ANALYSIS OF CHANGE IN PARTY POSITIONS TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN UNION AGENDA IN SERBIA[∗]

Önder CANVEREN[∗∗]-Müge AKNUR[∗∗∗]

ABSTRACT

Following many years of political competition in Serbia between reformists and nationalists, critical presidential and parliamentary elections were held in 2008 during the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo by Albanians in the shadow of the European Union (EU) agenda. 2008 elections reshaped party politics in favour of pro-Europeanism. This article analyses the change in party positions towards EU membership with the help of "process analysis" by referring to the independent variables of *compliance, identification, and internalization*, modelled by Herbert Kelman. The study focuses on following political parties that have shaped Serbian politics for a long time: The Democratic Party of Serbia (*Demokratska Stranka Srbije* - DSS), the Democratic Party (*Demokratska Stranka* - DS), the Serbian Progressive Party (*Srpska Napredna Stranka*-SNS), and the Socialist Party of Serbia (*Socijalistička Partija Srbije* - SPS). Contrary to arguments, which suggest that party positions have changed due to EU conditionality with the help of internalisation variable; this article argues that for SNS and SPS "compliance", for DSS and DS "identification" variable offers a more comprehensive causal explanation.

Keywords: Serbia, European Union, Europeanization, Party Politics, Position Change.

[∗∗] Res. Assist. Dr., Dokuz Eylul University, Faculty of Business, Department of International Relations, Izmir, ORCID: orcid.org/0000-0002-5352-7573, E-mail: onder.canveren@gmail.com
[∗∗∗] Assoc. Prof. Dr., Dokuz Eylul University, Faculty of Business, Department of International Relations, Izmir, ORCID: orcid.org/0000-0002-1407-7047, E-mail: muge.aknur@deu.edu.tr

ÖNDER CANVEREN - MÜGE AKNUR

SIRBİSTAN'DA AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ GÜNDEMİNE İLİŞKİN PARTİ POZİSYONLARINDAKİ DEĞİŞİMİN ANALİZİ

ÖZ

Sırbistan'da reformistler ve milliyetçiler arasında uzun yıllar süren siyasi rekabetin ardından, özellikle Arnavutların Kosova'nın tek taraflı bağımsızlığını ilan ettiği 2008 yılındaki kritik cumhurbaşkanlığı ve parlamento seçimleri Avrupa Birliği (AB) gündeminin gölgesinde gerçekleşmiştir. 2008 seçimleri, parti politikasını Avrupa-taraftarlığı lehine yeniden şekillendirmiştir. Bu makale, "süreç analizi" yardımıyla Herbert Kelman tarafından tasarlanan *uyum, özdeşleşme ve içselleştirme* bağımsız değişkenleri üzerinden AB gündemine ilişkin parti pozisyonlarında gerçekleşen değişimleri analiz etmektedir. Çalışma, Sırp siyasetini uzun süre şekillendirmiş olan Sırbistan Demokrat Partisi (*Demokratska Stranka Srbije* - DSS), Demokrat Parti (*Demokratska Stranka* - DS), Sırp İlerleme Partisi (*Srpska Napredna Stranka* - SNS) ve Sırbistan Sosyalist Partisi (*Socijalistička Partija Srbije* - SPS) üzerine odaklanmaktadır. Makale, parti pozisyonlarındaki değişimi "içselleştirme" tezi yardımıyla AB koşulluluğuna bağlayan savların aksine SNS ve SPS için "uyum", DSS ve DS için "özdeşleşme" faktörünün daha kapsamlı bir nedensel açıklama sunduklarını iddia etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sırbistan, Avrupa Birliği, Avrupalılaşma, Parti Politikası, Pozisyon Değişimi.

Introduction

In the aftermath of the Yugoslav crises, the European Union (EU) adopted a more comprehensive framework for peace, security and stability in the Western Balkans in the context of its enlargement policy. Specifically, the EU considered that Serbia plays a key role in stabilising the region. However, although Brussels granted Serbia "candidate status" in 2012, relations between the two sides have not always been harmonious, as the European Commission believes that the overall pace of negotiations will depend particularly on the progress in two areas – rule of law and normalisation of its relations with Kosovo.[1] In its transition from centrally planned economy to free market economy and from authoritarian rule to a

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[1] European Commission, "Serbia 2018 Report", *Enlargement*, 17 April 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-serbia-report.pdf, (08.05.2019), p. 3.

problematic democracy, Serbia has experienced the legacies of the Communist period and Milošević's regime. Its relations with the EU have fluctuated due to Serbia's resistance to the International Criminal Tribunal's (ICTY)[2] policies concerning former Yugoslavia and its struggles over Kosovo. In this process, Serbian political parties have not acted as mediators between their country and the EU.

Given this shadow of historical legacies and long-lasting dilemmas regarding identity, border conflicts and nation-state building process, this article analyses how the following Serbian parties have shifted their positions towards the EU: the Democratic Party of Serbia (*Demokratska stranka Srbije*-DSS), the Democratic Party (*Demokratska stranka*-DS), the Serbian Progressive Party (*Srpska napredna stranka*-SNS), and the Socialist Party of Serbia (*Socijalistička partija Srbije*-SPS). These parties have received the highest percentage of votes and ruled the country over different periods since 2000. Moreover, they have both determined the domestic political agenda and regulated relations with the EU. The article investigates why and how these political parties have gone through various position changes in the shadow of the EU agenda: from hard-Euroscepticism to pro-Europeanism for SNS and SPS; from soft-Euroscepticism to hard-Euroscepticism for DSS; and a tone downing of pro-Europeanism for DS. The article is based on process analysis under the assumption that the changes in these positions took place through a series of stages.

To identify the factors behind these position changes, the analysis investigates *(i) compliance, (ii) identification, and (iii) internalization* as independent variables, as modelled by Herbert Kelman.[3] Compliance refers to attitude change with the calculation of gaining specific rewards or approval and avoiding specific punishment. Identification refers to attitude change when decision-makers want to establish or maintain a satisfying self-defining relationship. Lastly, internalization is a change when the ideas and actions of which it is composed are intrinsically rewarding. The article argues that while the position changes of SNS and SPS can be understood in

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[2] The ICTY was established as an ad hoc tribunal in 1993 by the UN to investigate war crimes committed during the dissolution of Yugoslavia. The EU made cooperation and compliance with the ICTY a pre-condition for Western Balkan countries in their accession negotiations. Specifically, it required to the capture and extradition of suspects to The Hague.
[3] Herbert C. Kelman, "Compliance, Identification, and Internalization: Three Processes of Attitude Change", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Volume 2, Number 1, 1958, p. 53.

terms of compliance, the changes of DSS and DS can be understood in terms of identification.

Following an explanation of the conceptual framework, the second section of the article examines the competition between nationalists and reformists during the early phases of the post-Milošević and post-conflict transitions since the Bulldozer Revolution (2000). It also provides details of the critical presidential and parliamentary elections held in 2008. The last section uses process analysis to investigate the position changes of the four leading political parties through compliance, identification, and internalization.

1. Research Model for the Position Changes of Political Parties

Foreign policy preferences and policy implementations are the consequences of complex processes that depend first on decision-makers' ideas and second on national elites, who decide, conceptualize, and develop the policies.[4] Therefore, national institutions, particularly previous institutional legacies matter for the Europeanization of candidate countries because they influence the effectiveness of EU conditionality. In fact, EU conditionality depends on the incentives within the country's internal dynamics, particularly party politics that play the role of gatekeepers during the accession process due to their legislative and executive powers.[5]

In general, the relationship of party positions within the EU agenda is firmly rooted, discursive, fixed, and relative. That is, party position can be framed as a reflection of the redistribution of powers, party pragmatism, and

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[4] Gamze Tanil, "The Social Constructivist Fusion Perspective: A Theory for Europeanization", *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, Volume 15, Number 4, 2014, p. 493.

[5] Milada Anna Vachudova, "Party Positions, EU Leverage and Democratic Backsliding in the Western Balkans and Beyond", *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 52, Number 1, 2014, pp. 122–138; Walter Mattli and Thomas Plümper, "The Demand-side Politics of EU Enlargement: Democracy and the Application for EU Membership'", *Journal of European Public Policy*, Volume 9, Number 4, 2002, pp. 550-574; Simon Bulmer and Christian Lequesne, "New Perspectives on EU-Member State Relationships", *Questions de Recherche/Research in Questions*, Number 4, 2002, p. 4; Tapio Raunio and Simon Hix, "Backbenchers Learn to Fight Back: European Integration and Parliamentary Government", *West European Politics*, Volume 23, Number 4, 2000, p. 142.

political tactics.[6] A few recent studies have questioned how political parties interact with the EU agenda, specifically regarding the general orientation of parties towards European integration, the importance of European issues for party politics, and the degree to which parties are internally divided on EU issues. According to Mair, the EU agenda may be a shaping parameter of inter-party competition that leads to party dissolution or hinders new party formation.[7] It might also have an impact on parties' interactions with each other concerning voting behaviours, either by repositioning ideological spectrum of political parties or by encouraging the emergence of a new European-centred dimension of competition (change in position).

Kelman describes three different mechanisms for attitude change and position shifts: *compliance, identification,* and *internalization*.[8] Subsequent studies examining the EU agenda in candidate countries from the perspectives of political parties have enriched the literature theoretically and empirically by applying these three alternative approaches.

Compliance: One of the most basic assumptions of free and fair elections is that political parties clearly formulate their policies to gain (more) votes. As Downs points out, citizens are apt to vote for parties whose positions match their own.[9] Thus, a pragmatic party might take a more tactical and interest-oriented position, depending on how European integration is likely to benefit it and its supporters. Political parties continuously shape and re-shape their positions based on the issues backed by their supporters. In other words, the supporters determine party position and policy orientation (bottom-up/uploading), through their electoral impact on policies.[10]

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[6] Aleks Szczerbiak and Paul Taggart, "Theorising Party-Based Euroscepticism: Problems of Definition, Measurement and Causality", *SEI Working Paper*, Number 69, 2003, p. 19; Laure Neumayer, "Euroscepticism as a Political Label: The Use of European Union Issues in Political Competition in the New Member States", *European Journal of Political Research*, Volume 47, 2008, p. 137.

[7] Leonard Ray, "Measuring Party Orientations towards European Integration: Results from an Expert Survey", *European Journal of Political Research*, Volume 36, Number 2, 1999, p. 284; Peter Mair, "The Limited Impact of Europe on National Party Systems", *West European Politics*, Volume 23, Number 4, 2000, p. 28.

[8] Kelman, *ibid*., p. 53.

[9] Anthony Downs, "An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy", *Journal of Political Economy*, Volume 65, Number 2, 1957, p. 141.

[10] For details, see James Adams, et al., "Are Niche Parties Fundamentally Different from Mainstream Parties? The Causes and the Electoral Consequences of Western European Parties' Policy Shifts, 1976-1998", *American Journal of Political Science*, Volume 50, 2006,

Identification: This approach argues that party competition might be entirely about positional competition in relation to the main topical issues[11] whereby political parties can identify themselves through their positions in this issue by competition rather than by ideology or identity politics.[12] For instance, certain parties, called single-issue parties, may adopt and politicize one of these issues and instrumentalize their stance as the basis of their party identity.[13] The EU agenda has emerged as one of the main factors in inter-party competition, with an increasing polarization among voters and political parties on EU-related issues.[14]

Internalization: Concerning Europeanization, ideas, identities, and perceptions are expected to affect subsequent policy choices. The level, direction, and scope of national identity must be analysed since the meaning of belonging to Europe is negotiated among the political elites.[15] According to this approach, domestic change is possible only if the EU persuades candidate countries to identify themselves as part of the European community and internalize EU norms and values.[16] Europeanization succeeds when both the learning and socialization steps match European norms and values. The process will not be more effective and goal-oriented

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pp. 513-529; James Adams, Lawrence Ezrow and Zeynep Somer-Topcu, "Is Anybody Listening? Evidence that Voters do not Respond to European Parties' Policy Statements during Elections", *American Journal of Political Science*, Volume 55, 2011, pp. 370-382.

[11] Christoffer Green-Pedersen, "The Growing Importance of Issue Competition: The Changing Nature of Party Competition in Western Europe", *Political Studies*, Volume 55, Number 3, 2007, p. 609.

[12] Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, "On the Evolution of Political Issues", *Agenda Formation*, (ed.) William H. Riker, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 1993, pp. 151-152.

[13] Cas Mudde, "The Single-Issue Party Thesis: Extreme Right Parties and the Immigration Issue", *West European Politics*, Volume 22, Number 3, 1999, pp. 182-197; Bernt Aardal and Pieter van Wijnen, "Issue Voting", *The European Voter*, (ed.) Jacques JA Thomassen, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2005, pp. 192-212.

[14] Catherine E. De Vries, "EU Issue Voting: Asset or Liability? How European Integration Affects Parties' Electoral Fortunes", *European Union Politics*, Volume 11, Number 1, 2010, pp. 89-117; Catherine E. De Vries, et al., "Individual and Contextual Variation in EU Issue Voting: The Role of Political Information", *Electoral Studies*, Volume 30, Number 1, 2011, pp. 16-28.

[15] Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, "A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus", *British Journal of Political Science*, Volume 39, Number 1, 2009, pp. 21-22.

[16] Jeffrey T. Checkel, "International Institutions and Socialization in Europe: Introduction and Framework", *International Organization*, Volume 59, Number 4, 2005, p. 804.

unless new (European) ideas, norms and collective understandings emerge, expand, and are internalized.[17]

One of the controversial issues in the literature is whether these position changes have taken place under the influence of the EU agenda and Europeanization process (i.e. the bilateral dynamics) or due to new constraints and opportunities at the national level (i.e. domestic dynamics). Most researchers base their explanations for position shifts among Serbian parties in terms of EU conditionality and the external incentives model in that EU membership was instrumentalized as the only way of realizing Serbia's political and economic interests, including in the Western Balkans.[18] The EU's credible carrot and stick strategy is believed to have put enormous pressure on Serbian parties to cooperate with the ICTY and enter into dialogue with Kosovo, thus moving their country forward along the EU path.[19] In fact, Serbia's EU integration process was halted multiple times due to its unwillingness to cooperate adequately with the ICTY. The political elites then concluded that there was simply no alternative to EU accession, given that Serbia was geographically and politically surrounded by neighbouring states that had already started to enjoy the benefits of the EU.[20]

2. Historical Background: Political Conflict between Serbian Nationalists and Reformists during the Transition Period

Serbian party politics has been going through a complicated transformation. A group of mostly short-lived new parties and splits from nationalist hardliners to pro-European reformist parties identified as "taxi

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[17] Jeffrey T. Checkel, "Social Construction and Integration", *Journal of European Public Policy*, Volume 6, Number 4, 1999, pp. 548-551.

[18] Altuğ Günal, *Sırbistan'ın Avrupa'ya Dönüşü: Nedenler, Engeller, Beklentiler ve AB Faktörü*, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Supervisor: Nazif Mandacı, İzmir 2011, pp. 131-182.

[19] Igor Bandović and Marko Vujači, "The European Question in Serbia's Party Politics", *EU Integration and Party Politics in the Balkans*, (ed.) Corina Stratulat, European Policy Centre, Brussels 2014, p. 53.

[20] Othon Anastasakis and Dimitar Bechev, "EU Conditionality in South East Europe: Bringing Commitment to the Process", *South East European Studies Programme*, April 2003, http://www.epus.rs/sr/aktivnosti/konferencije/solun/pdf/ostala/conditio.pdf, (13.05.2018), pp. 1-20.

parties" have been active in politics.[21] Party politics suffers from the lack of institutionalism, which reflects itself in under-developed party programs and changing voting patterns that lead to instability and unpredictability. The charisma, persuasiveness, and legitimacy of party leaders are the main motivational factors that shape elections although the levels of trust on political parties and the parliament are low in the country.[22] Recent past and ongoing post-conflict transition in Serbia produce a large political vacuum for national elites to (re)produce a discourse referring to historical sociology. This is the reason why social attitudes and the ethos of conflict are significant indicators for the analysis of party politics and voting patterns in Serbia.[23]

Throughout the 1990s, the bloody disintegration of Yugoslavia produced heavy consequences in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo.[24] Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević's rise to power in 1987 had taken place during the earlier phases of Yugoslavia's dissolution, when polarization among Serb, Albanian, Croatian, Muslim/Bosniaks, and Slovene political elites had increased tremendously. Leading figures and political elites were not in favour of former Yugoslavian leader Josip Tito's vision of brotherhood and unity. Rather than "brotherhood and unity" world view that have its origins in the socialist system of Yugoslavia, the political elites of the post-Tito era adopted nationalism as their new ideology.

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[21] Elisabeth Bakke, "Central and East European Party Systems since 1989", *Central and Southeast European Politics since 1989*, (ed. Sabrina Ramet), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000, p. 73.

[22] Zoran Đ. Slavujević, "The Citizens of Serbia´s Views of Democracy: Limited Sovereignty as an Essential Restriction of Legitimacy of the Political System and Development of Democracy", *Serbian Political Thought*, Volume 3, Number 4, 2011, p. 109.

[23] Janko Međedović and Boban D. Petrović, "Predictors of Party Evaluation in post-Conflict Society: The Case of Serbia", *Psihologija*, Volume 46, Number 1, 2013, pp. 27-43.

[24] The 1974 Constitution in Tito's Yugoslavia ensured autonomy for Albanians in Kosovo and Hungarians in Vojvodina. Later, Milošević wanted to ensure his political control of Kosovo through the emergency laws that came into force in 1989 as well as the *Serbization of institutions*. After 1989, the autonomy of Kosovo was gradually reduced and ended with the new Constitution (1992). At the beginning, Albanians responded with a strategy of passive resistance and a shadow state against discrimination and human rights violations. A militarized Albanian resistance movement, the Kosova Liberation Army (KLA), founded in 1991, decided to take up arms in 1996, leading to direct clashes with Serbian forces. Various international initiatives failed to find a comprehensive solution to the Kosovo question. Later, NATO started its first war against Belgrade, *Operation Allied Force*, in phases (March-June 1999). Since then, Kosovo has been under the rule of international mandates (UN and the EU) although they declared their independence from Serbia in 2008.

Nationalism and ethnic rhetoric helped Milošević rise to power and maintain public support against his rivals.[25] Similar to the rise of nationalism in Croatia, Slovenia and Albanians in Kosovo, Milošević's aggressive, exclusive, and ethnocentric nationalist rhetoric in Serbia paved the way for the onset of ethnic conflicts during the1990s. Milošević played a manipulative role also at domestic affairs in which nationalism and identity were at the centre of his political campaigns against his opponents.[26] Organisational obstacles of the opposition parties empowered Milošević's rule in the country.[27] They had insufficient effects during the election campaigns, in which they followed an ideology-oriented propaganda against communism.

Following the change in presidential election system in July 2000 that requires the election of the president by direct votes, Milošević called for the early elections. By calling early elections he assumed that he would win the election one more time. Opposition groups that included 18 parties formed a pre-election coalition called Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) and selected Vojislav Koštunica as their candidate. The DOS managed to win more than 50% of the votes.[28] When Milošević lost power following the Bulldozer Revolution in 2000, he was still a national hero and Serbian leader for half of the population according to the election result.

In general, the majority of national elites of Milošević's regime protected their political positions at the beginning and were not properly been replaced by new ones. Therefore, the transition following the peaceful

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[25] Mischa Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, Penguin Books, London 1996, p. 20; Aleksa Djilas, "A Profile of Slobodan Milosevic", *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 72, Number 3, 1993, pp. 86-92.

[26] Vladimir Goati, "A Deficit in Legitimacy: The Political Development of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia", *Democratic Reconstruction in Balkans*, (eds.) Margaret Blunden and Patrick Burke, University of Westminster-Centre for the Study of Democracy, London 2001.

[27] Zoran Slavujević, "The issues: Dimension of Electoral Confrontations", *Elections to the Federal and Republican Parliaments of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro 1990-1996*, (ed.) Goati Vladimir, Sigma, Berlin 1998.

[28] Serbian Democratic Opposition (DOS), consisted of 18 political subjects, defeated Milošević in the early presidential election. However, Milošević appealed the election results and declared a second ballot while the opposition were celebrating their victories. Organized demonstrations, called the Bulldozer Revolution, started across Serbia on September 27. Milošević eventually had to recognize Koštunica's victory on October 6, 2000 and resign the following day.

revolution in Serbia was slow in creating a new reform-oriented political structure.[29] According to Massari, during the first decade of post-Milošević era, institutions, actors and values remained to be influenced by legacies of the previous regime.[30] Milošević's deep-rooted victimhood syndrome continued especially among the larger nationalist groups and as a heavy legacy, it deeply affected the country's political culture.[31] The majority of the nationalists in the early transition years remained loyal to the prevailing value orientations and legacies, continuing and reproducing the same institutional and ideological patterns of the previous regime.[32] Their xenophobic nationalist denial syndrome concerning the ICTY and Kosovo, with the narrative of victimhood served for the purposes of nationalists. This rhetoric continued to be part of anti-EU discourse in the public sphere, emphasising ethnicity and claiming common descent, history, religion, and territory.[33] However, in the last decade, some of the nationalists have gone through transformation in their value orientation affecting the institutions in Serbia.

In the early 2000s, relations with the EU were full of scepticism and confusion. Until 2008, two critical issues of conflict between Serbia and the EU were cooperation with the ICTY and the normalisation of relations with Kosovo in the aftermath of NATO operations and Albanian secession. In dealing with EU conditions for transitional justice, Serbia's self-identification of victimhood encouraged both escapism and denial. It therefore took nearly 23 years for ICTY starting from 1994 until 2017 to

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[29] Ivan Vejvoda, "Serbia after Four Years of Transition", *The Western Balkans: Moving on*, (ed.) Judy Batt, Institute for Security Studies, Paris 2004, pp. 37-54.

[30] Maurizio Massari, "Do All Roads Lead to Brussels? Analysis of the Different Trajectories of Croatia, Serbia-Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Volume 18, Number 2, 2005, p. 267.

[31] 1980s have witnessed the rise of victimhood narrative in Serbian society. The sense that being a Serb was equivalent to be a real victim was an obstacle to peace because it caused anger and seemed to validate Serbian conflicts in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo as self-defence. In addition, the closedmindedness and xenophobic attitudes were used by influential regime propaganda that portrayed Western countries as the aggressors, and the UN, ICTY, and EU as anti-Serb, biased, and unjust. This allowed escapism and denial over Serbia's own past wrongdoings. For details, see Sabrina P. Ramet, "The Denial Syndrome and its Consequences: Serbian Political Culture since 2000", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Volume 40, Number 1, 2007, pp. 41-58.

[32] Mladen Lazić, "Spread of Value Orientations among Political and Economic Elites in Serbia", *Romanian Journal of Political Science*, Volume 7, Number 2, 2007, pp. 67-83.

[33] Iavor Rangelov, "International Law and Local Ideology in Serbia", *Peace Review*, Volume 16, Number 3, 2004, pp. 331-337.

finalize its investigations against some former Yugoslav leaders due to the reluctance of the target countries to cooperate. In fact, the negotiations for EU's membership condition "normalization of the relations with Kosovo" are continuing.

In the early years after Milošević, the conflict concerning Serbia's position in world politics in between Europe and Eurasia gathered Serbian political parties around pro-European reformists and anti-European nationalists.[34] More precisely, the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) and the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) have been under the legacies of the Milošević regime whereas parties such as the Democrat Party (DS), the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO), and New Serbia (NS) were reformist parties, joined by the newly-established G17+ and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Ethnic minority parties also adopted a pro-European reformist stance. At the leadership level, President Vojislav Koštunica (2000-2003) represented the nationalists (in moderate term)[35] and stood close to SRS and SPS,[36] while Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić represented the reformists.

Serbia's foreign policy orientation concerning Kosovo's status, cooperation with the ICTY, EU integration, and relations with Moscow emerged as major issues of conflict between nationalists and reformists. The balance between reformists and nationalists during the first two years of the transition changed in favour of the nationalists following Prime Minister Đinđić's assassination in 2003. The two subsequent coalition governments formed between 2004 and 2008, with Koštunica as prime minister ruled out reforms to meet the EU's pre-accession conditions. The lack of a European vision was compounded by the nationalists' negative idea of Europe, who presented the EU as an anti-Serbian institution due to developments and western reactions during and in the aftermath of the conflicts in the Balkans, particularly in Kosovo.[37] Koštunica rejected any extradition of war criminals

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[34] Daniel Bochsler, "The Party System of Serbia", *Party Politics in the Western Balkans*, (eds.) Vera Stojarová and Peter Emerson, Routledge, New York 2013, pp. 99-118.

[35] In fact, President Koštunica can be regarded both nationalist and at the same time somehow as a reformist (within the nationalist camp) due to his cooperation with the reformist parties during and after the elections in 2000.

[36] Janine Natalya Clark, "Vojislav Koštunica: Some Reflections on his time as Prime Minister", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Volume 10, Number 1, 2008, pp. 31-46.

[37] Karmen Erjavec and Zala Volcic, "The Kosovo Battle: Media's Recontextualization of the Serbian Nationalistic Discourses", *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, Volume 12, Number 67, 2007, pp. 67-86.

accused by the ICTY. Moreover, he and his nationalist followers' Kosovo-first policy showed that they preferred Russia to the EU.

Meanwhile, Serbia's reformists preferred a modern, democratic, and pro-European regime. Unlike the nationalists, they perceived EU membership as the only viable foreign policy aim to avoid international sanctions, receive restoration assistance, ensure aid packages, and accomplish political and economic liberalisation through new trade agreements.[38] However, until 2008, the pro-European elites were unable to make the EU vision the mainstream objective of the new regime. Due to these uncertainties and domestic clashes, Serbia was perceived by West as a "frustrating and often disappointing partner" in the Western Balkans.[39]

3. 2008 Elections in the Shadow of the European Union Agenda

In 2008, two elections were held in Serbia while Kosovo declared its independence from Belgrade on 17 February 2008. The first was the presidential election held in February; the second was the early parliamentary elections held in May.[40] The future of Kosovo and Serbia's foreign policy orientation between Brussels or Moscow were the two central issues of the elections. The presidential election was a competition between two leaders: SRS's nationalist leader Tomislav Nikolić and DS's reformist leader Boris Tadić. Nikolić, who claimed that any agreement with the EU would weaken Serbia's position on Kosovo, promised to strengthen ties with Russia as an alternative. During and after the election, the reformist DS pursued a policy called "both the EU and Kosovo". To this end, Tadić often indicated that Serbia wanted both Kosovo and EU membership, adding that Serbia could only defend its rights in Kosovo through European integration.[41]

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[38] Branislav Radeljić, "The Politics of (No) Alternatives in Post-Milošević Serbia", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Volume 16, Number 2, 2014, p. 245.

[39] Judy Batt, "The Question of Serbia", *European Union Institute for Security Studies*, Number 81, 2005, p. 9.

[40] Despite the Eurosceptic ministers in the cabinet, Belgrade decided to sign the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU in November 2007 prior to the declaration of independence of Kosovo. However, this resulted in the collapse of the coalition and an early parliamentary election.

[41] https://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2008&mm=01&dd=29&nav_id=47301, (16.04.2018).

In the second round of the presidential election, Tadić received 50.31% of the votes, just 2.5 points more than Nikolić. The re-election of Tadić was seen as the victory for the pro-European orientation in Serbia. However, just two days before February 17, Tadić took an oath "to invest all his efforts in the preservation of sovereignty and integrity of the territory of the Republic of Serbia, including Kosovo and Metohija as its integral part".[42] Moreover, on the same day spontaneously the Serbian citizens went to the streets shouting "Kosovo is Serbia" slogans. Prime Minister Koštunica argued, "Kosovo's unilateral declaration of a false state is the final act of a policy that started with the NATO aggression against Serbia in 1999",[43] and called for harsh measures against countries that recognized Kosovo.

After twenty-two EU member states (excluding Spain, Slovakia, Cyprus, Romania, and Greece) recognized Kosovo's independence, the DS-DSS coalition collapsed over a disagreement about whether to continue with EU accession. DSS and other nationalist actors linked the question of Kosovo with Serbia's EU path. Therefore, they called for the suspension of EU accession. In contrast, reformist parties in the ruling coalition continued to maintain their core orientation of "Serbia in the EU, with Kosovo (as its part)".[44]

This early parliamentary election was held in May 2008 at a time of extremely high political tensions. Both nationalists and the reformists played the Kosovo and EU cards during their campaigns. Prime Minister Koštunica and his right-wing/nationalist DSS opted to focus their strategy almost exclusively on opposing Serbia's EU path as a de facto threat to Serbia's territorial integrity. They shaped their election campaign in terms of a binary choice for voters: Kosovo or European integration.[45] Nationalists argued that Serbian recognition of Kosovo would certainly be made a precondition for EU membership as a way of legitimizing their position. Other nationalist

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[42] For the full text of the oath see:
http://www.srbija.gov.rs/cinjenice_o_srbiji/ustav.php?change_lang=en, (17.03.2016).
[43] http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2008&mm=02&dd=17&nav_id=47781, (12.04.2016).
[44] Milenko Petrovic, *The Democratic Transition of Post-Communist Europe: In the Shadow of Communist Differences and Uneven Europeanisation*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2013.
[45] Andrew Konitzer, "Speaking European: Conditionality, Public Attitudes and pro-European Party Rhetoric in the Western Balkans", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Volume 63, Number 10, 2011, pp. 1853-1888.

parties also maintained a strong anti-European rhetoric. For example, SRS's leader Nikolić repeatedly referred to the EU as "evil".[46]

The pre-election coalition of reformists, "For a European Serbia",[47] insisted that the SAA with the EU was neutral regarding the status of Kosovo, and that it was primarily an economic agreement that opened the possibility for a better life for Serbian citizens. They also added that, as an international organisation, the EU had no authority to recognise Kosovo's independence since five EU member states had not recognised Kosovo. The coalition led by the reformist Tadić received 38.4% of the votes and 102 out of 250 parliamentary seats while the nationalist SRS received 29.4% of the votes, followed by 11.6% for the national-conservative DSS. Thus, the election ended in victory for the reformist coalition "For a European Serbia". Regarding voting behaviours and public opinion, the 2008 presidential and parliamentary elections demonstrated public support for the EU perspective that showed resistance to nationalistic discourse.[48] However, since then political parties in Serbia went through position shifts in favour of pro-Europeanism[49] as it will be analysed in the following section.

4. Analysis of Position Shifts among Serbia's Political Parties

In the post-Milošević context, party politics in Serbia fundamentally were concerned with identity issues, including wars, the ICTY, and Kosovo. Parties were polarised between reformists in favour of EU membership and the construction of a new Serbia, and traditionalists and nationalists focusing more on history and the narrative of victimhood. [50] However, as it can observed in the decreasing votes (see Table 2) for nationalists, the anti-EU bloc eventually got weaker and as a result, lost its influence, and got fragmented. Subsequently, anti-European nationalist (DSS) and far-right parties (SRS) started losing votes dramatically (Table-2). The pro-European

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[46] Massari, *op.cit*., pp. 259-273.
[47] Coalition around the DS, including G17+, SPO, and the League of Vojvodina Social Democrats (LSV).
[48] Srdjan Cvijic, "The New Serbia: Fast forward towards the EU?", *EPC Policy Brief,* Brussels, 2009.
[49] Marko Stojić, "Europe and the Serbian Parliamentary Election of May 2000", *EPERN Election Briefing*, Number 50, 2008.
[50] Marko Stojić, *Party Responses to the EU in the Western Balkans: Transformation, Opposition or Defiance?*, Springer, Cham 2017, p. 237; İlhan Bilici and Sinem Çelik, "Ulusal Kimliğin Batı Balkanlarda AB Üyelik Koşullarının Geçerliliği Üzerindeki Etkisi", *Turkish Studies,* Volume 12, Number 31, 2017, p. 36.

DS also lost a significant proportion of parliamentary seats before it was replaced by the newly established pro-European SNS.

Table 1: Political Parties under Examination

Party Name	Year	Leader	Process
Serbian Progressive Party (*Srpska napredna stranka - SNS*)	2008	Aleksandar Vučić	From hard-Euroscepticism to pro-Europeanism
Socialist Party of Serbia (*Socijalistička partija Srbije - SPS*)	1990	Ivica Dačić	From hard-Euroscepticism to pro-Europeanism
Democratic Party (*Demokratska stranka - DS*)	1990	Zoran Lutovac	Toned down its pro-European rhetoric[51]
Democratic Party of Serbia (*Demokratska stranka Srbije - DSS*)	1992	Miloš Jovanović	From soft-Euroscepticism to Euroscepticism

**Table 2:** Results of Parliamentary Elections in Serbia since 2003

	SNS	SRS	DSS	DS	SPS
2003	-	27% - 82	17% - 53	12% - 37	7% - 22
2007	-	28% - 81	16% - 47	22% - 64	-
2008	-	29% - 78	11% - 30	38% - 102	7% - 20
2012	24% - 73	-	7% - 21	22% - 67	-
2014	48% - 158	-	-	6% - 19	13% - 43
2016	48% - 131	8% - 22	5% - 6	6% - 12	10% - 29
(percentage of votes - number of seats)					

Source: http://www.rik.parlament.gov.rs/english/index.php, (20.08.2018).

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[51] DS is a leading pro-European actor in Serbian party politics and their position on EU agenda from the very beginning was stable without any change. However, they adopted a more careful and toned down rhetoric on EU agenda after the 2008 elections.

The overall political conjuncture in Serbia today tends to favour Brussels because anti-EU parties are currently weak, both in numbers and in parliamentary strength. Since 2008, Serbian party politics has undergone a long process of positioning and re-positioning (Graphic 1): (i) DSS went from soft-Euroscepticism to hard-Euroscepticism; (ii) DS toned down its pro-European rhetoric; (iii) SNS split from SRS as a new moderate pro-European actor; and (iv) SPS re-positioned itself from an anti-EU stance to a pro-European line.

Graphic 1: Position Shifts in Serbian Party Politics since 2008
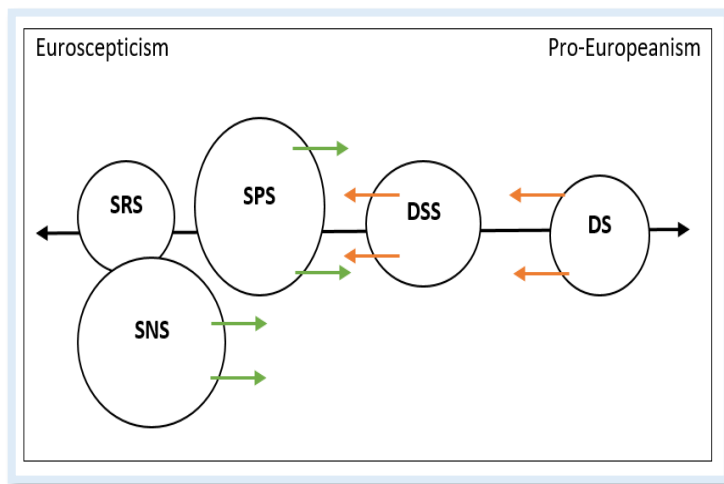
Source: Adopted from Dusan Spasojevic, "Europeanization of Serbian Party System – Accountability to Brussels or to People", *Fifth Euroacademia International Conference: The European Union and Politicization of Europe*, 14-15 November 2016, Bologna, p. 13.

The current government is a coalition of parties and leaders who engaged in position changes. The newly formed SNS and Milošević's SPS have evolved from a nationalist/anti-EU position to a relatively moderate pro-European position while acting as the ruling government since 2012.

4.1. Position Shifts as a Reflection of Compliance

Most parties in Serbia are leader-oriented with catch-all strategies for seeking power rather than proposing ideologies and programmes.[52] Consequently, party programs are still underdeveloped, having the features of catch-all parties that strive to attract as many votes as they can. From a more bottom-up perspective, one may argue that the position shift in these parties evolved as a response to the changing public mind-set in Serbia since 2008.

From a rationalist perspective, the position shift was the result of the lessons learned from elections. Parliamentary and presidential elections in 2008 sent the political parties a direct message that nationalist propaganda and Eurosceptic discourse were no longer winning strategies.[53] Since public opinion turned into a more pro-European orientation and anti-EU propaganda was not a driving force in voting behaviours (see Table 3), the subsequent shift in their position was thus a strategic adaptation to new voting patterns for the survival purposes. Those nationalists who continued to oppose the EU eventually lost electoral support or were side-lined by their domestic counterparts. As Baca argues, voting behaviour was the determining factor in this process: "Voters abandoned nationalist, anti-EU parties as they learned more about them."[54] Nationalists' 'Greater Serbia' dream, anti-Western sentiments and Eurasianist vision led Serbia to suffer economically, diplomatically and politically. Serbians then learned the lessons that previous foreign policy preferences were unrealistic, dangerous and unsustainable. Hence, both SNS and SPS considered their position shifts as essential to gain more votes and take power. SRS – from which the SNS emerged, were successful almost in all elections. However, due to its opposition to the EU, the party was not included in coalitions.

Secondly, the collapse of previous coalition governments combining pro-EU and anti-EU parties led to the formation of pro-EU coalitions.

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[52] Spasojević, *op.cit.*, p. 5; Lenard J. Cohen and John R. Lampe, *Embracing Democracy in the Western Balkans: From Postconflict Struggles toward European Integration*, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington 2011, p. 270.

[53] Konitzer, *op.cit.,* pp. 1878-1883.

[54] Erin Baca, *Croatia and Serbia: Two Roads Diverged or Wandering down the Same Path? Institutionalization and Europeanization of Party Systems since the 2000 Democratic Elections*, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Department of Political Science, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Supervisor: Milada Anna Vachudova, Chapel Hill 2011, p. 3.

Accordingly, anti-EU party leaders softened their nationalistic rhetoric and formulated moderate, achievable, and acceptable party goals to make themselves desirable coalition partners.[55] In short, the new conjuncture and political dynamics since 2008 revealed that a coalition partnership between reformists and nationalists was no longer feasible. Public opinion approved Serbia's EU accession process in larger percentages by 58% during and 67% after the 2008 elections. It should be noted that this positive public perception has evolved into anti-European sentiment in recent years.[56]

Table 3: Changes in Serbian Public Opinion for and against EU Membership (each December)
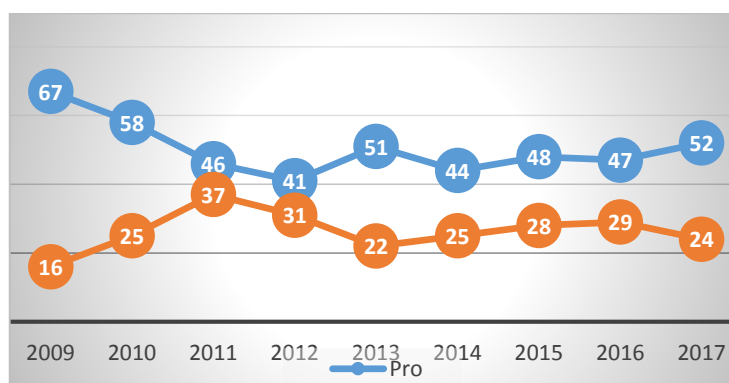
Source: http://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/nacionalna_dokumenta/ istrazivanja_javnog_mnjenja/opinion_poll_december_17.pdf, (29.09.2018), p. 4.

The voters in Serbia view and evaluate political parties more in terms of party leaders, which makes voting behaviour highly correlated with leadership charisma.[57] This leader-centric party politics creates a democratic deficit inside political parties in that candidacy and secure positions are largely dependent on party leaders. The position shifts in SNS and SPS were

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[55] Bandović and Vujači, *op.cit.*, pp. 61-62.

[56] According to recent findings by Balkan Barometer (2018), Serbia owns the region's most sceptical public opinion against EU membership with the lowest level of support for EU accession (29%).

[57] Dušan Pavlović, "Political Parties and the Party System in Serbia after 2000", *Reshaping the Broken Image of Political Parties. Internal Party Democracy in South East Europe*, (ed.) Georgi Karasimeonov, Gorex Press, Sofia 2006, pp. 173-200.

mainly due to the party leadership and a gradual ideological shift.[58] Under the leadership of Milošević and Vojislav Šešelj, some (opposition) groups in SPS and SRS were uncomfortable with nationalist and anti-western rhetoric. However, these groups waited for the appropriate time and conjuncture. Accordingly, the electoral defeats during Šešelj's trial in The Hague pushed nationalist Nikolić and Vučić to form a new party: the SNS.

In 2008, former president Tomislav Nikolić and current president Aleksandar Vučić established SNS as the latest reformist party, following a split within SRS. Both leaders had conflicts with SRS's nationalist leader Šešelj. Nikolic formed a new party called SNS and Vucic joined this party later due to unsolved disagreements. A large majority of party members and voters have aligned with central right wing SNS, enabling it to remain the ruling party since 2012. After SRS lost votes, the newly established SNS concluded that to remain an attractive and strong party, it had to abandon its nationalist line by reframing its old discourse and veto-player position against European reforms.[59] In other words, the reluctance of the founders of SNS to remain in opposition led to the split within the SRS. Therefore, they had no choice to but to adapt the new realities in Serbian politics by giving up nationalistic and anti-Western rhetoric.

Similarly, following the death of Milošević, the change of the leader in SPS led to a position shift in the party. Since its establishment in 1990 by Milošević, the party maintained legislative and executive power in Serbia. However, its authoritarian ruling style ended with the Bulldozer Revolution in 2000. Both its socialist and nationalist discourses and policies had continued during the dissolution of Yugoslavia until 2000, when SPS and its candidate for presidency, Milošević, lost the election. Between 2000 and 2006, a reformist fraction developed, which waited patiently for the right time (specifically, the death of Milošević in 2006) to change the party leader. In December 2006, party delegates elected Ivica Dačić as their new leader. A slow but steady realisation of the previous regime's mistakes and the high cost of this for SPS significantly influenced attitude change in the party.

Through the internal transformation (replacement of the leadership), SPS reshaped its political stance with a new vision for Serbia and adopted a

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[58] Spasojevic, *op.cit.*
[59] Bandović and Vujači, *op.cit.*, p. 61.

pro-EU discourse as a reflection of a shift from socialism to social democracy. Today, the ideological re-positioning remains intact for the SPS while the party seems to be based more on pragmatism than ideology. Today SPS seems to give up ideological orientation as the core of party's politics and now surviving more with tactics and political calculations. Acting as both First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ivica Dačić has highlighted SPS's shift from a socialist position to a more social democratic line while complaining that the party is still living in the past. Due this negative legacy, the party does not get enough electoral support. [60]

Since 2012, when the new SNS-SPS coalition agreed on pro-EU policy directives, the EU agenda has played an important role in their rational approach to foreign policy. Their new way of thinking has helped to end Serbia's isolation and provided an opportunity for Serbia to get rid of its negative image.[61] SNS justifies EU membership as a path to build a new future for Serbia that would be beneficial for all.[62] In parallel with this new vision, SPS's leader and Minister of Foreign Affairs Dačić repeatedly emphasises that lessons have been learned from the mistakes of the past: "We do work hard to help them [new generations] not to repeat the same mistakes we made in the past."[63] Similarly, he declared, "We have paid and continue to pay today a high price for our mistakes, for our sinful ambitions and our crimes",[64] adding, "Serbia is making efforts and is not returning to the past."[65]

As the senior partner in the current government, SNS has experienced a change in position following its leadership change. As the largest group in today's parliament, SNS was able to change their position by splitting from SRS due to a strong leadership and party identity that they failed to transform. The changes in attitude and position of both parties

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[60] http://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/about-the-ministry/minister/minister-interviews/13119-interview-by-ivica-dacic-given-to-politika-ambassadors-must-help, (14.04.2018).

[61] Berta Hegedusova, *Serbia in Transition,* Lund University Department of Political Science, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Supervisor: Annika Bergman-Rosamond, Lund 2013, p. 30.

[62] https://www.sns.org.rs/en/novosti/vesti/vucic-serbia-poised-new-future, (12.04.2018).

[63] http://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/press-service/statements/15499-address-by-minister-dacic-at-the-summit-on-the-western-balkans, (14.04.2018).

[64] http://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/about-the-ministry/minister/minister-interviews/13451-our-job-is-peace-minister-dai-to-nedeljnik-, (14.04.2018).

[65] http://www.dw.com/en/serbia-foreign-minister-ivica-dacic-i-hope-the-eu-will-survive-until-were-ready-to-join/a-19539484, (14.04.2018).

originated from their new rational choices to seek power by gaining the most votes.

4.2. Position Shifts as a Reflection of Identification

DSS helped to shape Serbia's future, particularly after the opposition's 2000 election victory under Koštunica's premiership between 2004 and 2008. As a leading political actor split from DS in 1992, DSS was not against Serbia's accession to the EU in principle in the early phase of their government. However, after the majority of European states recognised Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008, DSS took a hard-Eurosceptic position that prioritized Serbia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. For DSS, EU integration and the Kosovo negotiations were not two separate processes, so the EU would eventually ask Serbia to recognize independent Kosovo for full EU membership.[66] An official party page described this dilemma as follows:

> *Since 2008 the DSS has positioned itself as a staunch defender of the premise that Kosovo should remain within Serbia (in some shape or form) and that further negotiations must take place to determine a workable political outcome regarding Kosovo and Serbia. Because of this approach, DSS is against Serbia joining the EU if in return it is bound to acknowledge the legitimacy of the self-proclaimed independent Kosovo. The party left the European People's Party in February 2012.[67]*

In fact, Euroscepticism was crystalized as DSS's party identity, with the official party page defining Euroscepticism as their ideology. The party decreased its political propaganda on the EU agenda.[68] By identifying itself with Euroscepticism, DSS adopted a strategy of consolidating traditional and nationalist votes. However, both SRS and later the newly established DVERI adopted anti-EU stance while Dosto je Bilo (DJB) preferred a soft-Eurosceptic one that enabled them to become alternative parties for nationalist voters. Consequently, DSS only holds six seats in the current parliament. Considering DSS's traditional position within the process, one

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[66] Dušan Spasojević, "Serbian Political Parties and the Kosovo Question", *Kosovo and Serbia: Contested Options and Shared Consequences*, (eds.) Leandrit I. Mehmeti and Branislav Radeljić, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh 2016, p. 116.
[67] http://www.dss.rs/fact-about-dss/, (18.04.2018).
[68] Ibid.

may frame their moderate-nationalist and non-sceptic position during the early phase of the transition as exceptional. Following the pro-Albanian policies among the Western world, their traditional reflection towards the West/EU re-emerged and crystalized within the party.

Eurosceptic parties (DSS and SRS) including newly established DVERI put forward Eurasianism as a proposal, calling for deepening cooperation with Russia as an alternative to EU membership. Serbians frame the Russian Federation as a natural ally due to a common history, religion and culture, Russian support over Kosovo and trade partnership in the region. Fink-Hafner argues that Serbian's common distrust of the EU as well as their sympathy towards Russia complicates the picture of power struggles in the region.[69]

For nationalist and Eurosceptic SRS, the future of Serbia lies in Eurasia. Their leader, Šešelj calls the current foreign policy orientation absurd and demand for a replacement by full political, economic and military integration with Russia.[70] DSS complains about the negative impact of EU integration towards the relations with Russia, underlying Chapter 30 (External Relations) which will necessitate sanctions against Russia.[71] New Eurosceptic actor DVERI, defines Serbia-Russia relations as "falling in love," and argues that strategic partnership is not far from being realized.[72]

As the pioneer of pro-Europeanism in Serbia, DS developed a strong discourse that presented EU membership as a mission. Its party programme defines EU accession as the main foreign policy priority and encourages good neighbourly relations, such as a Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and international economic cooperation.[73] This new vision of the party for Serbia in world politics and pro-European discourse have remained strongly within DS. Having embraced this mission from Đinđić, President Tadić later described the country's EU membership process as one of the most

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[69] Danica Fink-Hafner, "Europeanization and Party System Mechanics: Comparing Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro", *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans Online*, Volume 10, Number 2, 2008, p. 180.

[70] https://sputniknews.com/politics/201604011037305313-serbia-eu-integration/, (18.04.2018).

[71] http://www.pravda.rs/lat/2017/12/12/jovanovic-poglavlje-30-obavezace-srbiju-da-uvede-sankcijerusiji-video/, (18.04.2018).

[72] https://dveri.rs/clanci/obradovic-iz-moskve-vreme-saradnje-sa-rusijom-tek-dolazi, (20.04.2018).

[73] http://www.ds.org.rs/fajlovi/dokumenta/ds-program.pdf (16.04.2018).

important national interests and main strategic direction. He considered
Serbia's future as being "only in the EU".[74]

The 2012 elections were won by the newly formed SNS while the
governing pro-EU DS lost many votes and became the opposition. Their
negative performance in economy, their slowness and lack of willingness for
institutional reforms and tension between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo
de-legitimized the party among the supporters. However, party leaders
linked this defeat with its over-identification with the EU and unconditional
support for accession. In particular, its discourse and policy regarding "both
the EU and Kosovo" failed to gain wide public support.[75] As a result, DS
now pursues a more cautious, toned down its pro-European stance, with
party members taking account of public opinion and voting patterns: "DS
does not want to participate in manipulating European values at a time when
the EU has the lowest support of citizens since 2000".[76] In the meantime,
DS suffered also from intra-party competitions at leadership level that
caused new splits such as the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in 2005 and
the New Democratic Party (NDS) in 2014.

Meanwhile, the main actors in Serbia's post-Milošević era, DSS and
DS, changed their positions regarding the EU. DSS adopted a Eurosceptic
stance over Kosovo and directed its entire political rhetoric and election
campaigns against the EU. Representing reformist front and presenting the
EU as the most important foreign policy issue, the DS had to soften its pro-
European discourse after starting to act as an opposition party in the
parliament.

4.3. Alternative Explanations: Position Shifts as a Reflection of Internalization

Several studies examining Serbian political parties in terms of
Europeanization argue that due to internalized European norms and values
political elites bring about position changes. According to this approach,
position shifts among political parties in Serbia have dominant normative
and ideational dimensions.

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[74] https://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2011&mm=12&dd=12&nav_id=77743,
(16.04.2018).
[75] Predrag Simić, "Serbia: Continuity and Change after 2012 Elections", *International
Relations Quarterly*, Volume 4, Number 1, 2013, p. 5.
[76] http://www.ds.org.rs/vest/dragan-sutanovac-vratio-nagradu-najevropljanin, (16.04.2018).

According to Atlagić, Serbia's negative image in world affairs has enabled post-Milošević elites to instrumentalize EU membership as the path to a Euro-Atlantic world that necessitates shifts in values and identity.[77] Considering identity transformation, Vachudova argues that political competition in Serbia has shifted away from nationalism towards a larger consensus on joining the EU,[78] with Serbia's political elites providing both value-based and identity-related justifications for their new positions. In advocating EU integration, they emphasize geographical closeness, value systems, shared history and traditions, and mutual fate.[79] SNS's party programme, for instance, defines the party as a state-building political force with a peaceful foreign policy based on the principle of Serbia's EU membership.[80]

Some scholars argue that Serbian identity was transformed and redefined in relation to internalization. For instance, the lyrics of Serbia's song, "New Face", performed in the Eurovision Song Contest in 2007, was seen as a symbol of (re)creating an identity, recycling memory and imagined tradition, but also referencing European cultural, media, and political spheres.[81] The introduction of a new national calendar in 2011 by the DS-led government was portrayed as aiming to meet both Europe's expectations and further Serbia's interest in joining the EU.[82]

Internalization elements partially appear within the discourses of the current government's partners, SNS and SPS, after their gradual position shifts. Claiming that EU integration is a peace and stability project, SPS describes the EU's Western Balkans enlargement as follows: "The EU, as the greatest peace project in modern history, cannot be considered complete without the Balkan region, which is its integral part geographically,

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[77] Siniša Atlagić, "International Positioning of Serbia in the Era of Pax Americana", *Serbian Political Thought*, Volume 11, Number 1, 2015, pp. 27-37.

[78] Milada Anna Vachudova, "Party Positions, EU Leverage and Democratic Backsliding in the Western Balkans and Beyond", *Conference: Rejected Europe, Beloved Europe, Cleavage Europe?*, European University Institute, May 2017.

[79] Bandović and Vujači, *op.cit.*, p. 57.

[80] https://www.sns.org.rs/lat/o-nama/program-sns, (12.04.2018).

[81] Marijana Mitrović, "'New Face of Serbia' at the Eurovision Song Contest: International Media Spectacle and National Identity", *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'histoire*, Volume 17, Number 2, 2010, pp. 171-185.

[82] Lea David, "Impression Management of a Contested Past: Serbia's Evolving National Calendar", *Memory Studies*, Volume 7, Number 4, 2014, pp. 472-483.

historically, politically and, above all, in terms of shared values and culture."[83] Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dačić argues that Serbia is a stabilizing force in the region. He states that Serbian leadership is committed to peace and regional stability and working for the continuation of reconciliation.[84] Serbia's bid for EU membership is legitimized by SNS, arguing that Serbia's European path is not only promoted because of money but also because of a system of values.[85] It is promoted since a change in mind-sets and habits was needed for Serbians to improve their quality of life.[86]

Referring to a common history and shared geography, position shifts are legitimized by an over-emphasis on the fit between Serbian and European identity. However, a similar observation cannot be made regarding the internalization of European norms and values since examination of value systems and political parties show that there has only been a limited pattern of Europeanization of party politics in Serbia.[87] Lazić concludes that Serbia's political and economic elites have not adopted liberal values as a clearly dominant framework.[88] Similarly, Serbia's local political elites are insufficiently open to the aspirations, ideas, and experiences of others.[89] According to Orlović, Europeanization of Serbia's parties and its party system is far more limited than that in other countries in the region.[90]

Thus, it is possible to develop a causal explanation through internalization with a focus particularly on discourse, although elite socialization remains limited in the Serbian case. In other words, Serbia is a case in which national elites acquire only the discourse of socialization with

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[83] http://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/component/content/article/16667-dacic-qthe-european-union-is-not-complete-without-the-balkan-regionq, (14.04.2018).

[84] http://www.dw.com/en/serbia-foreign-minister-ivica-dacic-i-hope-theeu-will-survive-until-were-ready-to-join/a-19539484, (14.04.2018).

[85] http://www.srbija.gov.rs/vesti/vest.php?id=125956, (12.04.2018).

[86] https://www.sns.org.rs/en/novosti/vesti/monocle-interview-aleksandar-vucic, (12.04.2018).

[87] Slaviša Orlović, "Parties and the Party System of Serbia and European Integrations", *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans Online*, Volume 10, Number 2, 2008, pp. 205-222.

[88] Lazić, *op.cit*., pp. 67-83.

[89] Vladimir Vuletić, "Between the National Past and (an) European Future", *Sociologija*, Volume 45, Number 3, 2003, pp. 217-236.

[90] Slaviša Orlović, "Europeanisation and Democratisation of Parties and Party System of Serbia", *Politics in Central Europe*, Volume 3, Number 1-2, 2007, pp. 92-104.

the EU via referring to sharing identity and European norms and values. However, it is quite rare to observe the implementation of this discourse in behaviours and decisions as an example of political inappropriateness. While references to identity through geography and history remain intense, it is not easy to establish an intimate relationship between position shifts and internalization of European norms and values, given Serbia's slow and challenging accession process.

Concluding Remarks

In 2000, Milošević called for early elections, which ultimately led to his own demise. Despite his party's control of the state apparatus, he was defeated in the first round of elections after opposition groups, for the first time, allied against him and entered the elections with a common nomination to create a new era in Serbian party politics. Consequently, the type of regime, the mode of transition, and the historical legacies all became subjects that were discussed in election campaigns. However, the old elites were unable to agree on the future direction of the country or the fundamental norms and values for the new regime.

Serbia continued its post-communist and post-conflict transition under the shadow of various historical legacies. Serbia's history enriched with nationalism has produced and re-produced obstacles and challenges that caused fluctuating progress in the early years. Victimhood legacy is still significant for nationalist groups who support the status quo, with their Eurosceptic position. For the pan-European reformist elites, acceptance of Kosovo and cooperation with the ICTY have emerged as two high-cost pre-conditions imposed by the EU.

Despite the heavy legacy of the past, the costs of the process, and the existence of influential veto players, reformists have met the pre-conditions for accession that began in 2013 within this new conjuncture. 2008, known as the longest year in Belgrade, ended more beneficially for the reformists as their election victories were perceived as representing a referendum on EU membership. The faction established between 2000 and 2008 following the Bulldozer Revolution evolved over time in favour of pro-Europeanism due to position changes among Serbia's mainstream parties. The previous leading parties, DS (toned down its pro-European rhetoric) and DSS (from soft-Euroscepticism to hard-Euroscepticism),

engaged in attitude change and position shifts away from the EU agenda. Meanwhile, the current coalition government partners, SNS and SPS have moved away from their previous nationalist line since the 2012 elections to adopt a more moderate pro-European position.

Based on the model proposed by Kelman, this study analysed position changes among the leading political parties in Serbia after the 2012 elections. It problematised the causes of these position shifts through the mechanisms of compliance, identification, and internalization. Since Europeanization has had a minimal impact on Serbian political parties, it is difficult to justify these changes through internalization of the EU mechanism. Political parties have experienced position shifts within domestic politics in response to new opportunities and obstacles. Therefore, compliance and identification reveal more explicit causal links in this case study whereas identification offers stronger explanatory power for analysing position changes in DS and DSS. As one of the leading actors in the transition years, DSS maintained its anti-EU position to continue its nationalist and traditional approach. Since 2008, following the recognition of Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence by most EU members, DSS' Eurosceptic stance has become part of the party identity. DS, which represents the moderate and reformist voters, had to soften its unconditional and enthusiastic support for EU membership as an opposition party after the defeats in the elections.

Serbian domestic dynamics and political competition in Belgrade have led to the position shifts by SNS and SPS. Despite their dissenting attitudes and new political views against the party programme and leadership enriched with old discourse and far-right position, intra-party opposition groups were silent in the shadow of their former leaders and waited for the appropriate time. The founders of SNS left SRS when their leader, Šešelj, was in The Hague. Meanwhile Milošević's death allowed a position shift in SPS through the leadership change. These position changes were shaped by the 2008 election results, in parallel with the factor of compliance as a political tactic. In order to respond to changing voting patterns in Serbia and gain more votes to become a ruling coalition partner in the government, these two parties adopted a pro-European discourse with their new moderate stance.

Although both parties have included elements of internalization within their discourse after rising to power, their references at this point

were limited only to the identity dimension. It is difficult to make a correlation between position change and the internalization of European norms and values. Thus, Serbia has not reached the desired level of economic and political liberalization in its accession negotiations, which leaves the issue of internalization in effectual.

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