

The Important Question: Why and How Croatia Got Acceptance Whilst Serbia and Bosnia Denied By EU

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Abstract

As it known, Balkan countries have always been in an important position for the EU. Especially with the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the EU has introduced its policies to these countries and provided economic and social assistance for them. Thanks to these aids, most countries have converged to the EU. However, at this point, the different policies pursued by the countries and the countries that support or do not support the countries have played an important role in the EU membership process. The point that is especially taken into consideration here is that although most of the Western Balkan countries have started their EU membership processes in the same period, some of them became successful at this point while others have failed. Particularly in this process, the concept of Europeanization and the European identity become effective. This situation is examined in this study in terms of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia. This study tries to answer the question of why and how Croatia got acceptance whilst Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina denied by EU. To examine this question, Europeanization and European identity will be crucial.

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Önemli Soru: Sırbistan ve Bosna AB Tarafından Reddedilirken Hırvatistan Neden ve Nasıl Kabul Edildi?

Öz

Bilindiği üzere Balkan ülkeleri her zaman AB için önemli bir konumda olmuşlardır. Özellikle Yugoslavya'nın dağılmasıyla Avrupa Birliği kendi politikalarını bu ülkelere tanıtmış ve onlara ekonomik ve sosyal yardım sağlamıştır. Bu yardımlar sayesinde çoğu ülke AB'ye yaklaşmıştır. Ancak bu noktada, ülkelerin ve ülkeleri destekleyen veya desteklemeyen ülkelerin izlediği farklı politikalar AB üyelik sürecinde önemli rol oynamıştır. Burada dikkate alınan nokta, Batı Balkan ülkelerinin çoğu aynı dönemde AB üyelik süreçlerine başlamış olsa da, bazıları bu noktada başarılı olurken, diğerleri başarısız olmuştur. Özellikle bu süreçte Avrupalılaştırma kavramı ve Avrupa kimliği etkili olmaktadır. Bu durum bu çalışmada, Sırbistan, Bosna-Hersek ve Hırvatistan açısından incelenmiştir. Ancak bu noktada, ülkelerin ve ülkeleri destekleyen veya desteklemeyen ülkelerin izlediği farklı politikalar, AB üyelik sürecinde önemli rol oynamıştır. Burada özellikle dikkate alınan nokta, Batı Balkan ülkelerinin çoğu aynı dönemde AB üyelik süreçlerine başlamış olsa da, bazıları bu noktada başarılı olurken, diğerleri başarısız olmuştur. Özellikle bu süreçte Avrupalılaştırma kavramı ve Avrupa kimliği etkili olmaktadır. Bu durum bu çalışmada Sırbistan, Bosna-Hersek ve Hırvatistan açısından incelenmiştir. Bu çalışma, Sırbistan ve Bosna-Hersek AB tarafından reddedilirken Hırvatistan'ın neden ve nasıl kabul edildiği sorusunu yanıtlamaya çalışır. Bu soruyu incelemek için Avrupalılaştırma ve Avrupa kimliği çok önemli olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Avrupa Birliği, Hırvatistan, Sırbistan, Bosna Hersek, Avrupalılaştırma, Avrupa Kimliği

1. Introduction

European Union (EU) has an impact on many countries concerning many policy areas. Since the establishment of the EU, it has tried to integrate other countries to European norms and rules. The idea of a united Europe started in 1957 with the establishment of European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). After that, this community began to change its structure and name. When the historical background of the evolution of the EU is examined step by step, communities which are established into the European system are crucial. For example, the ECSC transformed to European Economic Community (EEC), and EEC was reconstructed as EU. In these changes, there is one common feature for the EU. This feature is concept of member states. EU aggregated 28 members with the membership of Croatia. This situation is named the last enlargement for it. It experienced six enlargement processes until this time. The most critical enlargement actualized in 2004 for the Union. With this situation, Central-Eastern European states joined the EU. The central policy of the Union about member states started to change, and the importance of Balkans increased for it. 2004 and 2007 enlargements were problematic because states which joined the EU had problems economic and political. These countries had also trouble regarding *acquis communautaire*. For such reasons, these enlargements were criticized by many people. For understanding the situation of Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia, enlargements which actualized in 2004 and 2007 should be examined. Locations of Balkans are essential for the EU because Balkans provide the connection with the East for Europe (Akçay, 2016). For this reason, strategy of the Union about Balkans always remain on the agenda. In this sense, the importance of Western Balkans states which is composed of Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia increased. (Şahin, 2013).

This article tries to explain the circumstances of Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia about membership to the EU. Croatia became a member of the Union in July 2013. Serbia and Bosnia couldn't gain the status of membership yet. Serbia took the status of the candidate in 2012 (European Commission, 2018). Bosnia applied to EU for full membership in 2016

(European Commission, 2018). There are differences between these countries with regards to being members of Union, for this reason, the primary question of this study will explain why and how Croatia got acceptance whilst Serbia and Bosnia denied by EU.

For examining this question, constructivism will be used as a theoretical framework. Particularly norms and culture will be the two main concepts to answer the research question. This article consists of three main parts. First, the importance of Balkan States for the EU will be discussed. In the second part, the application process of Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia will be explained one by one. In the third part, the research question of this essay will be analyzed to understand the reasons behind the rejection of Serbia and Bosnia by EU.

Identity is considered as integration, not decomposition in construction. It is aimed that the peoples of Europe feel themselves belonging to the Union and thus to form their interests and actions on this basis. After the creation of the identity, it was determined to determine the interests for the good of this identity and put it into action in the practical field. Constructivism therefore differs from power-based approaches such as realism. It refers to a process of international relations where norms and order are at the forefront instead of power. It handles this process with the contribution of non-state actors. At this point, the fact that the how the concept of European identity affects these countries in terms of membership to the EU will be examined in this article.

2. The Importance of Balkan States for the EU

Balkans is a strategic region for EU. When Balkan region is examined in terms of history, the dissolution of Yugoslavia is a topic which should be investigated. Balkans created some concepts in people minds like war and conflict. For example, the Kosovo problem between Serbia and Kosovo, nationalism between Croatia and Slovenia created ideas about Balkans in 1980s. In the 1980s the impact of communism started to decrease in Balkans and democratization process began. For this reason the interest of Union fronted to Balkan region. In 1999 EU started Stabilization and Association process with Balkans (Munter, 2018). Ac-

tually as a location Balkan region has significance for Union because, the problems which will actualize in Balkan region like internal conflicts can spread to Europe. After dissolution of Yugoslavia, EU started to make some policies for Balkan region.

Until 2005 there was external relationship between EU and Balkans but after 2005 Balkans were included enlargement strategy of Union (Karluk, 2015). After this situation enlargement process for Balkans started and the EU started to work on integrating Balkan countries into the union. In this point, the concept of integration became crucial to understand relations between EU and Balkan states. According to Alijevic integration means that protecting peace in member state (Alijevic, 2012). The strategy of EU is trying to provide peace in Balkans. Also there are crucial economic and political relations between Balkans and Europe. For this reason EU is not just neighbor for Balkans but also it is a partner for Europe (Gyamfi et al., 2016.).

Balkans became part of EU. The interest of Union about Balkans started after the dissolution of Yugoslavia. The important event for Balkans for EU was Thessaloniki Summit in 2003 (Gyamfi et al., 2016.). With this Summit the future of Balkan states gained effectualness.

2.1. Serbia

Serbia is an important country for Balkans. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Serbia gravitates to Europe. The relations between Serbia and the Union started in the 2000s (Akçay, 2016). After the fall of Sloban Milesovic's regime, Serbia started to focus on the EU. (European Court of Auditors, 2014). In 2003 the image of Serbia in the eyes of EU changed due to the assassination of Zoran Djindjic who was Prime Minister of Serbia (Economides & James, 2015). EU initiated the stabilization and association process in 1999. The desire of this situation provided peace and democracy in Balkans (Karluk, 2015). In 2008 EU was signed stabilization and association agreement with Serbia. With this agreement, the relations between the Union and Serbia were getting better. Serbia took some instigation from the EU about Kosovo issue and war criminals. (European Court of Auditors, 2014). Serbia obtained

significant success in EU way. In 2009 Serbia deserved free travel in the Schengen area. 2009 was an important date because Serbia gained both visa liberation and applied EU (The Delegation of the European Union to The Republic of Serbia, n.d.). In 2011, two arrestments were crucial for Serbia. First one was on 26 May when Ratko Mladic who is Bosnian Serb war criminal was arrested (BBC News, 2011). The second one was on 20 July. Goran Hadzic who was the last Yugoslav war jail-breaker was arrested (The Guardian, 2011). These issues prompted to new relations between Serbia and EU. On 12 October 2011 Commission presented a positive opinion about Serbia and it proposed that Serbia should take the status of the candidate (European Council Council of The European Union, n.d.). Serbia started to progress in the way of the EU. The European Council asserted Serbia as EU candidate country. In 2013 the European Council initiated accession negotiations with Serbia (Council of The European Union, 2014). The first intergovernmental conference which indicated Serbia's accession negotiations actualized in 2014 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Republic of Serbia, n.d.). After 2014 Serbia has continued to be integrated into the EU.

2.2. Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH) has experienced great troubles throughout its history and it became distanced from Europe due to these troubles (Koeth, 2012). Wars determined future of BIH. Bosnia stayed isolated because of wars until 1995 Dayton Agreement. The relations between EU and BIH started in 1992. EU started to give humanitarian aid to BIH after Dayton Agreement (Akçay, 2017). With this aids BIH started to affiliate EU. In 2003 BIH was accepted as potential candidate country in EU (Commission, 2003). BIH has remarkable features which separate BIH from other countries in terms of its political structure. For this reason BIH has different structure for EU. When historical background of BIH is investigated, another important date was 2012. In this date EU and BIH started High Level Dialogue which aims to assist for EU accession process in terms of their responsibilities (Delegation of The European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2012). BIH

tried to implement responsibilities which were determined by EU but there were some problems in terms of these responsibilities. For example there were three promoter communities which are determined as Bosnians, Croats and Serbians in constitution of BIH. According to this constitution, apart from these three ethnic groups, other groups cannot be elected to high level public service (Akçay, 2017). EU requested changes in this article but according to progressive report of commission about BIH, this demand didn't actualize (European Commission, 2016). In contrary to this some improvements came true in BIH according to 2016 Commission report but these improvements were not enough for membership. There are still absences in terms of political and economic criteria for BIH. For this reason Bosnia and Herzegovina is waiting as a potential candidate country.

2.3. Croatia

Croatia is the last country to join the EU. When relations between Croatia and EU are examined, there was wavy relationship between EU and Croatia. Croatia experienced many wars and conflicts like other Balkan countries. These conflicts and wars created political and economic problems in Croatia. In 2001 the stabilization and association agreement was signed between Union and Croatia. In 2003 Croatia applied for membership (Ott, 2006). In 2005, accession negotiations started for Croatia (Toygür & Atak, 2009). Croatia tried to be integrated to *acquis communautaire*. The role of Iva Sanader who was prime minister of Croatia in 2003 was crucial regarding EU. After Sanader came to head of government, the relations with EU were established and discrimination to Serbs finished (Altun, 2013). In accession process the important expectation of Union was that assisting to International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) by Croatia in the topic of arresting General Ante Gotovina (Schimmelfennig, 2011). The positive report which was offered by ICTY chief prosecutor to EU, the negotiations between Croatia and Union started in 2005 (Republic of Croatia Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, n.d.). The important mission for Croatia was adapting Croatia's laws with *acquis*. In 2011

member states of EU took a decision about closing accession negotiations of Croatia (European Commission, 2011). Croatia became member to EU in 2013 thus EU aggregated 28 member states. Consequently, Croatia became successful. With this enlargement EU established relationship with Croatia which is different country in terms of its structure. In other words a country which has different social norms joined the EU (Altun, 2013).

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As a supranational organization, the EU continues its political initiatives to expand its impact on the continent. Limited reformist efforts in the western Balkan countries on the European continent are likely to be slow and the transformation process is slow. In addition to the institutions and social reflexes shaped by socialism, this descriptive and classifying effect of ethnic identities continues in terms of Balkans. As mentioned above Balkan region is important for EU in terms of its location. For this reason EU has made many policies for Balkan states. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia the importance of Balkans increased and many Balkan countries started to endeavour for accession to EU. Especially with joining of Croatia to EU, many Balkan countries became more hopeful about joining to the EU. In this part success of Croatia in EU membership and failures of Serbia and Bosnia in EU way will be examined.

Actually the accession process to EU bases on some features like norms. For this reason the theory of constructivism has an impact in the membership process of EU. Firstly when the constructivism is investigated, norms which are determined as proper behavior for identity is a focal point for constructivism. (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). The main purpose of EU in accession process is creating European identity for candidate countries. For this reason the accession process of candidate countries progress regarding European identity. For this essay the membership of Croatia and the failures of Serbia and Bosnia in EU way is an important because these topics will be explained in terms of their identities, norms and religions thanks to constructivism.

Firstly relations between Serbia and EU can be described as problematic because of Kosovo problem (Akçay, 2017). Without Kosovo problem, there are many problems which affect accession process of Serbia. For example executive, rule of law, corruption, organized crimes, freedom of expression, economy and foreign policy are problematic topics for Serbia. (Russell, 2018). When the accession process of Serbia is examined, it is possible to say that, Serbia couldn't be successful. For understanding situation of Serbia in EU regarding constructivism, Europeanization and euroscepticism should be the main point. In Serbia nationalism is crucial for politics. For this reason many political parties support priority of nation instead of priority of EU (Sağiroğlu, 2017). The concept of identity came up in this situation. Serbia moves away from EU due to nationalism. In accordance with these information, Serbia should be integrated to European norms for membership and she should complete all criteria of EU. The main argument of Serbia's accession can be described as creating European identity. The topic of failure of Serbia in European way emphasizes that Serbia stayed far from EU because Europeanization didn't progress and Euroscepticism started in public. For this reason Serbia couldn't be successful like Croatia in accession process and she couldn't find enough support from other European states.

Secondly BIH is a different country for EU because of religion. When demographic features of BIH are investigated, it is possible to say that majority of people in BIH is Muslim. The accession process is slow for BIH. As it's known, there are some criteria for being member of EU. BIH failed about completing these criteria because after Dayton Agreement, solution for political instability couldn't be found (Ağca, 2010). This situation can be explained as main problem. Also there are some problems in minority rights, economic and political situations (European Commission, 2018). The main barrier for BIH in accession process is political problems but nationalism is other important factor for BIH. The relations between BIH and EU can associated with self-interests. In other words membership doesn't provide any interest for BIH (Uğurkan, 2015). This situation initiated Euroscepticism in BIH. It can

be said that, some factors like nationalism and identity affect the position of BIH in EU. That is to say, the concept of identity and nationalism may create failure for BIH. According to citizens, the problems of BIH can't be solved with EU. For this reason these situations explain the failure of BIH in EU (Turčilo, 2013).

Lastly Croatia is a member of EU. There are differences between Croatia and other Balkan countries in terms of Europeanization. Actually during the accession process Croatia started to improve its economy and social structure (Hahn, 2013). Indeed the most important thing which affect the accession of Croatia to EU is Europeanization. According to Croatia, Europe can be described as political and cultural home (Subotic, 2011). That is to say the Europeanization patterns occurred in Croatia before the membership. In this part it should be emphasized that, the effect of Germany for accession of Croatia bases on historical partnership. In 1991 Germany supported to separation of Croatia from Yugoslavia. Croatia started to close Europe because the support of Germany created trust. Consequently, Croatia followed successful policies for EU. After separation from Yugoslavia, it tried to establish relations with Europe thanks to Germany. The European identity came up in Croatia and it affected people life. For this reason Croatia is different from Serbia and BIH in terms of accession process.

4. Conclusion

As a conclusion, Balkans has importance for EU. After dissolution of Yugoslavia, EU followed some policies about Balkans and it tried to integrate these countries to EU. In this essay the success of Croatia and the failure of Serbia and BIH was examined. In the light of this investigation, it can be said that every states followed different policies for EU and EU has different idea about these states. In this study the reasons of failure of Serbia and BIH and the success of Croatia was explained.

In this sense, it can be said that the concept of Europeanization in terms of identity is important because Croatia feels itself as European for this reason, it tried to integrate European norms. That is to say, when the situation of Croatia in terms of Europeanization is examined, suc-

cess of the Croatia bases on its identity. Since Croatia feels intensely on European identity, they have easily advanced the Europeanization process. At this point, it has been easy for Croatia that has internalized European norms and values to become a member of the EU. Also public opinion affected this situation. In contrary to this in Serbia and BIH, situation is different. The incomplete process of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in terms of the EU in particular is due to the fact that these countries do not fully realize the concept of Europeanization. They failed in this process, especially since these countries did not realize their policies and norms and rules at the same level with the EU, and because they did not fully integrate and internalize the norms into their communities. In short, the success of Croatia bases on identity which is about constructivism. So, at this point, the creation of European identity has been effective in the candidacy processes of the countries and the EU accession processes. In this context, Croatia, which has established its European identity well, has been successful in the EU process, unlike Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is to say, Croatia, which has completed a Europeanization process based on certain stages with the fulfillment of the conditions given by the EU, has been successful in the membership process. At this point, Croatia, with the support of other countries existing in the EU, has easily completed this process. On the contrary, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which are in a problematic situation with EU rules and norms, have still not succeeded in the membership process. Due to this incompatibility, these two countries, which could not complete the Europeanization process successfully, remained far from the EU. The main conclusion reached at this point was the success of the Croatia, who integrates European identity well, and the failure of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, who were further away in that period.

In general, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, which could not meet the requirements of Europeanization, remained away from the membership path. Particularly in this process, the integration of European rules and norms is an important point for membership. In this case, the situation of creating European identity in countries is an ac-

celerating factor of this integration. In other words, a country that has established its European identity well completes the Europeanization process rapidly and reaches membership faster. It can be said in the light of this information that Croatia has completed this process rapidly and a European identity has been established in the society. This situation occurred with the integration. However, the fact that the same situation did not happen in Serbia and Bosnia Herzegovina kept these two countries away from membership.

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