan fighters were reported fighting in Syria and Iraq under the name of the so-called "Islamic State" (Shtuni, 2016). Accordingly, this proves how Turkey uses foreign fighters in its foreign policy to serve its aims in any territory. The strategy is not limited to preparation camps for fighting but includes involvement in education and several sectors that reshape cultural identity and thus shape attitudes. Such strategy created radicals who were not fighting to defend their country but just fighting for the sake of violence, claiming to defend their religion as directed by their funder.

According to a special report that the United States Institute of Peace issued, Turkey had a significant role throughout history in the creation of extremism in Kosovo. The report addresses the Dynamics of radicalization and violent extremism in Kosovo (Shtuni, 2016). It analyzes the dynamics of radicalization in accordance with the demographic trends and geographic footprint, the socioeconomic and political factors, the geopolitics and identity flux, the martial social identity and legacy of war, and inspirational leadership and group dynamics (Shtuni, 2016).

Turkey uses the preservation of the cultural identity of the region and its population in order to maintain its cultural cohesion (Vogiatzis, 2022). Accordingly, Ottomanism is maintained through offering financial support in the Balkans, as well as providing facilities and infrastructure for enhancing the living condition and protection under the shield of UNESCO as minorities in a foreign country (Vogiatzis, 2022). Turkey has been relying on one of its main instruments in the Balkans to achieve its foreign policy: NATO. According to Davutoğlu, Turkey needs to use all the possible ways to strengthen its position in the region among Western countries (Vogiatzis, 2022). "At the same time, Turkey is planning economic and strategic cooperation with co-religious countries, and it wants to impose its expansionist intentions

towards Greece via the expansion of Thrace" (Vogiatzis, 2022, p.39). Turkey considers the Balkans an essential geostrategic location and a gateway to the European Union (Hoti et al., 2022).

The Russian Role in Serbia-Kosovo Conflict

The Russian role in Serbia stems from the long-term ties between the two countries. Russia considers Serbia a vital ally in the Western Balkans (Metodieva, 2019). Russia has been one of the key players in the Western Balkans for centuries. It helped Serbia in gaining its independence from the Ottoman Empire. Later, it helped Serbia in the 1990s against NATO air forces. Russia adopted a pro-Serbian stance in the Kosovo matter as it clearly opposed its independence several times and stressed respect for the Serbian territorial integrity (Arbatov, 2000). The Russian support for the Serbs has always been justified by its duty to respect its Slavic-Orthodox brothers (Cohen, 1994). Accordingly, substantial Serbian support for any Russian act is witnessed among ordinary citizens, politicians, and government officials. Russia has been using the element of Christian Orthodox as one of the main influential pillars to gain support from the Serbs over any policy taken against the West (Metodieva, 2019). The religious ties between the two countries have been used in the Russian foreign policy in the Western Balkans for many years and continued to be used today.

Nonetheless, the right wing in Serbia is one of the prominent supporters of Russia and opposes any action taken that can make the country a pro-western country (Conley & Saric, 2021). One of the main foreign policies of Russia in the Western Balkans is the use of the minority Serbians in every country that can push for violence and instability at any time and facilitate the Russian intervention. Russia has used the Kosovo-Serbia minority in Kosovo several times in order to reduce the possibility of recognition (McBride, 2022).

The Western Balkans is a competition theater between Russia and the Western bloc (Samokhvalov, 2019). Accordingly, Russia uses far right wing, trained armed groups, and radicalism to increase tensions and prevent Western domination of the rest of the Balkans. The EU has succeeded in joining more members from the Balkans; however, other republics are still on hold, such as Serbia, a strong Russian ally that attempts by the EU to Serbia's membership acceptance may lead to more violence in the region (Conley & Saric, 2023). Russia with its attitude in dealing with the Ukrainian crisis has a high possibility of repeating itself in the Balkans in order to prevent Western expansion. Regardless of how the EU and the US have seized the Ukraine war as an opportunity to reduce Serbia's relation with Russia, Russia remains with a highly influential status in the Serbian economy, politics, and society that has long been crafted to create a cohesion culture and interests between the Russians and the Serbs (Metodieva, 2019).

Kosovo's independence may reduce the Russian influence in the regions, but it will undoubtedly lead to a better situation in the annexation referendums in eastern Ukraine (McBride, 2022). Moreover, the Serbian nationalists are using the Russian invasion of Ukraine to intervene and take Kosovo under the same justification of minority groups, leading to more violence and destabilization of the region (Murray, 2023). Additionally, "more than 300 Balkan fighters are known to have participated in the conflict in eastern Ukraine on the side of the pro-Russia separatists" (Metodieva, 2019, p.5). This shows how most of the Balkan people are used by foreign powers to be fighters on their side, regardless of the land they defend. However, they are following a specific power that they belong to. Russia has focused its foreign policy on the cultural-religious element to strengthen its position in the Balkans.

The consecration of a new Russian church and the donation of $5 million by Gazprom to the Serbian Orthodox Church are among the more recent and more visible signs of

Russia's growing presence in the region based on cultural-religious ties. (Metodieva, 2019, p.5)

Russia's most significant method and approach in Serbia is the use of the Orthodox Church, which allowed Russia to gain domestic public support in Serbia using religious ties. This remains taking a huge portion of support from public opinion in addition to the controlled media outlets promoting certain views that work in the national identity, which the West is about to eliminate by the recognition of Kosovo. The Russian government mobilizes several state-owned firms, including energy giant Gazprom and state banks (McBride, 2022).

On the unofficial level, Russian nationals support, fund, and organize nationalist and paramilitary groups through military-style training camps for Serbian youth (McBride, 2022). Adopting this strategy has been used for many years in the Balkans and was one of the main contributors to violence in the region. However, Russia remains perceived positively among the Serbs because they still have the memories of the NATO air bombing on their country during the 1990s, which made the Serbs hardly perceive the West as one unit as compared to Russia (Last, 2022). "Russia's allure is that … [it is] perceived as someone who stands up to the West," said Vuk Vuksanovic, a Balkan analyst with the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy and an associate of LSE IDEAS, a foreign policy think-tank at the London School of Economics (Last, 2022).

2.2 Literature That Tackles Roots of Violence in Ethnic Conflicts

Realists' Approach to Understanding Ethnic Conflicts

Realism is the dominant theory in international relations. According to the realist theory, states are the most important political actors in the international system. The roots of realism go far to Thucydides' writings on the Peloponnesian wars in ancient Greece (Jesse & Williams, 2010). According to realists, the change in the balance of power post the cold war

allowed the rise of nationalist and ethnic conflicts to emerge. The most prominent example of this was the eruption of the Balkan War (Jesse & Williams, 2010). The rise of challenges as several ethnic groups for control of the same territory. Barry Posen wants to assess factors that could lead to an intense security dilemma when the imperial order breaks down, thus leading to a resort to violence (Jesse & Williams, 2010). Posen raises the question of what happens when a sovereign state, like the USSR and Yugoslavia, no longer exists. The ethnic groups will be concerned about the security that was already provided under the state. Posen focuses on how anarchy affects security for ethnic groups within states. Because when states fall, ethnic groups fear their survival and security (Jesse &Williams, 2010). Accordingly, these ethnic groups start to figure out whether the other ethnic group is a threat or not. To determine this, the ethnic groups look at the capabilities of the other, particularly the offensive one, the military. If the other group starts to build more capabilities, this will give a signal to the other that it is offensive and will drive this group to build more which will reduce the security of the other (Jesse & Williams, 2010).

Populism

There are numerous scholars who have defined populism in different terms; the most common aspects among all of these definitions were the 'people' and the 'other', which could refer to the elite, foreigners, or others (Cox, 2018). As for the 'people', in populist political communication, the term has an intended vagueness. It can signify the whole population of a country or just a segment of it (Deiwiks, 2009). It may also indicate only individuals with a particular nationality or culture and exclude all other population groups, as is the case in right-wing populism. 'People' refers to a community of blood, culture, and race. Accordingly, populism easily turns into racism (Deiwiks, 2009). The political discourse of those populists usually evolves around awakening emotions in the people to protect their nation from

foreigners, for example. They use numerous ways, such as economic grievances, to attract more supporters (Deiwiks, 2009).

Nationalism

Nationalism has been defined and interpreted in many different ways by scholars. It was defined in two main ways, either as a concern for one's nation and the desire to enhance its strength or as an exaggerated admiration of one's nation (Kecmanovic, 1996). Platmentaz stated that nationalism appears when national identity is threatened or felt to be insufficient. In other words, nationalism is about the desire to either reserve or enhance one's national or cultural identity, particularly when the identity is threatened. Nationalism could also be the willingness to transform or even create an identity when it is felt to be inadequate (Kecmanovic, 1999). Many authors associate nationalism with awareness of one's national identity. For example, Hayes (1960) wrote that nationalism may be defined as a fusion of patriotism with the consciousness of nationality (Kecmanovic, 1996). Similarly, Snyder (1964) referred to nationalism as a condition of the mind and feelings or sentiments of a group of people who are living in a well-defined geographical area. These people have a common language and literature through which the aspirations of the nation are expressed and attached to common traditions, and in several cases, they have a common origin (Kecmanovic, 1996). In 1993, Kaldor stressed the idea that the new ethnic nationalism post-Cold War is horizontal instead of vertical. In other words, instead of having a gathered community that lives in the same territory, these groups struggle to tie up the same ethnic groups that are scattered and divided across many territories. Accordingly, slogans raised by Serbian nationalists promote the idea of the Serbian nation-state that should be extended to all territories the Serbs live in (Kecmanovic, 1996).

Nationalism can be violent through having that profound concept of blood sacrifice and the nation. Carolyn Marvin and David Ingle, whose original study *Blood sacrifice and the nation* stressed the importance of violence for national identity creation and reproduction (Hutchinson, 2010). They highlighted that "the more they evoke a willingness to fight, the more credible the enemy, and the more threatening they are to group survival" (Hutchinson, 2010, p. 123). Thus, all this leads to violence as each group is trying to save its national identity that is threatened by the presence of the other.

> One reason is the attachment of the majority or dominant nationality of the state to its territory as a homeland sacralized by memories of previous wars or by virtue of its cultural or religious associations: for example, the status of Kosovo for Serbia. (Hutchinson, 2010, p. 134)

Irredentism

Irredentism is a natural feeling of ethnic nationalism, and it intensifies the impact on ethnic majorities and minority conflicts. The term irredentism is derived from the Italian 'terra irredenta', which means unredeemed land. It was first referred to the Italian-speaking areas under Austrian rule during the second half of the nineteenth Century (Yagcioglu, 1996). After Italy achieved unification, it fought Austria repeatedly in order to capture those territories. Regardless of the common phenomenon and its huge occupation in world politics, it has yet to be examined extensively as compared to other phenomena (Yagcioglu, 1996). Usually, it is dealt with as a case of secessionism.

Irredentism is based on two main aspects: first, the drive to expand in order to maximize power and wealth, which is expansionism, and second the empathy of people to fear and hatred toward the other who is different and considered either an enemy or a potential enemy (Yagcioglu, 1996). Irredentism could be dangerous to the stability of the state as many times it

turns into a radical form to protect the ethnic minority living under the domination of a nation-state.

> The stated goal of irredentism is, in its radical form, to 'liberate,' to 'redeem' an ethnic minority and the territory in which it lives from the domination of a nation-state [6], and in its moderate form, to aggressively defend that minority's rights and interests. (Yagcioglu, 1996, p.4)

The irredentist approach to a minority does not improve the group's status but worsens it because "when the nation-state realizes that another state (almost invariably a neighboring state) has initiated an irredentist policy aiming at that ethnic minority, the government of that nation-state starts perceiving it as a threat to the national security and integrity" (Yagcioglu, 1996, p.4). Accordingly, when the state discovers that it has started adopting oppressive measures toward that group, that group then develops a more urge for independence using violence. This approach was and still is used by the Serbian minority groups across the Western Balkans, particularly now in Kosovo. In addition, Albanians used it when Kosovo was part of Serbia.

2.3 Literature That Tackles Roots of Violence in Ethnic Conflicts - Part II

Memory and Cultural Identity

Triandis said, "Culture is to society what memory is to individuals" (Hudson, 2014). The role of memory and the 1389 Battle of Kosovo has a huge impact on the mobilization of modern Serbian nationalism. In understanding the societal topography of the past, scholar Eviatar Zerubavel mentioned that the way memory is collected and processed is both collective and specific (Gavin, 2011). Each person is informed by the collective identities (family ties, ethnic groups, or membership in a nation), with which he/she is mostly associated. These associations are known as *mnemonic communities.* Belonging to these communities shapes

how individuals see the past; therefore, they act on certain events based on different meanings they perceive. This process makes individuals who belong to different communities perceive things in different meanings based on their history, culture, experiences of the group, and religion (Gavin, 2011). The situation in Kosovo is seen differently by the Serbian and Albanian communities as both remember it as a site of defeat and persecution, but each group has its own reasons that are different than the other towards the same memory. Slobodan Milosevic, the Serbian leader during the Kosovo war, used to awaken the sense of national bravery among people to push for violence as he said, "Unless you fight for Serbia, your ancestors will be betrayed, your descendants will be shamed. These are your lands, your fields, your gardens, your memories" (Hill, 1999). He recalled the spirit of the Battle of Kosovo 600 years earlier, in 1389, against the Ottomans. However, the Serbs under Prince Lazar fought to the end, and, as Lazar said, "better to die in glory than to live in shame" (Hill, 1999).

> Zerubavel believes that 'acquiring a group's memories and thereby identifying with its collective past is part of the process of acquiring any social identity and familiarizing members with that past is a major part of communities' efforts to assimilate them'. (Gavin, 2011, p.42)

This interpretation explains the situation in Kosovo. Moreover, mnemonic communities can clash with one another over the truth behind a historical event, which is a clash on the meaning of history. This is known as mnemonic battles, and Kosovo is one of the most famous in this regard (Gavin, 2011).

The memory of a society plays a huge role in shaping the attitudes of other generations toward a dispute, and it is usually accompanied by several motives that may be the driving forces to more disputes as long-term hatred, retaliation, and the protection of one's national identity that turn into violent nationalism. Several examples of that could be in the Serbia and Kosovo case, between the Serbs and the Kosovans, the Serbs and Ottomans, the Serbs and

NATO, and the Kosovans and the Russian support for the Serbs. The memory could also be the other way around, which is still witnessed today in how the nationalist Serbians connect themselves to Russia as they remain to recall how Russia was on their side during the NATO air bombing. Meanwhile, the Serbs remain to have an aggressive attitude towards the EU and NATO because of the same case of NATO air bombing. However, a parallel example could be found in the establishment of the European community, which found huge success to overcome the tragedies of war through establishing peaceful cooperation though they had long-term disputes. Accordingly, memory could be used in several ways based on interests.

A study was conducted to assess the implications of nationalism and violence on the Serbian students' narratives on Yugoslavia's break up. The study mainly focused on assessing to what extent the new generation who did not witness the torture or the violence of this period is still affected by narratives (Jovanovic & Bermúdez, 2021). It addressed the young generation, mainly students who were born during or after the Kosovo war and entered university. The narrated tragedies of war had a significant impact on the attitudes of the new generation because of what was experienced and witnessed by their families during the war. Stories like the following were the most narrated among the students in the interviews.

> There was no electricity … my mother literally gave birth to me under flashlights. Luckily everything went well, but my parents had to leave the hospital a few hours after she gave birth on a stretcher because the hospital was close to something they wanted to bomb. (Interview with Emilija). (Jovanovic & Bermúdez, 2021, p. 3)

The study was carried out to evaluate the consequences of the Yugoslavia and the Kosovo war on the current Serbian young generation, that have not witnessed or experienced the violence at that time but were born in this period (Jovanovic & Bermúdez, 2021). The findings of the collective memory of conflict were summed up in three main themes the victimization of one's own group, the delegitimization of the opponent group, and the justness of one's own goals.

Victimization of one's own group included overestimating the severity of the crimes and adverse effects of the wars (Jovanovic & Bermúdez, 2021). Delegitimization of the opponent used to take different shapes that revolved around categorizing the opponent as brutal, immoral, intentionally committing harm, or labeling the opponent group as terrorist. The findings of the justifications of the goals of one's own group were the normalization of violence. The study showed how framed narratives by the old generation tended to justify violence, thus leading to the normalization of violence by the new generation (Jovanovic & Bermúdez, 2021).

Clausewitz's Book On War

Carl von Clausewitz was a general in the Prussian army and a military theorist. He wrote his book *On War* which consists of several books; he wrote this book after the bloody and violent consequences of both the Napoleonic War and the French Revolution. Clausewitz aimed to make sense of the war itself, not just the causes and the consequences of it, but its dynamics, the driving forces, and why it differs from one to another. To Clausewitz, "war is merely the continuation of politics by other means" (Clausewitz, 2008). One of the main controversial and debatable aspects and a key topic among scholars referring to his theory of war was the idea of war as a 'Trinity':

> As a total phenomenon, its dominant tendencies always make war a paradoxical trinity - composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as a blind natural force; of the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam; and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone. (Clausewitz, 2008, p.30)

He mentioned that violence, hatred, and enmity refer to the people. The play chance refers to the military while the subordination indicates the government.

Applying the previously mentioned concepts in understanding the reasons for war in the Western Balkans will make it clear how each element was deployed to trigger violence. For example, the Russian use of the Serbian minorities, coupled with hatred towards other ethnicities across the Western Balkans, is one of the interpretations of the driving forces and the dynamics of the conflicts in the Balkans. The same applies to the Turkish side; Turkey's use of building Islamist and Jihadist groups through the Muslim and Turkish minorities across the Balkan and recalling the war struggles and massacres by Christians pushes for endless violence and conflicts. However, in the end, the war in itself is the continuation of politics but in different ways, not because of ethnic or religious diversity. Both religion and ethnicity are used as one of the instruments that trigger emotions inside people and form different camps across societies where each belongs to a different bloc to support its interests.

Chapter 3 - Research Methodology

2.4 Objectives and Approaches

This thesis examines foreign powers' policies in multiethnic societies and their ramifications on both sides. The thesis mainly focuses on studying Serbia and Kosovo as a controversial issue of a multiethnic society still witnessing changes today. The Serbia-Kosovo issue shows the apparent competition between the East and the West. The thesis will examine the foreign policies of the European Union, United States, Turkey, and Russia in Serbia-Kosovo. The significance of this study is in tackling how foreign policies of foreign actors in multiethnic conflicts can lead to more disputes within and outside these borders. This thesis adopts a realists approach to understanding ethnic conflicts. The approach suggests that the change in the balance of power post-cold War fueled the rising of nationalist and ethnic conflicts because of the absence of the collapse of states that no longer existed as former Yugoslavia. Controversial issues, like Kosovo's recognition, trigger several issues within the European Union's domestic affairs. Nationalism, populism, and Irredentism are the main theories associated with this study. The three have been used by the actors involved towards one another as one of their foreign policies that enhances their positions. For example, Russia's support for the rise of populism in the European Union threatens the security of the whole union and enhances Russia's position. In addition, the nationalist Serbians who support Russia intensively reduce the chances of the EU and US rapprochement. Russia has used culture, religion, and history to support its position with these groups and guarantee its presence.

The Turkish and Western use of Irredentism in the Kosovo case to weaken the Russian and Serbian position is another example of how these theories apply to the foreign policies of the EU, US, Turkey, and Russia in Serbia and Kosovo, thus, reducing the chances of solving the issue between both parties. Russia has long been using Irredentism in many areas for Christian Orthodox and Slav 'brothers', Serbia in the Serbian minority living in Kosovo.

The long-term Western policy of encircling Russia has a backlash on Europe. Tackling the Serbia-Kosovo case during the ongoing war in Ukraine in order to explain how the West used and exploited the crisis to build other relations with Russian allies. Clausewitz's interpretation of war, particularly the trinity concept, was one of the works that helped understand the conflict's roots and what fuels it. Additionally, the role of memory in shaping the culture and identity of these multiethnic groups living in both Serbia and Kosovo was one of the crucial pieces of literature that explain how each side perceives the other and why.

2.5 Methods, Timeline, and Study Limitations

The methods used in data gathering are both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative data include studies, reports, articles, political doctrines, public response, and leaders' actions. Reports published by the European Commission and by other reliable institutions will be used. The study also utilizes different sources and publishers who include all the involved actors to assess the case using different perspectives and guarantee the non-biasedness of the research results. Nonetheless, the scholarly views used are not one-sided or give only Western or Eastern views towards the issue but will include multiple scholars from different areas. Studying multiethnic societies is not easy, mainly if the history of violence is significant, and if they still have possibilities of future engagement in violence. One of the focused qualitative studies will be used in understanding how narratives by old Serbian generations to new young generations still trigger anger and can lead to violence. Though the current young generation being studied is mainly in the university and has not witnessed war, their older generations fuel several feelings using emotions and many other aspects tackled in the study. This shows how the psychological part may lead to repeating the same conflicts, if not worse.

The quantitative data include numerical surveys and statistical data. Surveys are secondary data. The numbers will then be translated into qualitative data by interpreting them,

connecting their relevance to the topic, and how they affect the case being studied. The data include analyzing the number of Europeans, particularly French citizens, rejecting the EU enlargement in the Western Balkans. The survey includes several countries, including Serbia, Kosovo, and Turkey. This method will help in the domestic level analysis and its future influence on the EU's foreign policy. Nonetheless, it will lead to an understanding of the current EU internal affairs and help in structuring recommendations that consider several aspects. The unemployment rate in both Serbia and Kosovo will also be used to indicate the economic performance and to analyze, based on the cost-benefit analysis, whether it will be a burden on the EU and future investors or not to integrate these markets and invest in them, which is the economic level analysis. Moreover, the number of illegal migrants taking the Balkan route will be one of the data used in analyzing the situation from a multidimensional analysis.

The limitations of this study are finding unbiased data and information as well as the time constraint. The timeline of this study is based on long-term research that took years over the same issue, but with the recent changes in 2023 and after the Ukrainian War, several aspects required changes. Due to the rapid changes in the international environment, particularly in the last year, the thesis required significant changes that took around a year.

3.3 Levels of Analysis

The previously mentioned data that will be gathered, both qualitative and quantitative, are to address the issue in accordance with the economic and domestic levels of analysis, both used in foreign policy analysis. The most important part, which is the international level of analysis, will be used through the approach of political discourse analysis. The tool used in this level of analysis is desk analysis carried out through comparative foreign policy analysis. This part includes scholarly views on the issue and their analysis and assessment of the current and previous stance of each actor. Scholarly views will help in considering the outcomes of EU

enlargement in light of the huge success of populism within the EU. Nonetheless, the far-right in Serbia and its relation to Russia, and how they respond to any EU rapprochement will affect the region's stability. This will be shown through a survey from the Serbian public reflecting how they perceive Russia and the West.

The thesis seeks to analyze Turkish foreign policy based on its strategic depth doctrine as well as the political discourse adopted by the AKP and Erdogan. Accordingly, using these two methods will indicate the extent of Kosovo's importance to Turkey, and how Turkey uses its presence to support its broader foreign policy of Ottomanism through Islamism and Jihadism. The methods used aim to analyze how the current situation within the EU cannot bear the economic, political, or security issues arising from the EU enlargement of the Western Balkans. The domino effect is used as a theory to explain why the recognition of Kosovo will trigger more separatist and secessionist movements across Europe, which already exists heavily.

Chapter 4 - Presentation of Data

4.1. Serbia and Kosovo Conflict and Normalization of Relations

Serbia and Kosovo have long been in tension, which stems from a long-term conflict in the Balkan after the fall of former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. In late February 2023, Serbia, and Kosovo, under the European Union and United States Dialogue, reached a deal on normalizing relations. However, the future of that deal remains uncertain due to several aspects that will be tackled (Vulović, 2023). Kosovo was part of Serbia before the fall of Former Yugoslavia, which consisted of six Balkan states. The Yugoslav republics were Communist, and after the fall of the Soviet Union, the republics were weakened though they were not Soviet.

The rise of nationalism and religious affiliations led to bloody wars in the area. The Balkan is well known for its multiethnic nature; almost every former republic of the Yugoslav Federation had more than one ethnic group living within the same borders, speaking different languages, and following a different religion (Nation, 2003). The multiethnicity in the region triggered minority groups and separatist movements to seek independence from the large entity 'the state'. Conversely, the state refuses to allow conceding part of its territory. Therefore, the rise of massive violence and instability in the Balkans was witnessed in the 1990s (Nation, 2003). The conflict between the Serbs and Kosovans remains until today, with each party refusing the other side's demands. After the collapse of Yugoslavia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia were the last to leave the league (Abazi, 2016). Serbia remained to resist all the nationalist and separatist movements in every republic through the intervention of its army and its armed minority groups living in these republics. However, after the intervention of NATO and the support of other foreign forces, Serbia failed to prevent separation. In 1998 a war between Serbia and Kosovo broke out, and NATO forces intervened in the well-known NATO air bombing of Serbia. The Serbian leader at that time was Slobodan Milosevic, a war criminal

who committed massacres and multiple war crimes (Arbatov, 2000). Russia was the prominent supporter of Serbia during the war, while Turkey and the Western bloc supported Kosovo.

The Serbia and Kosovo conflict could reflect the dispute between the Eastern and Western blocs because each republic exhibits an opportunity for a foreign power to gain influence over the other in the region (Nation, 2003). Kosovo has the majority of Albanians consisting of 92%, while only the Serbs are a minority with 6% existing in the country. The majority of the Kosovans are Muslims, while the Serbs are mostly Christian Orthodox (Kovacevic, 2022).

In 2008, Kosovo declared independence from Serbia, but it has still not been recognized by the international community. Until today, Serbia has not acknowledged Kosovo as an independent state, and it still controls essential parts of Kosovo. Moreover, six European states have not recognized Kosovo's independence; the same applies to non-European states. In March 2023, The European Union and the United States pressed on Serbia and Kosovo to accept a proposal for more normalization of bilateral relations between the two parties to enhance the situation and the overall stability of the region (Vulović, 2023). This proposal may prevent future violence and conflicts from taking place in the Balkans, especially because Serbia in the summer of 2022 was about to go into an armed conflict again with Kosovo (Vulović, 2023). Tensions between the two parties remain witnessed, not only on the institutional level but also on the public level. Since the 1990s, the conflict has not been fully resolved; it always required a third-party mediation or intervention. Both parties always agree to the European Union's proposals and initiatives, hoping to be more integrated into the European Union and seeking EU and NATO memberships. Therefore, the EU and the US pressured both parties as much as possible (Conley & Saric, 2021).

The evolution of the normalization process between Serbia and Kosovo took several phases and most of the agreements still need to be implemented. The first was in 2011:

> The Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue began in 2011 as a technical dialogue before transforming into a high-level dialogue between leaders in 2012. The technical phase produced agreements on practical issues, such as freedom of movement, customs stamps, cadastral records, border management, and mutual recognition of diplomats. (Conley & Saric, 2021, p.7)

Most of these agreements were intended to be ambiguous, as negotiators preferred that details would be agreed upon later. However, because there needed to be more trust between the two sides, it was never fully implemented (Conley & Saric, 2021).

The other dialogue that followed and was higher in level resulted in two major agreements which hugely dealt with the status of the Serbian community in Kosovo, constituting a considerable part that remains an obstacle in every agreement and increasing its complexity (Conley & Saric, 2021). The 2013 Brussels Agreement allowed for the creation of an Association of the Serbian Municipalities (ASM) in Kosovo, an intermediary government level above that of the municipalities, which would afford Serbian-majority municipalities greater autonomy in education, urban and rural planning, economic development, and health (Conley & Saric, 2021). It also allowed the integration of Serbian parallel police and judiciary structures in northern Kosovo. In 2015, four other agreements were signed that highlighted and defined the competencies of ASM (Conley & Saric, 2021).

Both leaders of Serbia and Kosovo could not give absolute promises on their own on any of the agreements and dialogues; the same issue remains in the recent EU proposal and road map. However, they both agreed on specific aspects of enhancing the situation, but not a full normalization. Both leaders are fully aware of the domestic and international role in their politics; the normalization between Serbia and Kosovo is a very complex process due to the long-term tensions between the citizens of both sides and the foreign supporters of each side.

Therefore, tackling domestic and international situations is necessary for understanding the whole process (Conley & Saric, 2021).

At the Domestic level**,** due to the crimes committed during the war, the citizens on both sides remain to reject full normalization. Even when leadership seeks normalization to gain a better status in the international community, particularly the European, the public remains an obstacle. Nationalism has long been a huge factor since the Balkan War that deteriorates any initiative toward harmonization. Each side has its own agenda and aims from the agreement, which is why it does not always lead to the best results for both sides. Serbia's issue relies on the idea that Kosovo was a part of it. Therefore, it should not be granted full autonomy. Moreover, Serbia has long used the Serbian minority as a cause for every trouble, claiming to protect their rights from the majority of Albanians living in Kosovo. On the other hand, due to the large majority living in Kosovo, they do not believe that it will be fair for them to be under the umbrella of Serbian rule because they speak a different language and belong to a different ethnic and religious group. Therefore, each side sees the issue differently.

On the Serbian side, the Serbian political elites rely heavily on nationalist narratives to sustain popular support. The most popular among these narratives is that Kosovo is an unforgettable part of Serbia. The same applies to Media outlets and huge campaigns against Kosovan's independence. Nonetheless, it reflects a threat to the Serbian national security strategies. Pro-government media outlets spread the fear that conflict is imminent (Conley & Saric, 2021). Accordingly, far-right opposition parties, such as the pro-Russian Dveri party, repeatedly attack the SNS for betraying Serbian interests in Kosovo because of Vucic’s claims of recognizing Kosovo. Almost all debates about Kosovo in the Serbian public are influenced by the country's largest religious institution, the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC). The majority of the Serbians who belong to the SOC view Kosovo as the cradle of their

nation and religion, and the church amplifies Serbian nationalism and mythology on the issue of Kosovo's independence. (Conley & Saric, 2021, p.3)

The Serbian population makes up a very tiny portion of Kosovo as it almost accounts for 5.5% of Kosovo's population. However, several medieval Orthodox monasteries are in Kosovo (Conley & Saric, 2021). Consequently, the Serbs view these sites as sacred, and protecting these sites remain a source of tension, particularly after the violence in 2004 that damaged many Orthodox churches. Accordingly, the SOC has aggressively opposed any potential agreement that could lead to Kosovo's recognition (Conley & Saric, 2021).

On the other side, the domestic situation in Kosovo has been experiencing a dramatic political shift since 2021 with the sweep of Albin Kurti's Vetëvendosje 'Self-Determination' party to victory in a snap election in February. Since independence, the parties and political leaders that have dominated Kosovo's politics have always been associated with the war of the 1990s (Conley & Saric, 2021). Parties led by former members of the Kosovo Army (KLA), such as Hashim Aci's Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and Ramush Haradinaj's Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK), gained their legitimacy from their relation to the fight for Kosovo independence (Conley & Saric, 2021). The political rivalry between some parties in Kosovo, coupled with high levels of corruption, organized crime, and many other issues, have made Kosovo politically unstable since independence. Kosovo has gone to polls six times, which signifies its instability (Conley & Saric, 2021).

The Serbian minority in Kosovo constitutes huge importance in Kosovo's domestic politics, as Kosovo's 2008 constitution enhanced the right of minorities and granted them municipal self-governance, which is partial autonomy, and established protective zones for cultural heritage, and lends Belgrade huge influence over the Serbs in north Kosovo. It is worth mentioning that the vice president of Srpska Lista, Milan Radoicic, was among those designated for the murder of a Kosovo-Serbia opposition politician who was aiming to bridge

the difference between the Serb and Kosovan communities (Conley & Saric, 2021). Therefore, any Kosovo-Serbia politician criticizing Belgrade fears facing the same fate. Kosovo is instantaneously grappling with its violent past and fighting for its future (Conley & Saric, 2021). Nonetheless, the violence of the Serbs against the Kosovans during the war shaped how the Kosovans responded to the Serbs. Moreover, the remaining responsiveness of the Serbian officials against any discovered crime was not investigated. The Kosovan domestic reaction towards Serbia stems from the war tragedies, particularly after the discovery of several war crimes that were not properly investigated. One of these is the discovery of the "five mass graves containing the remains of more than 900 Kosovo Albanians [that] have been discovered in Serbia" (Conley & Saric, 2021). For the Kosovans, the only acceptable result of any dialogue is mutual recognition, and they are certain that Belgrade will not propose more compromises and concessions from its side (Conley & Saric, 2021).

4.2 The International Level - The European Union, United States, and Turkey Versus Russia

Serbia has long been a Russian ally in the Balkans. The Russian support for Serbia for a very long time, with claims to protect the Slavs and Christian Orthodox in the region, gave Russia a footstep in the Balkans to threaten European stability (Metodieva, 2019). However, the Serbian president, Aleksandar Vučić, today is trying to show that Serbia's policy is more Westernized and open to European integration but remains a solid Russian ally (Bechev, 2023). The relations between Serbia and Russia are historical, cultural, religious, and political (Metodieva, 2019), as Russia perceives Serbia as its gate to keep its influence in the region. While the European Union and the United States have long been trying to weaken this relationship, the Russian-Ukrainian War of 2022 became an opportunity for the EU and the US to gain influence over the Russian ally. Nonetheless, one needs to assess the extent of the

Russian influence inside Serbia before claiming that the EU and the US will be able to integrate Serbia into the European community. The Russian support for the Serbs during and post the Balkan war is not only on the leadership level but also on the citizen's level (Samorukov & Vuksanovio, 2023). Many Serbs believe that Russia is their number one ally and supporter. In addition, the far-right wing is pro-Russia, which shows much about the Serb's identity and belonging (Samorukov & Vuksanovio, 2023).

Accordingly, when analyzing the international level as a level of analysis in the Balkans, one should consider how these international actors gain power from the domestic level through the people's belonging. The ethnic divisions and the diversity in affiliations in the Balkans, particularly between Serbia and Kosovo, have made the breakup of the society easier, mainly because the foreign actors, in this case, are not just intervening to implement their agenda. However, they have long used the 'citizens' to support these aims (Metodieva, 2019).

> In 2018, suggestions of a deal with Kosovo predicated on territorial exchange caused the Holy Bishops Council of the SOC to state, 'Kosovo and Metohija . . . is not a question of national ideology or mythology nor, moreover, only territory, but represents the very essence of our church and national being'. (Conley & Saric, 2021, p.4)

Most importantly, a

> shared Orthodox faith is also a key pillar for Russia's influence in Serbia, in addition to the shared resentment of the West borne out of the 1999 NATO bombing of Serbia during the Kosovo War. A tense military standoff between Russian and NATO troops at Pristina airport at the end of the war resuscitated the Kremlin's narrative that Russia is the only true defender of Slavic and Orthodox people and a protector of the Serbs. (Conley & Saric, 2021, p.4)

The roots of the Russian soft power in the region stem from its claims that Russia is the defender of the 'Serbian world'. The Serbian and Russian military and economic ties have been strengthened since the 1990s, specifically in the energy sector. Nonetheless, it is most important to consider the Russian use of nationalism in Serbia to support a certain path against the Serbian and Kosovan normalization. Moreover, nationalism in Serbia is not only for Serbia, but since it started during the 1990s, it was coupled with support for any Russian act with their country (Conley & Saric, 2021).

On the other hand, the United States and the European Union are important players who have a significant role in counterbalancing against Russia in the Balkans. Turkey as a NATO member, is also a key player in the region, particularly in using Islam to intervene as it did in Bosnia, and as it did and remains doing in Kosovo (Roubanis, 2019). Turkey's role in supporting Kosovo is very crucial and reflects a lot of aspects of Turkish foreign policy that are not limited to the Balkans. Turkey has used the affiliation of Muslims in Albania and Kosovo to the Ottoman ruling period as a tool to step back and protect its so-called "small brothers" in the Balkans (Hoti et al., 2022). Though the recognition of Kosovo was critical to several states as it could be hypothetically parallel to other ethnic issues rising and demanding separation, for Turkey, it was the Kurdish issue. However, Turkey was one of the first countries to recognize the partial independence of Kosovo, and it seized the Kosovan crisis as an opportunity to show NATO that it is a reliable actor (Hoti et al., 2022). In addition, Turkey participated in the UN peacekeeping forces in Kosovo, as well as NATO air bombing on Serbian forces. Turkey's participation in all of these stems from its greater foreign policy and aims outside its borders by being active in the international arena to gain more influence. Turkey has long been using cultural diplomacy, specifically under the AKP, as a diplomatic tool believed to attract ethnic-social groups, political forces, and individual leaders who shared Ottoman nostalgia and religious devotion (Hoti et al., 2022). In other words, it uses Kosovans'

religious and historical affiliations as one of the soft power tools for rejuvenating its power and influence in the region. Since the Justice and Development Party came to power in 2002 in Turkey, they adopted a different Turkish foreign policy and ideology towards the outside world from the ones which were in place in Turkey before that time. Among these policies was the reinvention of the Ottoman historical heritage which favored the repositioning of Turkey. "With this new vision, Turkey was not to be the Eastern tail of the West anymore, but the epic center of a new setting" (Hoti et al., 2022, p.148).

Turkey struggled to be a vital actor in bridging between different countries and cultures, and the only way to do that was by adopting the assertive policies it used to implement in the recent decade. The current ongoing Turkish election of 2023 may lead to a change in this policy and other policies toward refugees. Accordingly, its role in Kosovo may also be based on the new leadership's doctrine.

Regardless of all the declared reasons by Turkey for its involvement in the Kosovo matter and all the historical, cultural, religious, and ethnic ties, Turkey plays a heavy role in the exploitation of Kosovo's economy through the control of several vital sectors, most of which were reported for corruption. Despite how Turkey wants to give the relations between itself and Kosovo a religious connection, Kosovo remains to reject this idea as it cooperates with Turkey to facilitate Euro-Atlantic integration. A key player, the Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey, Numan Kurtulmus, during a visit to Kosovo in 2016, almost resembling an imam, stated recklessly, "Kosovo is a European country which has absorbed Islamic culture in its roots. As such, Kosovo is the most important point of the Islamic geography in the West" (Hoti et al., 2022, p.152).

Most of the speeches of the Turkish officials aimed to promote religious tones in connecting the two countries and building the relationship between them in order to absorb Kosovo as the situation during the Ottomans. Relying on the religious part has long been the

Turkish way of dealing with foreign issues, which was the same method adopted during the Ottomans. Turkey needs to follow the way Albanian ethnonational identity organizes its affairs (Hoti et al., 2022, p.148). Albanians do not want to label them under any religious affiliations that could tear them apart but to be under one flag, one language. They believe that they have a common ancestry from the Illyrian tribes, and therefore, their objective is to unify elements of distinctive folk tradition and language (Hoti et al., 2022, p.148). However, Turkey started to use it in recent years more significantly than before, and it believes that it is the legitimate inheritor of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, it can adopt similar methods in the same geographical areas (Abazi, 2016). While following the political discourse of both Turkey and Kosovo, they adopt the same stance towards several aspects as declared on the official websites but not in all matters. Turkey also showed a similar tone in its policy towards Kosovo, which reflects that they both have similar visions. This point raises a critical concern in the EU and the US, which is the adoption of the Illiberal democracy model under Erdogan, to be implemented and followed in Kosovo, which threatens the whole continent.

However, Kosovo's and Turkey's views conflict at other times. For example, both views differed in viewing the importance of historical and religious factors in shaping their relations. Moreover, both countries' points of view conflicted when the US invited Serbia and Kosovo to open an embassy in Jerusalem, the occupied Palestinian land, in exchange for Israel recognizing Kosovo (Conley & Saric, 2023). Accordingly, the role of the US with Kosovo is always revolving around pressurizing it in exchange for gaining a higher status.

At the Economic Level, the Turkish involvement in Kosovan affairs is not only political but also economic, though Kosovo is not a rich country in terms of economic capabilities. Turkey ties the connection between the two countries through economic benefits as well as a monopoly over Kosovo's economy. This raised a debate on companies and investments in critical sectors in Kosovo about the extent of involving the personal interests of individual

political leaders on both sides. "Thus, the Turkish-American consortium Bechtel-Enka has won public tenders of more than a billion Euros for constructing the two largest highway projects in Kosovo. This bidding process was heavily criticized for the lack of transparency" (Hoti et al., 2022, p.151).

The same criticism was addressed to the privatization of the Kosovo electricity distribution company by the Turkish company Calik Holding. As well as the concessions of the Pristina airport given to the Turkish-French Consortium. All of the previously mentioned sectors and the way the bidding process went were criticized by the civil society for the lack of transparency and unfair prices. The nature of the Kosovo economy is a small market with limited economic resources except for mining and energy (Hoti et al., 2022) as Kosovo is rich in natural resources, especially reserves of lignite. It is not attractive for investors since it is an underdeveloped country struggling with several economic and political issues. Accordingly, it will be hard for investors to risk investing in a turbulent market. However, Turkey conducted several agreements between both countries to enhance and boost economic cooperation as an agreement on the elimination of double taxation and free trade agreement. Turkey has an opportunity to be one of the top five exporters to Kosovo and ranks 12th in importing from Kosovo goods and services (Hoti et al., 2022). Around 300 Turkish companies are registered in Kosovo, and 11 of them are considered big companies (Hoti et al., 2022).

The European Union and the United States

The European Union and the United States' role in facilitating the issue between Serbia and Kosovo is mainly related to their aims to prevent the expansion of the Russian influence in the Balkans, mainly through using Serbia as a long-term Russian ally (Joseph et al., 2022). However, in recent decades, the EU and the US have worked on offering Serbia several benefits in exchange for other interests in the region by gaining a Russian ally to their lines (Conley &

Saric, 2023). The Serbian stance has not been precise; sometimes, it shows a willingness for European and Western integration, and at other times, it stresses its strong relations with Russia and their ties. The declared intention of the EU and the US integration in the mediation process between Serbia and Kosovo since the war always revolved around guaranteeing more stability in the region, which would protect the whole European continent from more wars breaking out (Conley & Saric, 2023). This is done by putting conditions for these states over their relations, and if they reach agreements, they will be integrated into the European community gradually. Some of the European promises towards Serbia and Kosovo were achieved through the opening of embassies, economic cooperation, trade agreements, and investments. However, several European Union member states are still rejecting the recognition of Kosovo for a couple of reasons that will be addressed later (Conley & Saric, 2021).

On the other hand, the United States uses most of the dialogues to force Kosovo and Serbia to agree on American policies abroad, which has nothing to do with their issue. For example, in 2020, the Trump administration rushed to demonstrate diplomatic success by allowing Kosovo and Serbia individually to sign some commitments (Conley & Saric, 2021). Some aspects were related to the US International Development Finance Corporation opening an office in Serbia. In addition, the Export-Import Bank is to finance part of the new highway between Serbia and Kosovo. While other commitments had little to do with their actual relations, it was more of forcing them to support the American Foreign policy abroad in exchange for recognition and integration as opening embassies in Jerusalem and declaring Hezbollah a terrorist group (Aldrich, 2002). Although the United States has been accused of its participation in the rise of extremism in the Balkans through Islamist groups and Jihadists and their connection to the CIA for a long time to fight against Russia and Serbia, the American administration believes that Turkey was responsible for the rise of extremism in the region.

At the same time, most of the American policies in the Balkans were supported by the Turkish implementation. Accordingly, it needs to be made clear how the American and Turkish visions are different while they cooperated over the same matters to weaken the Russian influence. Moreover, the European Union and the United States raised their concerns and worries regarding the Turkish role, influence, and control in Kosovo as it increased Jihadism, Islamism, and extremism which drives the region into more radical ideologies that tear up societies and lead to bloody wars (Roubanis, 2019).

Disagreement in the European Union Towards Recognizing Kosovo

The American foreign policy in Serbia and Kosovo is a pro-Kosovan recognition, and it directed the whole European community toward that choice. However, the recognition of Kosovo threatens several other European countries. Nonetheless, the channel that is given to Turkey to expand its influence under the umbrella of NATO and the implementation of the European integration plan of Kosovo threatens Greek security (Athens Bureau, 2023). Turkey and Greece are both NATO members, but they remain having several conflicts. The top of them is the Turkish invasion of Cyprus (Turp-Balazs, 2021). Moreover, the Turkish issue in the Aegean Sea, the Turkish agreement on the delamination of the sea with Libya, and many other conflicts reflect Turkey's assertive and unilateral illegal actions against Greek security. Nevertheless, the support of Jihadis and Islamism in the Balkans under the Turkish direction threatens Greece. This reflected how the United States and the rest of the European Union neglected the threats posed on a one-member state by another non-member state for several reasons. Despite opening embassies and establishing diplomatic relations, official recognition in the United Nations still needed to be done. In addition, the Greek president, in March 2023, stressed Greece’s long and strong ties with Serbia and highlighted that it would not recognize Kosovo the respect or the territorial integrity of Serbia (Riegl & Doboš, 2018).

4.3 The Serbia-Russia Relation During the Ukraine War

Since the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022, the West has worked on intensifying relations with Serbia, believing Russia started to lose some of its allies because of being busy with the war and its costs. Accordingly, a couple of agreements and initiatives were taken from the European and the American side to gain Serbia, the long-term Russian ally in the Balkans, to their side (Bechev, 2023). The Serbian president managed to play on both sides to gain more interest. It signaled to the West that he is Pro-West for the sake of accepting the NATO and EU proposal for Serbia to join them (Hoxhaj, 2022). On the other hand, Serbia did not participate in the sanctions imposed by the EU on Russia; it just supported Ukraine in some of the speeches and denounced the invasion (Hoxhaj, 2022). Furthermore, Turkey is a key player in the Kosovo-Serbia conflict and a Russian enemy in the Western Balkans because each one of them supports a different side, still playing on both the Eastern and the Western sides during the war. At the beginning of the war in February 2022, Turkey was the country that was legally responsible for closing the passing of warships through the Turkish straits. However, it did not prevent the Russian navy from using it to pass to Ukraine, which signifies that Turkey as a NATO member, still did not want to lose its Eastern ally. Turkey is fully aware that the European Union and the United States do not include Turkey in the Western community as much as it includes other countries in the continent because it remains on the Eastern side and has a different religion than the rest of the continent. Therefore, it will not cut all its relations with Russia though they remain in conflict in the Western Balkans against each other.

Energy became a highly influential tool and weapon in the war. After the Russian invasion, Russia threatened the European Union to cut energy supplies, which led to a massive increase in the price levels of energy, commodities, and transportation. Accordingly, European citizens faced huge challenges (Sarman-Grilc, 2023). These struggles were reflected directly in the citizens' pushing for mass strikes across European streets due to the high prices, their

fear of not having enough heat during winter, and the cut of electricity at certain times. This indicated the EU's vulnerability due to its inability to act in such time or have planned in advance for self-sufficiency (Sarman-Grilc, 2023).

The EU, since the Crimea crisis, called for diversifying its energy sources, but most of the projects and plans declared still needed to be implemented, which stems from their lack of feasibility and impracticality. Again, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the European Union put sanctions on Russia that also harmed the EU, which depended heavily on Russian energy. In addition, before imposing European sanctions, Russia was already threatening to cut energy supplies. Accordingly, the EU has stressed the importance of diversifying its energy sources and started planning for a couple of regional projects. However, the timeline of the official launching of these projects has yet to be determined since every now and then, the EU would declare a project, but none of them solved the issue instantly; they all take time. The most important to be addressed in Western Balkans is connecting Serbia through a gas pipeline with Bulgaria. Russia had cut the energy supplies to Bulgaria last year. Therefore, in its plan for Balkans integration and diversifying energy sources to its members, the EU started in 2023 with the construction of the gas pipeline that runs from Belgrade to Sofia (Directorate-General for Energy, 2023). The European Investment Bank (EIB) will finance the construction of the Serbian section of a 171 km natural gas interconnector between Serbia and Bulgaria (Foltynova, 2022).

Allowing Serbia to have another source of energy supply with the integration with an EU member state may reduce the Russian chances of controlling Serbia; this is how the EU considers the situation. Since Serbia did not participate in the EU sanctions over Russia, it gave a warning to the EU that Serbia is still getting all possible chances and opportunities from both sides (Bechev, 2023). One should also pay attention to Serbian public opinion, and how it sees Russia after the invasion of Ukraine. "As many as 63 percent of polled Serbs held the West

responsible for the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war: significantly more than in all other polled countries, including Indonesia (50 percent), Turkey (43 percent), and India (34 percent)". (Samorukov & Vuksanovic, 2023). The BCSP poll revealed that 51% of the Serbs believed Russia to be Serbia's most important international partner, while 66 percent called Russia the country's 'greatest friend'. Russia is also widely seen as a selfless ally, with only 28 percent stating that Moscow is looking after its interests, and not just Serbia's: half of that same indicator in the EU (56 percent). Accordingly, it reflects that Serbia's cutting relations with Russia is a very far choice (Samorukov & Vuksanovic, 2023).

Chapter 5 – Results of the Foreign Policies and Recommendations to the European Union

5.1. The European Union Enlargement to the Western Balkans

There are several aspects surrounding the difficulty of EU enlargement in the Western Balkans. First, the domestic situation in Europe; since the COVID-19 crisis, Europe has been witnessing the most challenging times in its history. The European Union has been passing through several internal issues that became more obvious during the COVID-19 crisis, particularly the use of the crisis to fuel populism in Europe (Burchard et al., 2020). In addition, the energy crisis resulting from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, coupled with the high inflation rate, has led to an internal European crisis that increased the popularity of populists across Europe (De Benedetti, 2022). The union was already facing substantial internal issues among member states due to the rise of the right-wing and their success in ruling several countries across the EU; the most famous example is the BREXIT. Nationalists and Populists are well known for their political discourse that relies on wakening the nationalist emotions in the citizens (Mols & Jetten, 2020). Nationalism is one of the main issues that threaten EU unity, the rise of the right wing led to mass strikes in many countries as they are not just demanding separation from the union but some parts within the same country demanding secession from the state itself as Catalonia in Spain (Heras-Pedrosa et al., 2020). Furthermore, struggles in France and calls against non-French people not to stay, believing that other Europeans take their job opportunities in their country are among the intimidating issues to the EU unity (Meheut & Breeden, 2021).

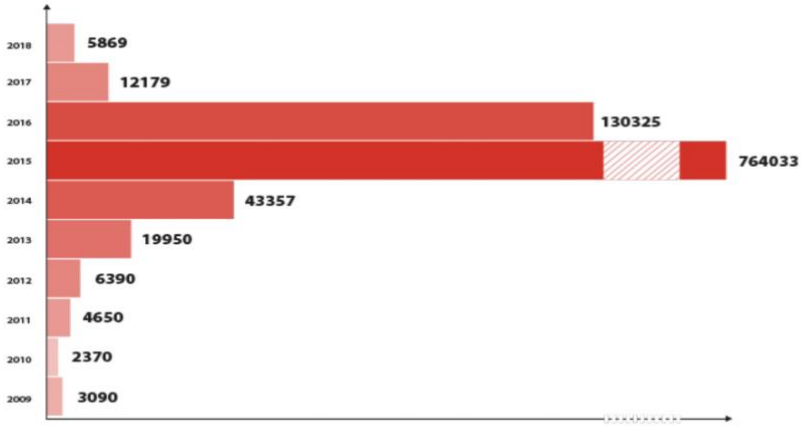
Several grievances from European citizens were raised due to their economic situation. One of the main issues with the European Union was the refugees, but European citizens started to even unwelcome other European citizens if they were from a different country (Halikiopoulou & Vlandas, 2022). That was highly witnessed in the election campaign by Eric

Zimmour, the French candidate who received a vast number of votes and found public support though he was jailed several times for his hate speech. Accordingly, this reflects how European citizens started to act in the last couple of years (Meheut & Breeden, 2021).

The isolationist policies adopted during COVID-19 by the EU member states against each other and the lack of solidarity during the crisis was not a result of the crisis. However, it was a general trend even before it, and the crisis made it faster. Populism in Europe found success even before the COVID-19 crisis (Taggart & Pirro, 2021). Populists succeeded in Hungary, Poland, Italy, and several other member states. One of the critical concerns of Populists in Europe is the massive number of refugees coming to their countries (Mols & Jetten, 2020). The Western Balkans is the second largest exporter of refugees to Europe (EU Council, 2023). Accordingly, the EU could be mistaken, thinking that if these countries joined, the EU would increase stability and reduce the number of refugees (Hübner et al., 2021).

Numbers of Illegal Border Crossings Through the Western Balkans Route

Figure 1- Numbers of Illegal Border Crossings Through the Western Balkans Route



Note: The break in column for 2015 is for presentation purpose, but it should be noted that the actual figure is 7 times larger than for example in 2014, Source: FRONTEX, 2019

Note. From "The Western Balkan Migration Route (2015–2019)", International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), 2021.

Figure 1 shows a graph that illustrates the number of illegal migrants flooding Europe taking the Western Balkans route. The graph indicates a period of almost ten years, which measures from the year 2009 up till 2018. The number of migrants kept increasing gradually until it reached a sudden high flow in 2015 which was the peak and then started to decline gradually. Though the number is decreasing, it remains to constitute a threat to the European Union as the economic situation in Europe worsens due to the world economic crisis (Oruc et al., 2020).

The Western Balkan Refugees' Route

Figure 2 - The Western Balkan Refugees' Route



Note. From "Prague Process: Dialogue, Analyses, and Training in Action", 2020.

*Macedonia= North Macedonia[1]

Figure 2 shows a map that indicates the refugees' route to reach the European borders. The flow of refugees could be from the people already living in the Balkans or the refugees coming through the Mediterranean reaching Greece or Turkish shores (Oruc et al., 2020).

Several Europeans accused Putin of supporting the rise of populism in the European Union to weaken its unity. This European claim stems from several proofs that have to do with the stance populists adopt towards Russia. They do not believe that Russia is supposed to be an enemy since they live on the same continent and have good economic relations based on mutual dependence. Nevertheless, they believe that the United States is the one that does not

[1] The Republic of North Macedonia is the official name of the country since 2019. There were no available maps that could be located showing the Western Balkan refugees' route with the new official name of North Macedonia.

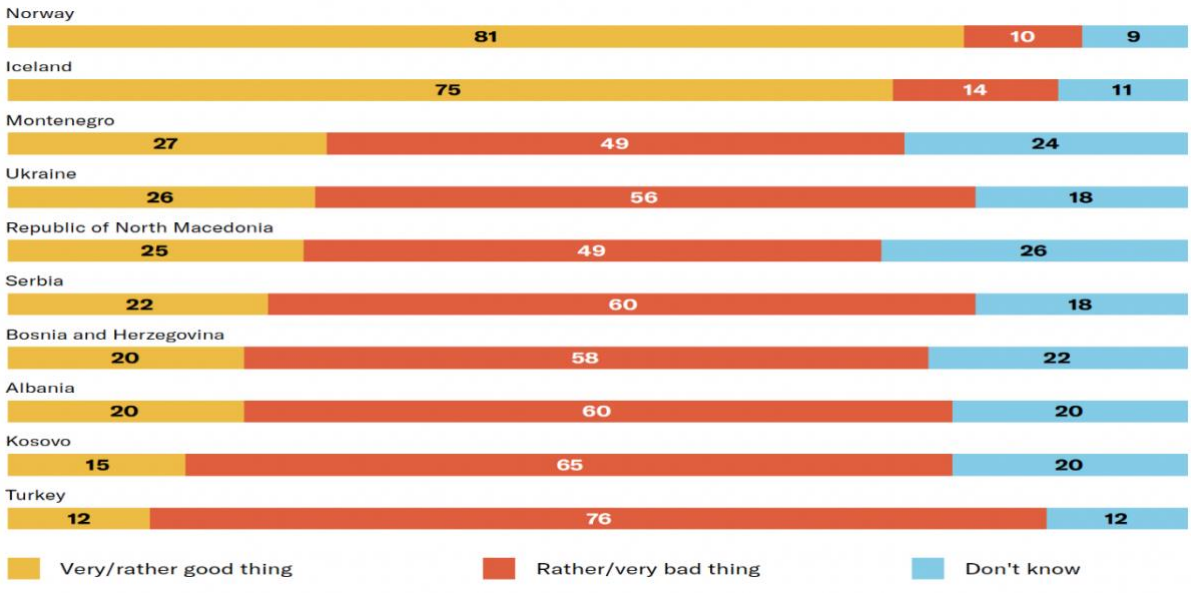
belong to the continent and does not want the best for it. Moreover, Marie Lupan, the former president of the National Rally, the largest parliamentary opposition group and a far-right group, is known for having friendly relations with Russia and Putin (Futàk-Campbell, 2020). Accordingly, the internal situation in the EU member states does not indicate its ability for enlargement due to the existing disagreements among member states and the economic circumstances (Futàk-Campbell, 2020).

Additionally, states, such as Germany and France, with significant contributions to the EU budget have shown their dissatisfaction regarding the policies followed and the burden they bear because small countries have been joining the union. Germany and France are suffering from the burden of small states in the EU; these countries led to higher unemployment and many other economic issues that worsened the whole situation in Europe (Schoeller, 2020). Nonetheless, the enlargement of NATO and EU to the East had its cost on the whole union. Countries in the East, like Poland, say that Germany and France should prioritize the security of the Eastern European countries and give it more attention. On the other hand, France and Germany are having economic, political, and social setbacks due to their considerable contribution to the EU that came at the expense of their citizens. Separatist movements in Germany seeking secessionism, as in Bavaria, a massive success for populists in shaping public opinion in France, and many other issues coupled with economic grievances are threatening the whole union (Mols & Jetten, 2020). Moreover, almost every country in the union faces an economic crisis, most recently Italy (Orlandi, 2022). However, the political unrest in French Street is another indicator that there is vast instability (Ataman et al., 2023). According to surveys in Europe assessing whether the Europeans, mainly French citizens, are accepting more EU enlargement in the Balkans or not, the results showed high dissatisfaction and disagreement among the Europeans (Hübner et al., 2021).

Attitudes Towards Individual Western Balkan Countries Joining the EU

Figure 3 shows the views of the following individual countries joining the EU in the future in comparison (in %).

Figure 3- Attitudes Towards Individual Western Balkan Countries Joining the EU



Note. It is the EU, not Western Balkan enlargement. French public opinion on EU membership of the Western Balkans. From "Open Society European Policy Insititute", 2021.

Figure 3 shows a survey conducted in 2021 to see the attitudes of Europeans toward individual Western Balkan countries and whether or not they approve their EU membership proposal (Hübner et al., 2021). In Serbia, 60% believe that it is terrible to join the EU, while 18% do not know, and only 22% believe it is positive. In Kosovo, 65% believe it is bad, while 20% do not know, and 15% believe it is good (Hübner et al., 2021).

Serbia and Kosovo almost had similar results in terms of the attitude towards them in Europe, which shows how the public perceives both cases. Nonetheless, Turkey is a crucial player in the case of Kosovo and is taking the European Union's side in the Western Balkans;

76% believed that it is a bad idea to join the EU, while 12% did not know, and only 12% of the participants believed that it is good (Hübner et al., 2021). Only 12% in Turkey do not know whether they should join the EU or not, reflecting how certain the public opinion in Europe is about their attitude towards Turkey and how to consider it as a member of the community (Hübner et al., 2021). Turkey has long been connected in Europe with the bloody ruling of the Ottoman Empire, and what it did to Christians and the churches.

In Ukraine, the results showed in 2021 that 56% believed it is not a good idea to join the EU as compared to only 26% who believed it is a good idea; this reflects that the Europeans are not welcoming more members due to the struggles they are passing through from its 'overstretch' (Hübner et al., 2021). However, the West could have avoided the war if it had confirmed to Russia that Ukraine would not join simply because, as Obama mentioned, Ukraine is more important to Russia than it is to the West. In addition, based on Mearsheimer's writings on the war in Ukraine as the West's fault, one must learn from this experience not to be repeated in the future (Mearsheimer, 2022).

Therefore, seizing the opportunity of the war in Ukraine to allow more members to join the EU, particularly those that represent and constitute high importance to Russia, is a considerable risk to the whole union. The consequences of recognizing Kosovo as a fully independent state and not just an autonomous region and accepting Serbia to join the EU will have severe consequences on the EU internally and externally. In this case, Russia will not be the only one fighting against this step, but also populists within the EU as well as ordinary citizens, mainly because they showed their unwelcome and dissatisfaction towards any step like this, in addition to the already existing divisions in the EU (Ivaldi & Zankina, 2023).

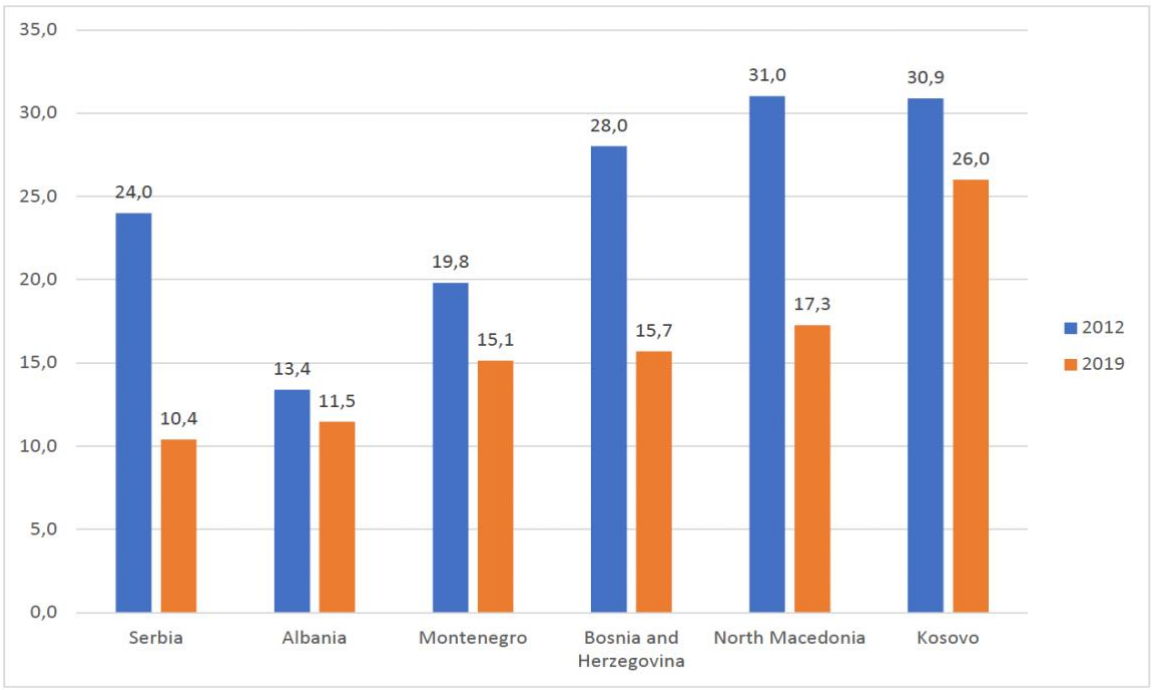
5.2 The Economic Situation

Europe invests in the Western Balkans through an EU road map for economic integration of the Western Balkans. Up to €30 billion in public and private investments in cooperation with international financial institutions (EU, 2022). The Economic and Investment Plan classifies ten investment aims to the long-term recovery, quicken the green and digital transition, and foster regional cooperation. The EU has approved 40 flagship investments worth €5.7 billion in total investment value – with bilateral contributions from EU member states and Norway, in addition to encouraging loans from international financing institutions (EU, 2022). It includes €1.8 billion in EU and bilateral donors' grant funding. Investments aim to be sustainable only if Western Balkan partners accelerate reforms, particularly in the rule of law and the fight against corruption. The EU plans to provide sustainable transport corridors in the region to make them faster and comply with EU standards (EU, 2022). The connectivity and simplified border crossing procedures will enhance trade and drive sustainable economic growth. In addition, priority is given to clean energy interconnections and the use of renewable sources. Moreover, the deployment of ultra-fast broadband ensures universal access and lower roaming costs in the digital future. The EU will also support human capital development through training, employment, education, and health to improve the labor market (Bartlett et al., 2022).

It is additionally, supporting the private sector financing to strengthen competitiveness. The EU aims to enhance the overall economic being of these countries in several sectors to make deals directly from the Common Western Balkan Regional Market to the EU single market (Bartlett et al., 2022). The aspects that are supposed to make economic cooperation more accessible, and the EU is working on them, are the digital market, the European value chain, connecting economies, free movement of goods, services, capital, and people, as well as regional investment space (Bartlett et al., 2022).

Unemployment Rates in the Western Balkans

Figure 4 - Unemployment Rates in the Western Balkans

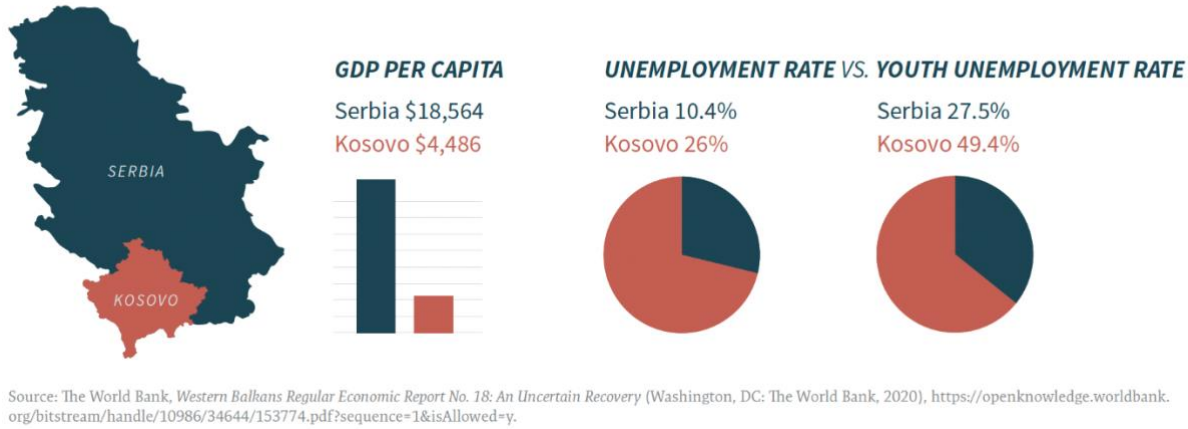


Source: Compiled on the basis of ILO statistics.

Note. From "The Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans: Assessing the Possible Economic, Social, and Environmental Impact of the Proposed Flagship Projects", 2022.

The graph shows the unemployment rate in the Western Balkans from the year 2012 up till 2019, which is before COVID-19. Although both Serbia and Kosovo witnessed a decline in the unemployment rate, both rates remain high as compared to any economy. The reports suggest that the frequent structural changes in Kosovo and Serbia are one of the main reasons for the weakness of the economy as well as brain drain, deindustrialization, and external imbalances (Bartlett et al., 2022).

Figure 5- Unemployment Rate in Serbia and Kosovo



Note. From "The Serbia-Kosovo Normalization Process: A Temporary U.S. Decoupling", Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2021.

Another source provides the difference between the GDP per capita and unemployment rate against the youth unemployment rate in both Serbia and Kosovo. Kosovo has a much lower GDP per capita, which counts $4,486 as compared to Serbia, which counts $18,564. Moreover, the unemployment rate in Serbia counted at 10.4% as compared to 26% in Kosovo. The unemployment rate among youth counted at 49.4% in Kosovo as compared to 27.5% in Serbia. The data reflect how Kosovo suffers heavily from economic issues (Conlye & Saric, 2021).

5.3 Serbia in the EU-Kosovo Liberalization of Relation and Kosovo Recognition

Nationalism in Serbia and Kosovo is a highly influential driving force that no one should ignore, as it is one of the main pillars of their foreign policy (Conlye & Saric, 2021). Accordingly, considering how Serbs perceive their relation to Europe versus to Russia, and what Russia represents to them is vital because these citizens will be part of the union. Therefore, which bloc the Serbs believe they belong to shapes how they will react toward the European community and towards any step that will deteriorate their relations with Russia. It

is worth noting that the far-right wing in Serbia is a Pro-Russian force that is highly violent and does not oppose peacefully but can trigger more violence and repeat the dramatic scenarios of the war in the Western Balkans (Buljubašić, 2022). In Kosovo, Turkey is supporting Islamism and Jihadism as declared by the US and EU that Turkey is the reason behind the rise of Islamism in the Western Balkans. Therefore, integrating the Kosovans in the EU who are following the ideology that is followed by the Turkish leadership which supports Jihadism, could be another threat to the EU's liberal ideology (Shtuni, 2023).

Kosovo's Recognition

Kosovo's recognition is a highly controversial issue to several states, particularly because several states within the EU and outside the EU have a similar case to a certain extent for a particular part of the territory seeking independence from the main state (Hoti et al., 2022). Regardless of the similarities and dissimilarities between each case and Kosovo, the clash of the two main international law principles remains debatable (Urrutia Libarona, 2012). Kosovo's recognition faces a clash between the people's right to self-determination and territorial integrity (Urrutia Libarona, 2012). Some countries believe that regardless of the majority living in Kosovo, whether they are Serbs or not, they should operate under the large state to prevent its fall. On the other hand, the other camp believes it is the people's right to self-determination since the majority are Albanian, and they do not belong to the Serb's race, religion, or language; therefore, they should have their rights protected and their language under their authority and supervision (Bal, 2022).

Kosovo's independence is part of the Western foreign policy in dividing societies, claiming that they are multiethnic, and this multiethnicity results in violence and their inability to live together. However, this is not absolute since these republics used to live there for centuries. Because each ethnic group became supported by a different foreign bloc, the interests

of the region and the people became unaligned. The European Union focuses on how to encircle Russia by using these small republics, but the EU ignored how dangerous these republics are to the EU (Dempsey, 2023). Recognizing Kosovo will mean that it is acceptable for each group that is not similar to the state to separate and start operating as an independent entity on its own. This will result in the birth of numerous small states or groups, each fighting for a specific goal, instead of having one large entity containing all these groups (Pezelj & Ramsay, 2022). Kosovo's recognition threatens several European states as Spain because of Catalonia, and because it believes that any unilateral action disrespects international law. In addition, other European member states that do not officially recognize Kosovo are Greece, Cyprus, Slovakia, and Romania. Although most of the previously mentioned states conduct diplomatic and economic relations with Kosovo, they remain to reject full recognition of Kosovo (Shehu, 2022).

In the beginning, Turkey was worried that recognizing Kosovo could trigger the same issue with the Kurdish people. Furthermore, the recognition of Kosovo threatens many other European states who are possibly facing similar issues with independence and separatist movements (Hoti et al., 2022). A research paper published by the University of Pristina, Kosovo, indicated that these issues are not similar to Kosovo's because of the following reasons:

> The Kosovo conflict was brought to the point of NATO's military intervention, international administration, and independence as an outcome of Serbia's brutal campaign aiming to cleanse Kosovo of the Albanian majority ethnically. None of these factors is present in the Basque region and Catalonia, Transylvania, and Crimea. (Hoti et al., 2022, p.150)

That claim was not supported with enough evidence to make a huge difference between each case or provide enough guarantees for the rejector states to recognize Kosovo without facing a

similar fate in their territories. According to the domino effect, recognizing Kosovo will possibly trigger other separatist movements across the globe to follow the same path (Pezelj & Ramsay, 2022).

The recognition of Kosovo by almost all the European Union countries, except five member states, reflects multiple realities about the union's unity and security. The first is that the security threats to the European member states started to differ among all the member states (De Sousa, 2022). For example, the threat posed on Greece due to the rise of the Turkish influence in the Balkans and elsewhere is not the same posed to a country like Poland. Second, the NATO members could sometimes be rivals, as in Cyprus (Scazzieri, 2021). Third, the Greeks support and respect Serbia as a sovereign country with a long history, which contradicts the rest of the EU's stance (Riegl & Doboš, 2018). A strong influence of Turkey in the Western Balkans gives Turkey an upper hand and will highly affect the Greek interests and the Cyprus issue. Turkey is exporting Islamism in the Western Balkans, which threatens the Christian community, mainly because the way Turkey implements its foreign policy abroad used to take a violent shape under the umbrella of religion; in fact, it is terrorism and not religion (Shtuni, 2016). Turkey's assertive foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean and the unilateral moves also reflect the neglect by the US and the EU of Turkey's violations of International Law. Turkey's election of May 2023 may be one of the key determinants of the future of the Turkish assertive foreign policy. It will shape how it will deal with Kosovo and other areas based on the new leadership's interests.

Serbia's president has been playing on both sides to gain the most concessions. As previously mentioned, "You cannot sit on two chairs at the same time, especially if they are that far apart." (Bechev, 2023). The U.S. deputy assistant secretary for European and Eurasian affairs said to Serbia back in 2017 that Belgrade had to make a choice between the West and Russia (Bechev, 2023). Therefore, if Serbia intended to join a certain camp, it should show

some commitment. However, all the data suggests that the Serbian leader cannot act against the opposition because both the opposition and supporters will consider him a traitor (Conley & Saric, 2021).

This is the general trend in Serbia; regardless of how it might show openness towards normalization and enhancing the relations with Kosovo to have a better status in the European Union and to gain more integration, the nationalist ideology remains at the top of the Serbian agenda. Any act of full normalization on the ground will be faced with violence. The EU could be mistaken if it believes that normalization will prevent more wars, but this may open the door for more violent resistance than it ever imagined, coupled with Russian support (Conley & Saric, 2021). Vucic, the Serbian president, is aware that even if he recognized Kosovo's independence and accepted the European conditions, Serbia would be the only winner. Because of implementing and funding European projects in Serbia, liberalization and integration in Europe after Vucic's acceptance of Kosovo will come into force. Conversely, the decision will always be vetoed by the United Nations Security Council by China and Russia (Conley & Saric, 2021).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the thesis aimed to analyze the foreign policies of the EU, US, Turkey, and Russia towards Serbia and Kosovo which are well known for their ethnic conflicts and tensions. Accordingly, this study used the domestic level of analysis to understand the factors influencing the future of normalization between both countries. Nonetheless, the significant role of each foreign actor determined the future of these relations. Since Serbia and Kosovo are clear examples of Western and Eastern competition; therefore, a close analysis of the tools used by each camp to undermine the other side's influence was included in the study.

The first chapter, the Introduction, presented the objective and significance of the thesis. The chapter showed the purpose of the paper and why that topic particularly needed to be studied. It included the methodological approach of the study, the literature review period, the literature terms that were used, and the relevance of the topic to today's needs. These were followed by the methods of analysis that were utilized in the thesis and the chapters and their levels of depth. The thesis focused on using several foreign policy levels of analysis: domestic, economic, and international. The chapter also considered the cultural, psychological, and religious elements as influential factors in Serbia and Kosovo.

The second chapter is the literature review; it contains literature that tackles the role of Western Powers in ethnic conflicts – the Serbia and Kosovo case. This includes the EU, US, and Turkey. Turkey was addressed based on its strategic depth doctrine and relevance to its Kosovo role. In addition, the second category encompasses literature that tackles the Russian role in the Serbia-Kosovo conflict. This category shows how Russia's long-term foreign policy still serves its interests in Serbia today through its cultural, historical, ethnic, and religious ties to the Serbs. The last category analyzes the roots of violence in ethnic conflicts; this part includes the realist approach to understanding ethnic conflicts, nationalism, populism, and irredentism. It also utilizes Clausewitz's work, memory, and cultural identity. Clausewitz's

book *On War* is one of the remarkable works that aimed not to understand the causes of war but its dynamics and driving forces. The concept of Trinity is the main idea addressed in this part and its relation to violence.

Chapter three, the research methodology, tackles the methods used in the study for data gathering. It provides the reader with the purpose of the study, its significance, why it is being examined today, and its relation to today's events. This chapter also focused on providing the reader with the methods used throughout the research to guarantee sufficient results. Accordingly, several methods and approaches were adopted to have comprehensive data and results. The study used secondary data, such as surveys. The methods used in data gathering are both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative data includes studies, articles, reports, books, and political doctrines. The quantitative data used are based on numerical surveys and statistical data. The sources of these data were based on a diversity of reliable institutions in order to guarantee high-quality non-biased results. The approach used is political discourse analysis, conducting deep analysis using thesis books, reports, and policies. The approach was applied using desk analysis as a comparative foreign policy analysis tool. The levels of analysis include economic, domestic, and international levels of analysis. Moreover, it highlights the scholarly work and insights about the literature being used and its relevance to the case as a method of approaching it.

The Fourth chapter focuses on the Serbia and Kosovo conflict and the normalization of relations between both countries. It presents the data and results of the study. It briefly summarizes the nature of the relations between Serbia and Kosovo using historical and current events. In the first part of the chapter, the analysis is based on the domestic level of analysis as an assessment tool that considers the influence of nationalism over these multiethnic conflicts, and how they can affect the development of relations. This part tackled the political parties of Serbia and Kosovo, their long-term doctrine, and the implications of any possibility of change

for understanding the extent of violence these groups might be able to engage in. The second part focuses on the international level of analysis, which includes The European Union, the United States, and Turkey versus Russia. This part analyzed the foreign policies of each actor involved in Serbia and Kosovo and focused on the extent of competition between the actors and the tools used by each of them. It addresses the economic, cultural, and political involvement of Turkey and the EU. The last part of this chapter focuses on the Serbia-Russia relationship during the Ukraine war. This part involves a deep analysis of the recent EU policies and initiatives towards Serbia, including energy security.

The Fifth/last chapter provides an interpretation of the results and recommendations for the European Union and the United States. The chapter tackles the European Union Enlargement in the Western Balkans, particularly Serbia and Kosovo. It addresses why the EU enlargement policy threatens the unity of the whole union and will have negative internal and external outcomes. The comments and recommendations are based on analyzing the current situation in the European Union, considering the rise of populism, economic grievances, and mass strikes for various reasons across Europe leading to political instability. This chapter also interprets graphs, surveys, and statistics to measure the outcome of the EU foreign policy. It includes the number of illegal migrants through the Western Balkan route and the attitudes of the Europeans, particularly the French, towards individual Western Balkan countries joining the EU, in addition to the unemployment rate in both Serbia and Kosovo. These data were provided to help in assessing the cost and benefit of the EU if Serbia joined it. Moreover, these data also allowed the assessment of how much success the economic integration could achieve through project funds and investments in Serbia and Kosovo. In addition, the role of nationalism and the differences in ideologies in both Serbia and Kosovo because of the Turkish and Russian involvement and contribution in shaping the belongings of these people is an important matter that needs close attention from the EU when addressing their integration with

the EU. Lastly, Kosovo's recognition and the issues arising from it have also been analyzed. This part tackled the legal debate between the two main international relations principles and the disagreements between the EU member states over the recognition of Kosovo. Based on the domino effect theory, Kosovo's recognition will highly affect other states. It also stresses the Cyprus and Greek issue with Turkey and emphasizes the type of relations between Greek and Turkey as two NATO member states.

The thesis showed how the foreign powers' policies were mainly serving their interests as clearly shown in the Western stance in its competition with Russia. The policies adopted by foreign powers constituted the roots of the conflict by means of giving nationalism, violence, and societal divisions a push from each to act against the others in addition to mobilization of nationalists to serve different foreign blocs. Accordingly, the spread of violence and wars across the Balkans was inevitable due to the splits among ethnic groups that originally stems from the foreign intervention. The well-known Turkish contribution to the rise of extremism in the region through using Kosovan fighters is one of the most significant outcomes of the foreign powers' policies. Therefore, the ramifications of the policies adopted by foreign powers became dangerous even for the European Union itself.

Lessons Learned

First, the EU's and the US's analyses were based on assessing the internal situation in the European Union and the internal situation in Serbia, which aims to join the EU. The internal situation in the European Union shows that the Union should refrain from taking an enlargement step in the Western Balkans, as it will trigger conflicts. The analysis of the study included the role of populism, its relationship with Russia, how it affects the unity of the whole union, and the economic instability resulting from enlargement and the recent crises. Moreover, the analysis also deals with Serbia's right wing and its stance towards the West versus Russia.

The Serbs believed that Russia was their long-term ally because it was the main supporter during their war, while NATO was their enemy. Accordingly, the Serbs preferred Russia as their ally based on their memory, and how it shaped the people's culture and attitudes toward others. Any reproach of the Serbian president to the EU is faced with harsh rejection internally.

The disagreements among the EU member states towards the recognition of Kosovo raise many questions and prove many aspects, the most important of which is that the security threats of the member states became different. For example, Greece's and Cyprus' rejection of Kosovo's recognition because the unilateral secession by territories is illegal and does not respect the basics of International Law. In addition, the Turkish occupation of Cyprus as a NATO member rivaling another, which is Greece, reflects a split; thus, leading Greece to vote for any decision that does not enhance Turkey's position in the Western Balkans. Because Turkey is the leading supporter of Kosovo; accordingly, Greece's support will help increase the Turkish influence in the region. Spain also is one of the rejecting states because of Catalonia. Several member states are not considering the existing issues arising from Kosovo's recognition because the data suggest that it will trigger more secessionist movements across Europe to seek independence. While the rest of the member states that do not face similar crises are not considering the consequences of the recognition over the rest of the member states, which means interests became different as well. Accordingly, European member states started to adopt different stances in their foreign policies, which is against the main principles of the EU.

Second, the Turkish role in the rise of radicalization and extremism in the Western Balkans through using Kosovans is one of the main threats that prove that any integration of Kosovo constitutes a threat. Even though Kosovo has not been granted full recognition yet, and is far away from EU membership, economic or political integration of Kosovo threatens the security of the continent due to the ideology adopted. The Turkish role was assessed based on

the strategic depth doctrine of Turkey and the use of the Ottoman Empire to regain connection and ties with the Kosovans to enhance its position. The results of the Turkish elections of May 2023 will be one of the key determinants of its foreign policy, whether it will continue following the same path or not.

Third, the Russian foreign policy in Serbia has proven its success through the support it gains from the public towards any policy. The Serbs believed that Russia was their supporter against the West, as they have historical, cultural, ethnic, and religious ties to Russia. Furthermore, the European and American support for Kosovo's recognition makes the public perceive them as supporters of the violation of Serbia's territorial integrity. Accordingly, Russia's position is strengthened even after the Ukrainian war, particularly because of the support and calls by the right wing in Serbia. In addition, Serbia, up till today, has not contributed to the sanctions on Russia, which signifies that it does not take the European stance.

Lastly, the normalization of the relations between Serbia and Kosovo depends on several internal and external factors. The study results suggest that regardless of the EU's and the US's efforts in the normalization process to guarantee peace and stability in the region, these efforts will not be as effective as they seem. The Serbian president has long been adopting the policy of playing on several sides to get the most concessions. Nonetheless, his steps towards normalization are always faced with domestic rejection, especially from the right wing which is pro-Russia. Moreover, the Serbian president benefits from the EU's and US's investments, economic integration, and liberalization of relations. At the same time, he is confident that Russia and China will always veto Kosovo's recognition. Accordingly, he gains the most benefit without showing his rejection since other actors will strongly oppose it in the Security Council.

Recommendations

Based on the lessons learned from the thesis results, there are recommendations to the European Union. The EU enlargement to the Western Balkans will not be in the best interests of the Union. Both Serbia and Kosovo suffer from economic as well as security issues. In addition, increased radicalism in the region will affect the ideology of the EU. Both Serbia and the EU suffer from the rising power of the far-right wing that is supported by Russia; therefore, integrating Serbia will have adverse effects. There are other recommendations related to Kosovo recognition, the EU members should not recognize Kosovo as it will lead to the rise of separatist movements seeking independence within the European continent.

As for the recommendations addressed to the USA, giving Turkey as a NATO member the opportunity to advance its position in the Balkans will lead to higher radicalization and extremism that threatens the European Continent and its liberal order. Therefore, a less Turkish role is required for the security of the region and its neighbors. On the other hand, there are other recommendations for Serbia that include the need for a clear stance towards Russia and the West.

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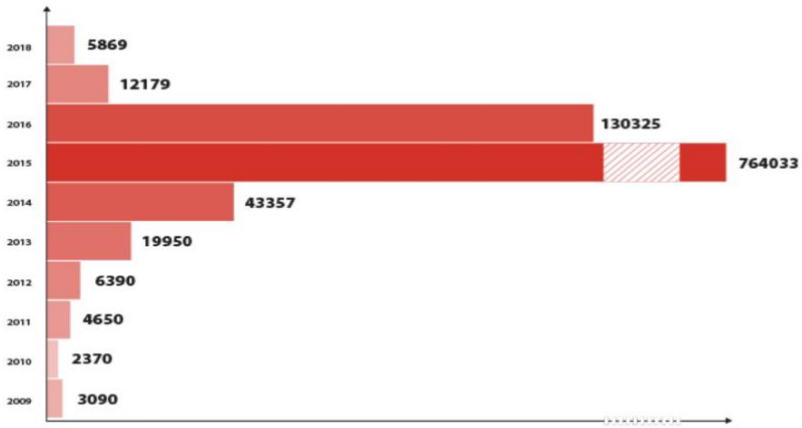
Appendices

1

Numbers of Illegal Border Crossings Through the Western Balkans Route

Figure 6

Numbers of Illegal Border Crossings Through the Western Balkans Route



Note: The break in column for 2015 is for presentation purpose, but it should be noted that the actual figure is 7 times larger than for example in 2014, Source: FRONTEX, 2019

Note. From "The Western Balkan Migration Route (2015–2019)", International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), 2021.

The Western Balkan Refugees' Route

Figure 7

The Western Balkan Refugees' Route



Note. From "Prague Process: Dialogue, Analyses, and Training in Action", 2020.

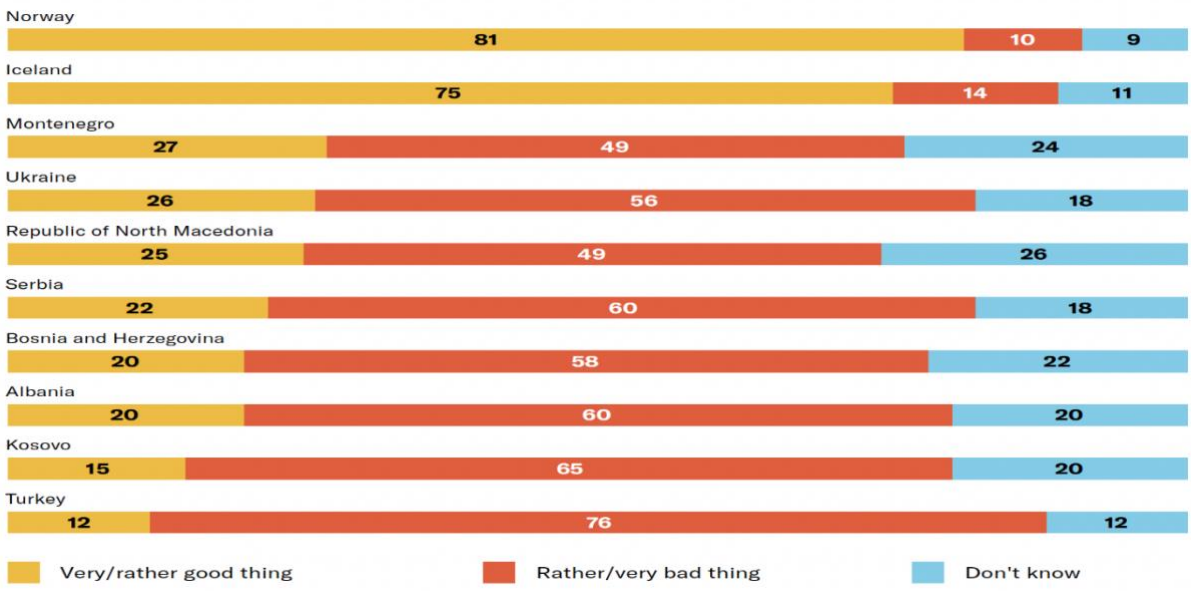
*Macedonia= North Macedonia[2]

[2] The Republic of North Macedonia is the official name of the country since 2019. There was no available maps that could be located showing the Western Balkan refugees' route with the new official name of North Macedonia.

Attitudes Towards Individual Western Balkan Countries Joining the EU

Figure 8

Attitudes Towards Individual Western Balkan Countries Joining the EU

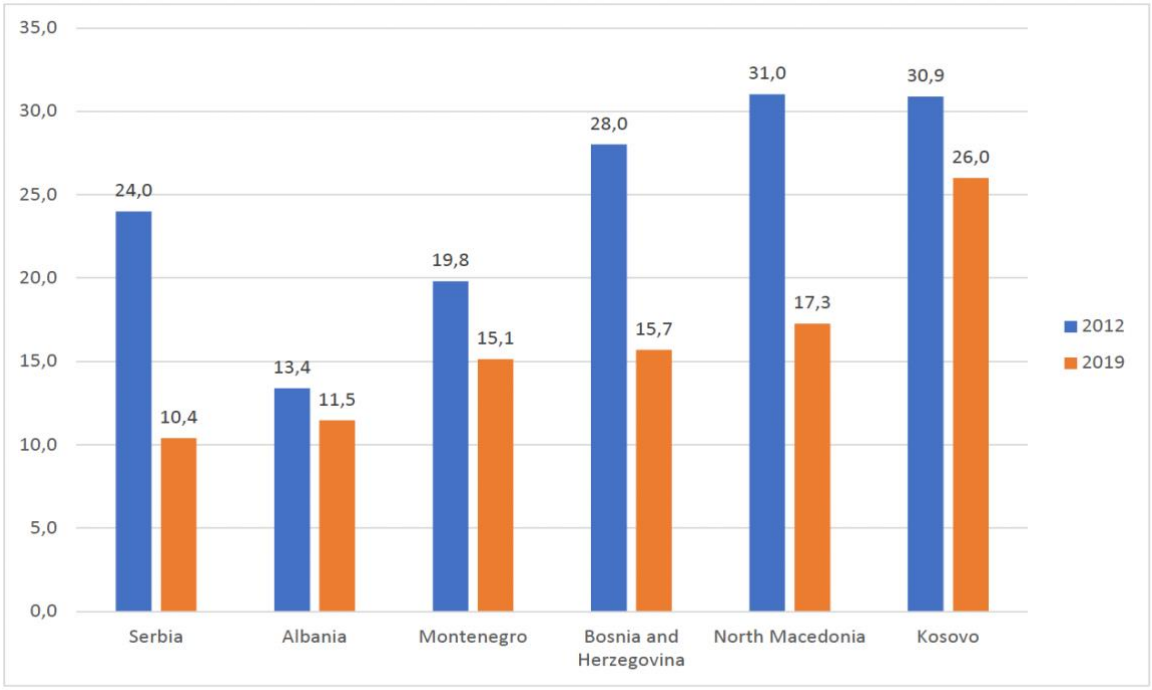


Note. It is the EU, not Western Balkan enlargement. French public opinion on EU membership of the Western Balkans. From "Open Society European Policy Insititute", 2021.

Unemployment Rates in the Western Balkans

Figure 9

Unemployment Rates in the Western Balkans

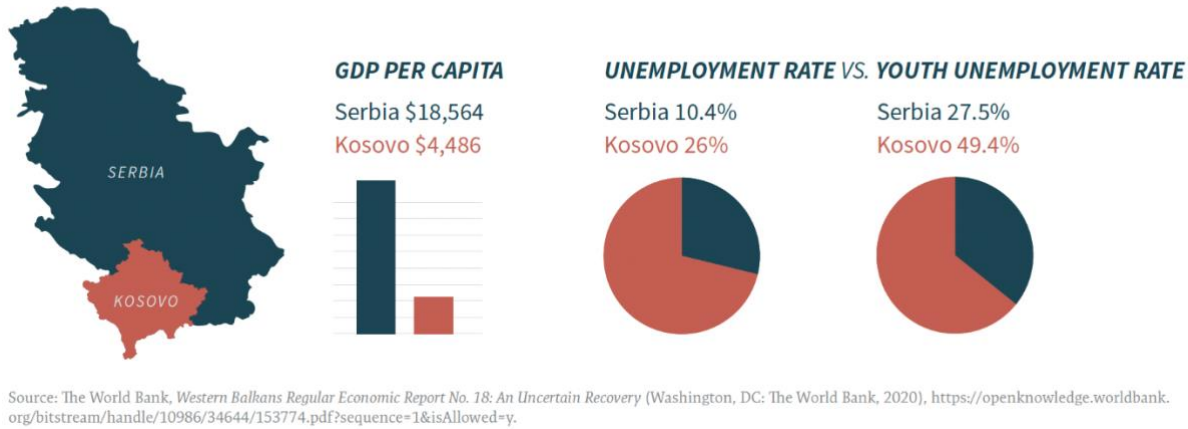


Source: Compiled on the basis of ILO statistics.

Note. From "The Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans: Assessing the Possible Economic, Social, and Environmental Impact of the Proposed Flagship Projects", 2022.

Figure 10

Unemployment Rate in Serbia and Kosovo



Note. From "The Serbia-Kosovo Normalization Process: A Temporary U.S. Decoupling", Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2021.