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**European Union accession conditionality and norm transfer:  
foreign policy alignment in the Western Balkans**

MA thesis

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I have written this Master's thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors,  
literary sources and data used for writing this thesis have been referenced.

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## Abstract

This Master's thesis focuses on European Union's accession conditionality in the Western Balkans countries in relation to their foreign policy alignment after the Ukrainian crisis and the annexation of Crimea in March 2014. More specifically, it analyses the alignment of current official and potential candidate states with sanctions on Russia. The alignment of enlargement countries is necessary for both the candidate countries if they intend to become members as well as for the EU itself as the former need to fully adopt all *acquis* and the latter needs to preserve its capability to “speak in a single voice” and continue promoting its values abroad. The main aim of the thesis is to ascertain whether EU's conditionality is credible for current enlargement countries. As foreign policy alignment is part of non-negotiable criteria for accession, the extent of alignment and the reasons why these states have aligned or not aligned with sanctions on Russia is analysed. In doing so, the focus is on the normative basis of policy positions and the role of EU values in the statements of government representatives.

The thesis firstly elaborates on the importance of enlargement, foreign policy alignment and norm transfer, and then moves on to analyse whether the EU puts pressure on candidate states to align, and how government officials publicly respond to this pressure. Secondly, the thesis moves on to analyse the substance of the explanations of Western Balkan government representatives and the possible variety of domestic actors who might be interested in promoting an alternative foreign policy agenda. Results show that most non-aligning Western Balkan states refuse to join sanctions due to their rational interests and/or close relations with Russia. Furthermore, there are also countries that already align, but have joined EU sanctions partly due to their own self-interest. All in all, research shows that even though the EU is a union based on certain norms and values, there is little to prove that its norms have been internalised by enlargement countries. Therefore, if the intention would be to speed up the enlargement process and ensure future unity, more attention needs to be given to the normative basis of EU foreign policy.

**Keywords:** EU enlargement, conditionality, Western Balkans, foreign policy, sanctions

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## Introduction

Enlargement is seen as the most successful part of European Union's foreign policy. In 2012, the European Union (EU) received the Nobel Peace Prize for its role in promoting peace, stability, prosperity and democracy in the region. The joint statement by the European Commission and European Council presidents noted that “this Prize is the strongest possible recognition of the deep political motives behind our Union: the unique effort by ever more European states to overcome war and divisions and to jointly shape a continent of peace and prosperity.<sup>1</sup>” While this prize was awarded in relation to the 2004 and 2007 enlargement rounds to Central and Eastern European countries, there are many other states in Europe which need support from the union in order to stabilise their domestic and regional politics. Therefore, being part of the Western value space and internalising norms that the EU is built upon is vital in ensuring a prosperous future for many neighbouring states, not least the Western Balkans that are next in line for EU membership.

In 2017, the EU is still committed to enlargement policy and offers a credible membership perspective to six Western Balkan states, while reminding that progress in negotiations mainly depends on the “homework” done by candidate countries themselves. As the EU focuses on the successes and failures of a candidate's own domestic reform agenda, it also allows distancing itself when progress slows down. Furthermore, due to the limited absorption capacity and low public support for EU enlargement in current member states, the union is not actively demanding that candidate states align with all *acquis* as soon as possible, but rather when they are ready. While Turkey is also an official candidate state, the internal developments in 2016 and 2017 have limited its perspective to continue integration into European structures and value space. Therefore, due to the setbacks in Turkey this thesis focuses on the six official and potential candidate states in the Western Balkans that have all voiced their intention to become member states and their willingness to align with policies in order to achieve membership as soon as possible.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Joint statement of José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, and Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council on the award of the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize to the EU', European Commission, 12 October 2012 <[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-12-779\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-12-779_en.htm)> [accessed 9 May 2017]

As the criteria for membership are extensive and it is not possible to compare and contrast all aspects of the enlargement policy, this thesis focuses on Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), i.e. Chapter 31 of the *acquis*. The relevant membership conditions set by the EU designate that candidate states are expected to progressively align with its foreign policy declarations, decisions and positions during the negotiation process, and fully align with all aspects of the CFSP, including restrictive measures, before they would join the European Union. While this thesis demonstrates that foreign policy alignment was not a problem before the Ukrainian crisis in 2014, alignment has visibly decreased in some states. In general, half of the Western Balkan official or potential candidate states are not willing to align with EU CFSP in relation to sanctions against Russia which were put in place in 2014, and this could develop into an important obstacle on their integration paths.

Since the European Union intends to continue with enlargement policy and direct reforms in these six Western Balkan states with the aim of stabilising the continent like it did with the CEE enlargement round, it needs to ensure its conditionality is credible for candidate states. If the Western Balkan states interpret the lack of pressure from the EU as an indication that their national interest could influence the unity of the EU foreign policy and in certain circumstances their non-alignment would be acceptable, there is little hope to “speak in a single voice” in EU foreign policy in the future. In addition, non-alignment would give the current EU countries a legitimate reason not to accept further enlargement in the near future or postpone it indefinitely.

This Master's thesis aims to analyse why some Western Balkan countries have chosen to fully align with EU CFSP and some have not. As alignment requires that candidate states are able to put their individual economic and other interests aside in order to show solidarity with the EU, their priorities and values are mirrored in the decision to align with CFSP. Analysing the reasons behind foreign policy choices is particularly important as it enables to understand whether candidates see EU conditionality as credible and whether their reasons for not aligning could be altered by pressure from the EU. Therefore, comparing these explanations allows understanding whether compliance is genuine or if it might be imposed on the candidate states. Imposed compliance,

however, could result in volatile alignment or non-alignment in issues where the policy positions of candidate states are a misfit with current EU positions.

The thesis also includes a comparison of the ethnic composition of each state and general public support for EU membership as these divisions are seen as the main dividing lines among the Western Balkan populations, and therefore also of their political representatives. Ethnicity continues to be an important factor that the political structure in these societies is based on first and foremost due to ethnic conflicts many of these countries survived after the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Including this factor is important as it increases our knowledge of the presence of domestic actors who might not agree with the foreign policy agenda of the current governments and might be interested in pushing for an alternative approach. Possible agenda shifts may take place both in countries that already align with EU CFSP as well as in countries that have refused to align with EU policy when it comes to restrictive measures against Russia. What concerns the aims of the union, it is necessary to understand whether EU high officials need to give more attention to the Western Balkan countries where domestic actors might seek policy shifts.

Several authors have written about the long-lasting effects of norms and more specifically, they have argued that the EU should focus on changing the values and norms in a society as norms are more effective in the long term.<sup>2</sup> While it is possible to agree to this theory in principle, it needs to be studied whether this process of norm transfer is actually taking place in the Western Balkans. The EU's foreign policy agenda which is generally based on norms and values is one of the most telling policy areas in order to test this theory. Therefore, this thesis presents the current progress of the EU in transferring its norms in foreign policy to the agendas of its candidate states that should be the most interested in aligning with EU policies due to their intention of joining the union.

The research question this thesis aims to answer is: *which factors influence CFSP alignment in the Western Balkan countries concerning Russia-related foreign policy positions?* While it would be effective in the long term if the candidate states understand

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<sup>2</sup> Nikola Tomić, 'When the carrot is not sweet enough. Conditionality versus norms as modes of EU influence on Serbia's foreign policy', *Südosteuropäische Hefte*, 2.1, (2013), 77-106

and internalise the values and norms respected by current EU member states, it is not clear whether the union has managed to explain to its candidates that these norms are not negotiable and full alignment is mandatory. In order to answer the research question, the thesis will include a country-specific analysis of the statements of Western Balkan countries' governments in relation to EU sanctions against Russia. Data is collected from both official government websites as well as media outlets in order to analyse the links between the official position to align or not to align and the underlying reasons why policy change would be too costly for certain countries in the region.

The first chapter of the thesis focuses on explaining the change in accession conditionality in order to better understand why full alignment is necessary. In addition, it is also explained why the EU is still committed to the Western Balkan enlargement, why this is vital for the region and why has this part of Europe received more attention recently. The second chapter gives an overview of how EU enlargement has been studied and what are the developments in this field of research. Furthermore, the chapter explains the different approaches how to induce change in candidate states, including through conditionality which often focuses on rational cost-benefit calculation, as well as socialisation and norms transfer which are seen as vital for producing truly long-lasting and genuine alignment. The third chapter focuses on the method used in this thesis to answer the research question and test the hypotheses, as well as describes the limitations using this method and data produces. The fourth chapter presents the alignment records of current potential and official candidate states, an analysis of the pressure from EU high officials to align and the overall legitimacy of EU conditions and the ethnic composition and public support for EU membership. The chapter then presents a country-specific analysis of the explanations for alignment and non-alignment. The last chapter of this thesis compares the six countries in question, and is followed by concluding remarks from the author.



# 1. Development of European Union accession criteria

Conditionality has become an inseparable part of cooperating with the European Union as an organisation built on respecting certain norms and values would not seem legitimate if it ignored these values in its external relations. Therefore, conditionality is an important part of both agreements with enlargement countries as well as with other third states. Even though conditions vary across countries and types of agreements, there is a clear tendency from the EU to set stricter and more ambitious cooperation terms over time and where needed. The most all-encompassing conditions are set to potential member states of the European Union. While the precursors of the European Union, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the European Economic Community (EEC) indicated that potential members could only be those countries that are European: “any European State may request to accede to the present Treaty,<sup>3</sup>” the terms are certainly not that modest anymore. The conditions of membership have developed into a collection of remarkably detailed requirements that need to be fulfilled before a country can even start its accession negotiations.

While it is true that the condition of being “European” ruled out membership for many, it still left the door open for most countries in the region which realised the benefits of cross-border cooperation and aspired to join the union. After successive enlargement rounds that took place every following decade from the creation of the EU, the territory of the union had spread out to Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries and as a result raised hopes in additional countries that indicated their wish to become possible candidates. Therefore, every enlargement round brought the EU's borders closer to more countries in the region, but in parallel the EU also included more conditions which needed to be fulfilled before membership was possible or to be even considered.

The European Union started applying political conditions to third states mainly in the end of 1980s with the fourth Lomé Convention (1989) which linked development aid with human rights, rule of law and democracy. When these norms and values were not respected to a sufficient extent, the EU threatened to recommend restrictive measures

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<sup>3</sup> Art. 98, Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community, 11951K/TXT, *EUR-Lex*, 1951; Art. 237, Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, 11957E/TXT, *EUR-Lex*, 1957

(notably suspending aid).<sup>4</sup> In 1992, the EU included the promotion of its values in the common provisions of the Maastricht Treaty which established the political union now known as the European Union. The provisions stated that in relation to development cooperation the “community policy in this area shall contribute to the general objective of developing and consolidating democracy and the rule of law, and to that of respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms.”<sup>5</sup> What concerns candidate states, a year later, during the 1993 Copenhagen European Council, the Copenhagen criteria were put in place in order to raise clarity concerning what EU membership is about and who would be eligible to join. The criteria established conditions which candidate states must conform to and the following principles are still guiding the union's enlargement policy:

1. stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;
2. a functioning market economy and the ability to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU;
3. ability to take on the obligations of membership, including the capacity to effectively implement the rules, standards and policies that make up the body of EU law (the '*acquis*'), and adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.<sup>6</sup>

These conditions have a dual purpose. While they serve the interests of the current member states by ensuring that new members would not obstruct the ongoing integration process (i.e. ensure EU absorption capacity is taken into account), these conditions also act as guidelines for aspiring members on their reform paths.<sup>7</sup> The Treaty of Amsterdam which came into force in 1999 further confirmed norms that the EU is founded upon: “the Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, principles which are common to the Member states.”<sup>8</sup> With the Lisbon Treaty, member states not

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<sup>4</sup> Véronique Dimier, 'Constructing Conditionality: The Bureaucratization of Development Aid', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 11.2, (2006), 263-280

<sup>5</sup> Art. 130u, Treaty on European Union, OJ C 191, *EUR-Lex*, 1992

<sup>6</sup> Accession criteria (Copenhagen criteria), *EUR-Lex* <[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/accesion\\_criteria\\_copenhagen.html](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/accesion_criteria_copenhagen.html)> [accessed 22 January 2017]

<sup>7</sup> Heather Grabbe, 'European Union Conditionality and the *Acquis Communautaire*', *International Political Science Review*, 23.3, (2002), 249-268 (p. 252)

<sup>8</sup> Art. 6, Treaty of Amsterdam, OJ C 340, *EUR-Lex*, 1997

only reaffirmed their commitment to upholding these norms and values set in the treaties, but conditioned any candidate state to actively promote them: “any European State which respects the values referred to in Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, the EU expects its member states to actively export these values and in doing so become active supporters and developers of EU foreign policy.

Even though the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) remains in the exclusive competence of the member states, the Lisbon Treaty indicates that “Member States shall support the Union's external and security policy actively and unreservedly in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity and shall comply with the Union's action in this area.”<sup>10</sup> These actions include the general guidelines as well as decisions, actions and positions taken by the union.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, member states are asked to “ensure, through the convergence of their actions, that the Union is able to assert its interests and values on the international scene. Member States shall show mutual solidarity.”<sup>12</sup> Whereas all these articles refer to countries that are already members of the European Union, it needs to be taken into account that it would speak in favour of the candidate states if they show solidarity even before they are able to join the EU. If and when a candidate state does not align with CFSP, the accession process will most likely be postponed until commitment to EU norms and values is displayed. What is more, as the accession process advances, candidates are expected to show commitment to promote EU values outside their borders as well if they wish to move forward with integration.

The EU's commitment to continue with its enlargement policy in the Balkans was confirmed during the 2000 European Council meeting in Feira, Portugal when member states adopted Presidency conclusions. These conclusions also stated that

“its [EC's] objective remains the fullest possible integration of the countries of the region into the political and economic mainstream of Europe through the Stabilisation and Association process, political dialogue, liberalisation of trade and cooperation in Justice

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<sup>9</sup> Art. 49, Treaty on European union (Consolidated version 2016), OJ C 202, *EUR-Lex*, 2016

<sup>10</sup> Art. 24, Treaty on European union (Consolidated version 2016), OJ C 202, *EUR-Lex*, 2016

<sup>11</sup> Art. 25, Treaty on European union (Consolidated version 2016), OJ C 202, *EUR-Lex*, 2016

<sup>12</sup> Art. 32, Treaty on European union (Consolidated version 2016), OJ C 202, *EUR-Lex*, 2016

and Home Affairs. All the countries concerned are potential candidates for EU membership.<sup>13</sup>”

Following the European Council meeting in Feira, the first EU – Western Balkans Summit was held in Zagreb at the end of the year. During this summit, EU reaffirmed its commitment and declared it would continue supporting the Western Balkan states in their individual paths towards democratic institutions, reforms, good neighbourly relations and cooperation.<sup>14</sup> The next meeting that took place jointly with the Western Balkan (WB) states was held in Thessaloniki in 2003 and is seen as one of the most important summits for the then potential candidate states as 'the Thessaloniki agenda for the Western Balkans: Moving towards European Integration' was adopted. This document laid out more clearly the methods the EU intends use to support these countries' European integration (including by financial means) and it also set priority fields where each aspiring member state needed to reform. What is more, the 2003 Thessaloniki Summit declaration did not just include political support for democratic and economic reforms, but envisaged possible future membership that would require cooperating in other policy fields as well. The potential candidate states also agreed to enhance cooperation in the EU's CFSP area:

“The Western Balkan countries welcome the decisions by the EU to strengthen its Stabilisation and Association policy towards the region and to enrich it with elements from the experience of enlargement. They welcome in particular the launching of the European Partnerships, as well as the decisions for enhanced co-operation in the areas of political dialogue and the Common Foreign and Security Policy, parliamentary co-operation, support for institution building, opening of Community programmes.<sup>15</sup>”

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<sup>13</sup> Santa Maria da Feira European Council Conclusions of the Presidency, *European Parliament*, 19-20 June 2000 <[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/fei1\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/fei1_en.htm)> [accessed 27 April 2017]

<sup>14</sup> Zagreb Summit Declaration, *European Commission*, 24 November 2000 <<http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/bridges/bosnia/ZagrebSummit24Nov2000.pdf>> [accessed 27 April 2017]

<sup>15</sup> EU-Western Balkans Summit, *European Commission*, 21 June 2003 <[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_PRES-03-163\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_PRES-03-163_en.htm)> [accessed 27 April 2017]

The following years saw EU's commitment being confirmed numerous times while the European Commission negotiated and concluded SAAs with the enlargement states in the region. Despite these efforts, however, the success rate in the Western Balkan states remained visibly different in comparison. Croatia was the first country in the region that managed to align its policies with the EU and fulfil the accession criteria to become a member state in 2013, raising hopes in other states as well. However, others have been much slower in aligning with EU policies.

Currently, the EU has brought the Western Balkans firmly back on the agenda of the union. During the celebration of 60 years from the signing of the Rome Treaty, member states of the EU confirmed in the Rome Declaration that the union is still committed to enlargement: “We want a Union which remains open to those European countries that respect our values and are committed to promoting them.”<sup>16</sup> This declaration was complemented by high level visits to the WB countries, including the visit of High Representative Mogherini in March when she met with leaders from all six countries. Ahead of the visits she confirmed that “the European Union will not be complete as long as this region at the heart of Europe is not united, as part of our community.”<sup>17</sup>

What concerns foreign policy, however, there are candidate states and potential candidates that have aligned with CFSP for years, but there are also countries where alignment has decreased. The alignment record which started to decrease in some Western Balkan countries from 2014 is closely tied with the Ukrainian crisis and the annexation of Crimea. Following these events, some enlargement countries opted to show support to Ukraine and the EU, but some insisted on military neutrality and/or made their case by claiming to suffer remarkable negative economic consequences or disadvantages in other bilateral issues if they would be forced to align. Generally, even though the Western Balkan countries confirm that their long-term policy goal is to join the EU, not all are ready to choose between the EU and Russia when it comes to foreign policy. Instead, they prefer maintaining sufficiently good relations with both.

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<sup>16</sup> The Rome Declaration, *European Council*, 25 March 2017 <<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/03/25-rome-declaration>> [accessed 24 April 2017]

<sup>17</sup> Federica Mogherini, 'Leading the Western Balkans inside the European Union', *European External Action Service*, 1 March 2017 <[https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage\\_en/21705/%22Leading%20the%20Western%20Balkans%20inside%20the%20European%20U](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/21705/%22Leading%20the%20Western%20Balkans%20inside%20the%20European%20Union%22%20Federica%20Mogherini)  
[nion%22%20Federica%20Mogherini](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/21705/%22Leading%20the%20Western%20Balkans%20inside%20the%20European%20U)> [accessed 6 May 2017]

## 2. Effecting change in enlargement countries

Large part of the literature on EU enlargement in the Western Balkans focuses on the reasons why the current enlargement strategy does not work in this region the same way it did in CEE (see Schimmelfennig and Scholtz, 2010 on the effect of the historical perspective on EU conditionality<sup>18</sup>; Tzifakis, 2012 on the causes of EU policy failure in Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>19</sup>; Belloni, 2016 on Euroscepticism in the WB<sup>20</sup>; Schwarz, 2016 on factors that shape the enlargement process in South-Eastern Europe<sup>21</sup>; Bieber, 2011 on state-building strategies in WB<sup>22</sup>). Despite the differences between these two enlargement rounds, there are also many similarities as the governing elites in CEE countries and in the Western Balkans are or were generally in favour of their country joining the EU. Furthermore, even if candidate states are not always successful in reforming their countries, the efforts are being made and are more or less visible. Therefore, it would be rational to assume that in areas where countries have already achieved alignment, they would continue on that path to ensure current EU members recognise their commitment and efforts to join. As membership conditions are non-negotiable, there should also be no doubt as to which parts of the *acquis* are more important – they are all intended to be fully aligned with.

The European Union has set criteria for membership which seems straightforward as the end goal would be a candidate state that is democratic, has a stable market economy and has adopted the *acquis* in full. As agreed by many, however, there are possibilities to interpret this criteria in so many different ways that scholars struggle with researching EU conditionality, and the representatives of candidate states that need to fulfil the criteria are puzzled by what exactly the end result should look like. This in turn raises doubts as to whether fulfilling the technical criteria leads to membership or is the decision mainly political. Political scientist Heather Grabbe who is also the former

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<sup>18</sup> Frank Schimmelfennig and Hanno Scholtz, 'Legacies and Leverage: EU Political Conditionality and Democracy Promotion in Historical Perspective', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 62.3, (2010), 443-460

<sup>19</sup> Nikolaos Tzifakis, 'Bosnia's Slow Europeanisation', *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 13.2, (2012), 131-148

<sup>20</sup> Roberto Belloni, (2016) 'The European Union Blowback? Euroscepticism and its Consequences in the Western Balkans', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, published online, (2016), 1-18

<sup>21</sup> Oliver Schwarz, 'Two steps forward one step back: what shapes the process of EU enlargement in South-Eastern Europe?', *Journal of European Integration*, 38.7, (2016), 757-773

<sup>22</sup> Florian Bieber, 'Building Impossible States? State-building Strategies and EU Membership in the Western Balkans', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 63.10, (2011), 1783-1802

senior advisor to then European Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn, explains in her research on EU conditionality that “readiness to join” largely lies in the eye of the beholder as even the current member states use different means to achieve compatibility with EU standards:

“Do new member states need a German economy, British civil service, Swedish welfare state, and French electoral system? Or how about a Greek economy, Belgian civil service, Austrian industrial relations, and Italian electoral system? The European Union does not present a uniform model of democracy or capitalism, and neither has it tried to define one. Diversity is a key feature of the Union, and the principle of integration while respecting difference remains important.”<sup>23</sup>

Fulfilling the conditions of membership is not an easy task and the strategy that works in one country might produce different outcomes in another. In general, conditionality can be seen as a mode of influence whereby external incentives are used to induce change through offering certain rewards in exchange for preferred policy positions or reforms.<sup>24</sup> According to this logic, change is always more easily achievable if there are material benefits or rewards that the target country would receive in return. In the case of EU enlargement, the ultimate reward is membership of the European Union, but there are also several other benchmarks that help convince member states that the end goal is achievable and the membership offer is credible.

In the following chapter, an overview of current research on EU membership conditionality is presented. Namely, the purpose is to identify factors that help ensure compliance and to ascertain how patterns of norm transfer and adoption differ from one another. The thesis will firstly focus on defining the concept of conditionality and exemplifying how this concept has been used thus far in literature. Secondly, the thesis discusses different methods how scholars have studied conditionality both in CEE and ongoing enlargement processes and thirdly, the thesis will turn to EU Common Foreign

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<sup>23</sup> Grabbe, p. 250

<sup>24</sup> Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier, 'Governance by Conditionality: EU Rule Transfer to the candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 11.4, (2004), 661-679

and Security Policy and research on sanctions in general in order to explain the normative implications behind aligning with restrictive measures. The chapter then concludes with an insight on how to answer the research question and shed light on the Western Balkan enlargement in relation to CFSP alignment by using existing research frameworks and concepts.

## 2.1 EU membership conditionality and norm transfer

Scholars have written numerous books and articles on EU conditionality and the compliance patterns of member states. Particularly, there are countless articles written on the success of the 2004 and the 2007 enlargement to CEE states (see Grabbe, 2002<sup>25</sup>; Haughton, 2007<sup>26</sup>; Pop-Eleches, 2007<sup>27</sup>; Sasse, 2011<sup>28</sup>; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2004<sup>29</sup>). Over time, studies on conditionality and enlargement have expanded to include the current candidate and/or potential candidate states (e.g. see Bieber, 2012<sup>30</sup>; Schimmelfennig, 2011<sup>31</sup>; Anastasakis, 2008<sup>32</sup>; Freyburg and Richter, 2010<sup>33</sup>) and even third states which have no immediate prospect of joining the European Union, but nevertheless display a pattern of compliance (see Burlyuk and Shapovalova, 2017<sup>34</sup>; Buşcaneanu, 2015<sup>35</sup>). However, research shows that there are different reform processes at work in different countries and the effect of EU conditionality varies across time, states and policy areas where EU is able to influence domestic reforms or policy positions.

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<sup>25</sup> Grabbe, p. 250

<sup>26</sup> Tim Haughton, 'When does the EU Make a Difference? Conditionality and the Accession Process in Central and Eastern Europe', *Political Studies Review*, 5.2, (2007), 233-246

<sup>27</sup> Grigore Pop-Eleches, 'Between Historical Legacies and the Promise of Western Integration: Democratic Conditionality after Communism', *East European Politics and Societies*, 21.1, (2007), 142–161

<sup>28</sup> Gwendolyn Sasse, 'The Politics of EU Conditionality: the Norm of Minority Protection during and beyond EU Accession', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 15.6, (2011), 842-860

<sup>29</sup> Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, pp. 661-679

<sup>30</sup> *EU Conditionality in the Western Balkans*, ed. by Florian Bieber (London: Routledge, 2012)

<sup>31</sup> Frank Schimmelfennig, 'EU Political Accession Conditionality After the 2004 Enlargement: Consistency and Effectiveness', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 15.6, (2011), 918-937

<sup>32</sup> Othon Anastasakis, 'The EU's Political Conditionality in the Western Balkans: Towards a More Pragmatic Approach', *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 8.4, (2008), 365-377

<sup>33</sup> Tina Freyburg and Solveig Richter, 'National Identity Matters: the Limited Impact of EU Political Conditionality in the Western Balkans', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 17.2, (2010), 263-281

<sup>34</sup> Olga Burlyuk and Natalia Shapovalova, 'Veni, vidi, ... vici?' EU Performance and Two Faces of Conditionality towards Ukraine', *East European Politics*, 33.1, (2017), 36-55

<sup>35</sup> Sergiu Buşcaneanu, 'EU Democracy Promotion in Eastern ENP Countries', *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, 29.1, (2015), 248-286



The compliance of non-member states with EU policies may have several reasons, but the most often stated one is definitely the prospect of joining the EU in the future which is desirable for many reasons. One of the most clearly advocated one is the possibility to participate in the single market as it is anticipated that access to a market with 500 million potential consumers, clear standards and non-discrimination would bring economic growth, prosperity and stability to their citizens. Other reasons for accepting EU conditionality include the “returning to Europe” discourse that was dominant during the 2004 and 2007 enlargement rounds. Returning to or being part of Europe is also relevant when talking about the ongoing enlargement to Western Balkans.

It is necessary to remember that EU membership would bring clear benefits, but there are also policies that are a clear mismatch with candidate states' current positions and therefore are not acceptable to some domestic actors. Whereas there was room for compromise during the earlier enlargement rounds in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it became obvious with the 2004 and 2007 enlargements that accession criteria of the EU are non-negotiable. Therefore, even though there are member states that managed to acquire opt-outs during the 1990s and early 2000s, aspiring states now need to adopt all *acquis* and conform to all policies and requirements that old member states have agreed to in the past. What is more, when taking into account enlargement fatigue and low popular support for enlargement in old member states, it is not surprising that current enlargement states of the Western Balkans would not receive any freedom to “cherry-pick” suitable policies and parts of *acquis*. Therefore, the EU needs to have various strategies to influence change in many different areas and especially where there is deep reluctance to reform.

Noutcheva argues in her book on European foreign policy and the Balkan challenges to accession that the compliance pattern of the government policies of these countries should be researched by focusing on three main factors. Namely, the perceived legitimacy of EU conditionality as seen by domestic actors, the costs of compliance and the ability and/or willingness of EU to use its powers to impose compliance when necessary.<sup>36</sup> The author subsequently claims that in countries where legitimacy is perceived high, compliance is substantial, even though it may take time to manifest. The

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<sup>36</sup> Gergana Noutcheva, *European Foreign Policy and the Challenges of Balkan Accession: Conditionality, Legitimacy and Compliance* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 5-6

final decision to comply is assumed due to the existence of strong societal actors that pressure the government to take up reforms by exposing possible weaknesses and failures to act by the government. Over time, the government is bound to moderate its position and through the accumulation of reforms the country aligns with more and more EU policies.

When legitimacy is perceived to be low, there are two possible outcomes which depend on the costs of compliance as they become decisive for domestic actors. In countries where actors perceive that complying could serve their interests, compliance takes place, but is often partial or volatile, and as there are no domestic actors that would pressure reforms on the basis of the legitimacy of EU norms, this decision is ultimately based on rational cost-benefit calculation. Therefore, compliance is lacking in states where the legitimacy of EU conditionality is perceived as low and the costs of internalising norms or reforming policies is seen as too high. In the latter situation, the only way the EU is able to exert pressure to reform is by resorting to coercive power, but this usually leads to imposed or fake compliance with a high risk of domestic actors seeking to reverse the compliance trend due to its inappropriateness.<sup>37</sup> Overall, there are four types of compliance – genuine/substantial, partial/volatile, imposed compliance which has a high possibility of reversed compliance and non-compliance.<sup>38</sup>

This logic is in essence similar to the argument forwarded by Börzel and Risse in their paper on European integration and the top-down Europeanization of member states. The authors aim to review the literature on the EU's effect on domestic policies, politics and polities in order to get a clearer sense of the situation when Europeanization could bring about domestic change.<sup>39</sup> In order for one to expect domestic reforms due to Europeanization, change needs to be inconvenient, or as Börzel and Risse put it: “there must be some degree of “misfit” or incompatibility between European-level processes, policies and institutions, on the one hand, and domestic-level processes, policies and institutions, on the other hand.”<sup>40</sup> Secondly, as difference in policies is not enough in

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse, 'When Europe Hits Home: Europeanization and Domestic Change', *European Integration online Papers (EIoP)*, 4.15, (2000) <<http://eiop.or.at/eiop/pdf/2000-015.pdf>> [11 April 2017]

<sup>40</sup> Börzel and Risse, p. 2

itself, there need to be certain domestic actors or institutions that respond to pressures from the EU to reform.

These domestic actors and/or institutions can increase pressure to change either due to the “logic of consequentialism” whereby reforms are pushed due to the expected gains or opportunities they would create for the interested party afterwards, or due to the “logic of appropriateness” whereby reforms are seen as legitimate and necessary as the norms they are based on are upheld and valued in a society. As March and Olsen explain it:

“Rules are followed because they are seen as natural, rightful, expected, and legitimate. Actors seek to fulfill the obligations encapsulated in a role, an identity, a membership in a political community or group, and the ethos, practices, and expectations of its institutions. Embedded in a social collectivity, they do what they see as appropriate for themselves in a specific type of situation.”<sup>41</sup>

The logic of appropriateness is expected to produce long-lasting reforms and policy positions that result in genuine compliance by the aspiring member state as there is widespread understanding in society that these positions are in fact appropriate. The EU, through its conditionality and persuasion tactics, tries to exert influence in both ways, although the end goal would certainly be the internalisation of EU values in candidate states that would ensure that potential member states uphold and advocate these norms in the future as well. These two logics can also be defined as rationalist institutionalist and sociological institutionalist perspectives and while they produce change through different patterns of reasoning, they are not mutually exclusive.<sup>42</sup>

These institutionalist perspectives embody different logics, but they also rely on different factors and explanations as to what is able to facilitate change in society. While rationalist institutionalism sees actors as goal-oriented, cost-efficient and calculative in their decision-making process, sociological institutionalism assumes that

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<sup>41</sup> James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, 'The Logic of Appropriateness', in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, ed. by Robert E. Goodin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 1

<sup>42</sup> Börzel and Risse, p. 2

actors base their decisions on what is “right” or what constitutes as proper and socially accepted behaviour.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, in the former perspective, it is possible to bring forth change through offering incentives that serve the interests of domestic parties and in the latter perspective, it is necessary to convince domestic actors or decision-makers by explaining the value or “appropriateness” of change. If successful, the domestic decision-makers would either absorb the policy positions by only slightly adjusting their former positions, accommodate the policy by adapting to it without changing the underlying collective understanding attached, or transform ones policy through accepting fundamental changes.<sup>44</sup>

While choices based on rational decision-making are more likely in a situation where interests and strategies are clear, the socialisation process would prove more effective when domestic actors have clear identities or are interested in “belonging” to a certain group of countries.<sup>45</sup> During the CEE enlargement rounds in 2004 and 2007, it was clear that these countries aspire to become part of Europe again and therefore should uphold European values and norms. Generally, this was understood by most old member states, even if there was initially less clarity about whether all these states should become part of the EU in the future. What concerns the Western Balkans, there is increasingly an understanding that these states should in time move closer to the EU and uphold its values, but as can be observed from the general debate, there are fewer EU countries which strongly advocate for future enlargement to the Western Balkans. For this reason, I argue, it is even more important that the current potential and official candidate states take EU conditionality seriously in order to present themselves as worthy candidates for future EU membership.

## **2.2 Importance of CFSP alignment**

Restrictive measures are an important part of EU CFSP and the sanctions put in place against Russia have clear normative grounds. As sanctions almost always come with a cost to those who align with them, it is important to keep in mind that suffering some kind of economic loss is part of a value-based decision. The latter shows that the target is or has been engaged in activities that are normatively unacceptable and the values

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<sup>43</sup> Börzel and Risse, pp. 7-8

<sup>44</sup> Börzel and Risse, p. 10

<sup>45</sup> Börzel and Risse, p. 13

which need protection are more important than potential economic losses the parties might encounter. In general, the choice between suffering economic loss and upholding EU norms and values is clear when it comes to restrictive measures against Russia as many states have endured loss in trade as a consequence. Therefore, there is an extensive debate between actors who support the continuation of sanctions until the Minsk agreements are fulfilled and actors who advocate for dropping sanctions due to their inefficiency and major economic consequences for most of the EU countries. This debate, however, has not resulted in changing the union's policy as sanctions have been extended several times and the overall condemning position towards Russia's actions in Ukraine is solid. This agreement among member states is mainly in place as all member states understand the long-term consequences that result from accepting the violation of the rules-based international order as it would be even more damaging to the security of Europe and all its nations in the future.

Hellquist shows through her research that generally third countries have been quite active in joining restrictive measures against different actors.<sup>46</sup> In her paper, she claims that the sanctions alignment record shows that before the Ukrainian crisis and the following targeted sanctions, the candidate countries as well as other third states were willing to join other restrictive measures without extensive debate about the actual necessity or benefit from these sanctions. This is so because aligning with sanctions against countries with which there are no immediate cultural connections or economic relations concerned has been and continues to be a rather simple way to show normative commitment to EU norms and values. The objective of third states to present themselves as committed to EU values becomes even more obvious when considering that scholars have largely concluded that sanctions do not usually bring about intended changes in the policy of sanctioned states.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, the choice to align with economic sanctions may be interpreted as an indication of a normative commitment to certain values and sanctions do not need to necessarily be linked with rational calculations. At least this was the case before sanctions were put in place against Russia.

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<sup>46</sup> Elin Hellquist, 'Either with us or against us? Third-country alignment with EU sanctions against Russia/Ukraine', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 29.3, (2016), 997-1021

<sup>47</sup> Robert A. Pape, 'Why Economic Sanctions Still Do Not Work', *International Security*, 23.1, (1998), 66-77

Aligning with sanctions the EU has put in place can have many different explanations. Many third countries (i.e. candidate countries, Eastern partnership countries etc.) are interested in having good relations with the EU and if restrictive measures do not come with important economic or other consequences, it is a fairly simple way to show support and preparedness to be included in the value space of the EU. What concerns Russia, there is a visibly different pattern as even candidate countries do not always align. Reluctance to join is displayed despite the fact that these countries have potentially more to lose when they show their unwillingness to align with the policies of the union they intend to be part of as soon as possible. Obviously, this raises concerns whether the candidates are actually willing to show solidarity with the EU in different foreign policy matters and if they are subsequently willing to uphold and promote its norms. As solidarity has become one of the most important values in the EU during the last decade (notably after terrorist attacks and during debt, migration and the Ukraine crises) it is vital that current member states see that candidate countries are actually willing to set their interests aside and “do what needs to be done”.

As the EU already has difficulties in “speaking with a single voice” in its foreign policy, it is clear that new members who do not even act as “good students” before they join the EU, are not welcome. When this general lack of willingness to act in solidarity would be considered together with low public support in old member states towards future enlargement, the necessity to show full commitment becomes even more obvious. As most decisions in Brussels are taken by consensus (and foreign policy decisions are always taken by consensus) it is highly likely that the EU might turn into an ineffective union of countries that is unable to pursue a common goal and work together in the international arena.

Furthermore, since the EU is already seen by many as a massive bureaucracy that has been unable to show success when directing change in its neighbourhood, it might prove fatal to the EU if the inability to take decisions becomes even more widespread in more policy areas. What is more, closer cooperation in foreign policy has gained wider support lately in relation to the global strategy introduced by High Representative

Federica Mogherini<sup>48</sup> and the election of Donald Trump as the President of United States. Therefore, many countries have made their case as to why the EU should be more active in its neighbourhood as well as globally. Enlargement to countries where this vision is not shared is only going to decrease the chances of successful enhanced cooperation in the future.

### **2.3 What influences CFSP alignment?**

The main purpose of this Master's thesis is to comparatively analyse the differences between the arguments presented by the Western Balkan countries in relation to EU CFSP alignment. The analysis on the substance of statements is complemented by a comparison of the ethnic divisions and general public support for EU membership which enable to draw conclusions on possible domestic policy change. The presence of potential domestic actors that could advocate for policy changes is concluded through ethnic divisions because the political party structure in the WB is still somewhat ethnicity-based and ethnic violence that characterised their recent history is still affecting policy decisions. The official position of the EU is presented by including the statements concerning CFSP and EU enlargement that high officials of the union forward during their meetings as it enables to understand the extent of pressure from the EU to align with its foreign policy positions. Therefore, this part of the thesis shows whether EU conditions are functional in the Western Balkans. Following this logic, if the legitimacy of EU conditions is perceived to be credible, alignment should be assumed. Therefore, the aim is to shed light as to why some of these countries have chosen to support EU foreign policy positions (namely, the restrictive measures against Russia) and what differentiates them compared to those that have not. While CFSP alignment was progressive in most countries before the Ukrainian crisis, the overall degree of alignment has decreased in some, despite the fact that all have expressed their aspiration to join the EU.

As noted in the theory chapter of this thesis, the perceived legitimacy of EU conditions is one of the most important factors that could influence policy change in enlargement

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<sup>48</sup> 'High Representative Mogherini presents EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy', *European External Action Service*, 28 June 2016 <[https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/water-diplomacy/7337/high-representative-mogherini-presents-eu-global-strategy-for-foreign-and-security-policy\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/water-diplomacy/7337/high-representative-mogherini-presents-eu-global-strategy-for-foreign-and-security-policy_en)> [accessed 16 April 2017]

countries. The position of the EU in relation to non-aligning states is therefore vital for this analysis and helps to understand whether these states might give in to EU's requirements in order to keep their membership perspective alive. Secondly, I will analyse the ethnic composition of these member states and the public support for membership in order to draw conclusions about the existence of domestic actors who might aim to influence their government's current policy. Thirdly, I will include country-specific arguments on EU CFSP alignment or non-alignment in order to determine whether their decisions are based on the normative basis of EU membership and/or their own rational interests serving the individual needs of their countries. Therefore, the thesis aims to understand which factors influence CFSP alignment in the Western Balkan countries concerning Russia-related foreign policy positions.

The underlying purpose for this thesis is to analyse the types of arguments domestic actors use to explain compliance or non-compliance. Thus, to understand the decisions of candidates, the substance of their arguments is essential to comprehend. It is expected that the WB states which do not align with EU restrictive measures on Russia mostly resort to rational arguments where the main focus is on their own potential losses from aligning with this type of policy, but countries who do align, mostly explain it in terms of the normative obligations they as European states have. While the arguments could be a mixture of the two, it is expected that in general, the countries that focus on norms and values in their foreign policy choices align with sanctions which have strong normative grounds – as it is in the case of the Ukrainian crisis.

The dependent variable in this Master's thesis is therefore compliance with EU CFSP (more specifically sanctions on Russia) which is operationalised as aligning and non-aligning countries. It is not obvious by just looking at percentage points of alignment from European Commission candidate country progress reports that the majority of declarations, policies and Council decisions which some countries do not align with are not supportive of Russian policy, and therefore it is important to concentrate on specific policies that relate to restrictive measures against Russia. The chapter on methodology further explains the need to focus on alignment vis-à-vis Russia.

The independent variables used in this thesis are the legitimacy of EU conditions concerning EU CFSP alignment, the ethnic divisions and public support for EU



membership and the substance of the arguments the WB countries present to EU officials to explain their alignment or non-alignment. The dominance of either rational arguments or normative commitment is expected to give the most conclusive empirical explanation as to why these potential or official candidate countries have either decided to act in solidarity with the EU or not. While it is not possible to conclude that a state uses either one or the other type of reasoning, it is assumed that either rational or normative explanations dominate. Furthermore, the differentiation between normative and rational arguments combined with the presence of ethnic divisions in candidate countries allows us to better understand whether and on what conditions a 100% alignment would be possible in the future. This thesis therefore tests the following:

Hypothesis 1: The functionality of EU CFSP conditions is lower in non-aligning rather than in aligning countries.

Hypothesis 2: Normative arguments are more likely to be used by aligning rather than by non-aligning countries.

Hypothesis 3: Rational arguments are more likely to be used by non-aligning rather than by aligning countries.

Hypothesis 4a: Countries with only one major ethnic group are less likely to alter their CFSP alignment than countries with more major ethnic groups.

Hypothesis 4b: Countries with more than one major ethnic group are more likely to alter their CFSP alignment than countries with one major ethnic group.

The following chapter will give an overview of the method I intend to use in order to test these hypotheses and answer the research question: *which factors influence CFSP alignment in the Western Balkan countries concerning Russia-related foreign policy positions?* While other independent variables are also discussed in the following chapters, the main the focus is on the normative-rational dimension as it can be argued that by resisting alignment, these states contest the primacy of EU values and norms in their societies<sup>49</sup> and therefore might not be suitable candidates for EU membership in the future.

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<sup>49</sup> Hellquist, p. 19

### 3. Methodology

Change can generally be asserted by either top-down or bottom-up pressure. This thesis will focus on both as the statements of EU high officials as well as the response and willingness to align by the governments of official or potential candidate states is researched. Even though the countries chosen for this analysis are similar in their historical backgrounds, they are relatively different in their policy positions and their relations with third countries. For this reason, it makes sense to analyse variables inductively as it allows researching the subjects without imposing any predetermined explanations on the cases that would not be suitable in their respective domestic contexts. In the following sub-paragraphs, it is also explained why these countries are chosen for analysis, how variables are operationalised and what limitations this research method presents.

#### 3.1 Case selection

The countries at the focus of this thesis are the official and potential candidate states of the European Union. Currently, there are five official candidate states and two potential candidate states which are all facing numerous difficulties in aligning with EU policies. Some of them, however, can already present 100% alignment with EU CFSP very early in their accession processes. The official candidate states are Montenegro, Serbia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)<sup>50</sup> and Albania. The potential candidate states are Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and Kosovo.<sup>51</sup> These states have similar and closely intertwined history and therefore, it can be argued that in general this region faces specific and similar obstacles which make them largely comparable. Overall, the problems these countries struggle with have common traits as they are often derived from past ethnic conflicts in the region and subsequent declarations for independence (e.g. Montenegro and Kosovo from Serbia).

First and foremost, the cases chosen for this analysis are determined by the number of current potential and official candidate states of the EU. Furthermore, as the conditions of EU membership and the historical backgrounds of the current enlargement rounds

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<sup>50</sup> In this thesis, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Macedonia and FYROM are used in parallel.

<sup>51</sup> In this thesis, the designation 'Kosovo' is used without prejudice to positions on status, in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

and previous rounds are quite different, it does not make sense to include any other previous candidate states in this analysis. Croatia, which joined the EU most recently in 2013 could be a possible additional case, but as this type of analysis limits the amount of cases that can be included, in this thesis I have focused only on those six countries that are currently seen as possible member states of the EU. When considering that increasing the number of cases would in turn decrease the analytical depth, it is sensible to limit the cases to the WB countries. I will, however, include a short paragraph on Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria in the subchapter that compares these six cases.

Though an official candidate, Turkey is not included in this thesis both due to its different history with the European Union as well as because of events that have changed Turkey's perspective to join the union at all. Following the coup attempt in July 2016 and April 2017 referendum that gave the current President Recep Tayyip Erdogan a mandate to bring forth reforms in order to develop Turkey into a presidential system of government, the EU has largely accepted its inability to effect meaningful change in Turkey. The European Parliament has called for the suspension of Turkey's membership talks for some time now,<sup>52</sup> but it is only after the referendum when the Enlargement Commissioner Johannes Hahn also raised the question of a possible new format for cooperation which should be developed in cooperation with Turkey.<sup>53</sup>

The analysis focuses on comparing Western Balkan countries also due their domestic variety which would allow determining why some states align and some do not. As the ethnic composition and public support for EU membership are different in the mentioned states, these variables might help to explain the CFSP compliance patterns. A comparison of these countries in relation to their ethnic groups and popular support is likely to give an insight whether change in policy positions could be assumed in the future or if there is strong public support for the current government and/or its policies. Ethnic divisions are vital to include for understanding the potential variety of domestic actors who might want to influence the accession process. As is known, not all of these states display a strong support for EU membership and some have competing domestic

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<sup>52</sup> Georgi Gotev, 'MEPs advocate suspending EU-Turkey accession talks', *Euractiv*, 27 April 2017 <<https://www.euractiv.com/section/future-eu/news/meps-advocate-suspending-eu-turkey-accession-talks>> [accessed 28 April 2017]

<sup>53</sup> Alastair Macdonald, 'EU executive urges change of tack in relations with Turkey', *Reuters*, 24 April 2017 <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-eu-hahn-idUSKBN17Q27G>> [accessed 28 April 2017]

actors that are fighting against the current agenda of their governments to continue European integration and to seek membership in organisations that uphold and promote Western norms and values. Therefore, the cases included in this paper are very similar in some aspects and different in others, but a comparative approach could explain the CFSP alignment in the region in a more holistic way.

### **3.2 Operationalisation**

In this thesis, the dependent variable 'alignment' is operationalised as aligning and non-aligning countries. While potential or official candidate countries could align with most other EU CFSP declarations, policies and conclusions, in this thesis only sanctions alignment on Russia is presented. Therefore, if a country aligns with sanctions on Russia, it is presented as an aligning country and if it does not, it is considered to be a non-aligning country. While other CFSP policies are also important and note that the candidate country is willing to show commitment to EU values, the major normative conflict currently lies in the EU's relation with Russia, and solidarity from member states is first and foremost requested for this foreign policy instrument. The relevant alignment data is collected from European Commission's annual progress reports on enlargement countries and government websites in the case of Kosovo which is not officially invited to align by the EU.

The independent variables included in this thesis are the legitimacy of EU conditionality in relation to CFSP, the substance of arguments (either mainly normative or rational) used by WB governments to explain their alignment or non-alignment and the ethnic divisions and public support for EU in these societies. In order to analyse the alignment of potential and official candidate countries and differentiate the reasons why some of these countries have joined sanctions on Russia, I will firstly present the overall alignment data from 2011-2016. These statistics show how candidate state alignment is connected with the focus years. It will also show which countries opted in favour of alignment and which ones preferred to focus on their national interests instead. Tracking the alignment record also before the Ukrainian crisis enables to divide this group of countries by their general compliance patterns and then move towards analysing the reasons behind these foreign policy choices in 2014 and afterwards.

The first variable tested in this thesis is the legitimacy of EU conditions as it relates to alignment with CFSP and sanctions on Russia. In order to understand whether the Western Balkan states' governments understand that EU conditions are non-negotiable, this thesis will firstly present the general position of EU high officials and then include the response from the candidates. It is expected that the union does not use coercive power to pressure non-aligning states to change their policy positions and join sanctions on Russia and resulting from this, these states do not see the need to align. The data analysed in this thesis is derived from government websites, EU press releases as well as local news reporting on the visits of EU high officials to the Western Balkan countries. EU conditions could be seen as legitimate when (potential) candidate countries aim to explain their non-alignment or alignment. If the countries focused on in this thesis refuse to align with some parts of CFSP (including sanctions against Russia) as they see it is not and will never be in their interest to align, the legitimacy of EU conditions is seen to be weak.

As it is not possible to claim for certain that all these officials use the same kind of policy lines during their meetings behind closed doors, there is little certainty that coercive language is not used during meetings between candidate states' representatives and EU officials, but if this coercive power is not used in public statements and press conferences then the Western Balkan governments are less likely to respond to pressure if aligning is not in their interest. Since legitimacy is difficult to measure, it may not be possible to give definite answers to the assumption, but it is expected that the perceived legitimacy is mirrored in the statements by WB officials as they aim to explain their non-compliance or compliance with these EU conditions.

While some countries display a 100% commitment to work together with the EU in “speaking with a single voice” in foreign policy, some have chosen to face criticism from the EU after failing to comply. As the reasons behind aligning with EU policy positions are almost as important to this thesis as the explanations for non-compliance, all these countries are compared and contrasted in order to answer the research question and test the hypotheses. Therefore, the main independent variable included in the thesis is the substance of arguments presented by government representatives aimed at explaining their alignment or non-alignment. The substance of arguments is generally

either normative if the country focuses on EU values and norms when commenting on its alignment (or non-alignment), and rational if the state is unwilling or unable to align due to its own self-interest. The latter is seen to be rational as the state would have to choose between possible losses to its economy or negative effects related to its national interests and will therefore rather ignore EU values and norms than join sanctions on Russia.

Therefore, in order to conclude whether states use rational or normative arguments to explain their compliance or non-compliance, the substance of their arguments is important. However, in order to increase reliability, these arguments are also positioned in relation to relevant background information specific to these countries in order to decrease chances that government officials use certain arguments just to please EU officials or their own citizens. Data for the analysis is taken from all available media outlets and government websites that are translated into English. As the use of English-language media and websites might be seen as too limiting for my research, this choice is also explained in a more detailed manner in the subchapter on limitations.

As there is never full certainty in political science that a policy position and its explanation is indeed genuine and is in line with the what is perceived to be true, it is not likely that definite answers can be given to the research question, but comparative analysis of the current six enlargement states is still necessary in order to understand whether different approach from the EU might be able to increase the alignment record in these countries. In order to increase or decrease the legitimacy of rational arguments by different governments, the relevant trade figures of these countries (i.e. main import and export partners) are also included.

Thirdly, the ethnic divisions and public support data are also presented in the analysis. This is done in order to compare the existence of possible actors who could be interested in altering the foreign policy of their respective countries. While ethnicity is not the only factor that helps to distinguish between domestic actors or guides their policy positions, it is relevant in the case of the Western Balkan countries as the legacy of ethnic conflicts is still fresh in the memories of their citizens and the political party structure is also often developed by taking different ethnic groups into account. The data for analysis is taken from the CIA World Factbook which is an often used database as it

offers comparable and reliable information which is collected regularly and in a consistent manner. The data for comparing the public support for the EU and its membership is taken from reports by the EU-funded Regional Cooperation Council that regularly conducts public opinion surveys in the Western Balkan, but in order to increase reliability, statistics are also taken from other sources and included in the footnotes of relevant subchapters.

The above-mentioned variables are used in this thesis as it needs to be analysed whether the enlargement countries see the EU as a normative power whose values should have primacy and should be defended and promoted in the world, or is joining mostly supported due to the expected wealth it would bring. While the EU is often seen as an economic actor that has a stable economy and a market of 500 million citizens, it is likely that the candidates also aspire to join the EU only due to the possible economic gains that they could receive in the future. As foreign policy is one the most obvious policy fields where the union tries to promote its norms and values, this thesis is built upon the premise that its member states should put values first even if it might bring some economic losses or is not in their short-term national interests.

### **3.3 Limitations**

One of the main limitations of this thesis is the focus on English-language media and documents. However, it needs to be clarified whether the reasoning presented to the domestic audience or to EU and its member states is analysed. As this Master's thesis attempts to shed light on the communication between the national governments and the high officials of the European Union, the emphasis is on international or English-language media. Therefore, even though understanding the viewpoints of all the affected parties (including all domestic actors) would enable deeper knowledge of the domestic feelings on the subject, in this thesis the focus is on official policies and statements by government representatives. These are the people who often meet with EU officials, discuss future enlargement and the successes/setbacks on their reform paths. In addition, while other domestic actors might seek a wider platform for their arguments as well, they often lack an international audience in Brussels and other states outside their region. In order to test the legitimacy of English-language media which

this thesis is based on, comparative articles in other languages from domestic media and websites are included when needed and possible.

The second limitation is related with the official policy of the EU high officials. While it is widely known that public talking points and private discussions have a tendency to have somewhat different character and strength, it is not possible to analyse what goes on behind closed doors during meetings between EU officials and government representatives. That is, if you have not had the chance to attend these meetings or do not have the resources to interview the participants. However, if these discussions do not lead to changes in policy, it might be suitable to analyse the public statements of officials as well.



## 4. Empirical analysis

### 4.1 Alignment with EU CFSP and sanctions on Russia

What concerns foreign policy, the European Union expects progressive alignment from candidate states. This means that even though 100% alignment shows great commitment to the accession process and the norms and values the EU represents, full alignment is not requested early on in the enlargement process. Therefore, candidate states have legitimate arguments not to align when they refer to requirements of the accession process and their national concerns about aligning with policies that could potentially affect them negatively. However, it must be remembered that once a candidate aligns to a certain degree, it does not bode well for the state if alignment starts to reduce. Furthermore, lowering degree of alignment is definitely not in line with official EU policy and requirements for candidate states.

Currently there are two Western Balkan states that fully align with EU foreign policy – Montenegro and Albania. These states are either already members of NATO (Albania) or will become members in the near future (Montenegro). While in 2011 Albania aligned itself with 95% (64 out of 67) of EU declarations and Council decisions,<sup>54</sup> the country displayed its full commitment to EU policies already the following year.<sup>55</sup> All in all, Albania's alignment has been 100% since 2012 and this has not decreased in the following years. The 2015 progress report noted that

“On the common foreign and security policy, Albania aligned itself with all relevant EU declarations and European Council conclusions (100% alignment). This trend has been consistent for the last few years, thus demonstrating a very clear commitment in supporting the positions promoted by the European Union on issues related to international peace and security.”<sup>56</sup>

Montenegro has shown a similar commitment by aligning with 99% of EU positions, declarations and Council decisions in 2011.<sup>57</sup> Already in 2012 Montenegro achieved a

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<sup>54</sup> Albania 2011 Progress Report: Chapter 31, *European Commission*, 12 October 2011

<sup>55</sup> Albania 2012 Progress Report: Chapter 31, *European Commission*, 10 October 2012

<sup>56</sup> Albania 2015 Progress Report: Chapter 31, *European Commission*, 10 November 2015

<sup>57</sup> Montenegro 2011 Progress Report: Chapter 31, *European Commission*, 12 October 2011

100% alignment record and has honoured its commitment since then. In 2014, the European Commission's report stated:

“Montenegro generally aligned itself with and implemented restrictive measures introduced by Council decisions, including EU restrictive measures in the context of Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea and events in eastern Ukraine. Montenegro voted in favour of the UN General Assembly Resolution on the territorial integrity of Ukraine.<sup>58</sup>”

The rest of Western Balkan potential and official candidate states have not shown commitment similar to Montenegro and Albania as before the Ukrainian crisis their CFSP alignment record was higher than it has been after sanctions on Russia were put in place. The CFSP alignment statistics show that before 2014 Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia also had close to 90% or even 100% alignment record, but joining sanctions against Russia proved to be too difficult for them. The 2014 progress report on Serbia's accession process states:

“Serbia supported the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine in general terms but was absent at the vote of the UN General Assembly Resolution on the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Serbia did not align itself, when invited, with Council decisions introducing restrictive measures in the context of Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea and events in eastern Ukraine. The Serbian government gave reassurances that Serbia would not actively seek to take undue advantage of the situation arising from the introduction of the Russian embargo on imports of EU agricultural products in answer to the restrictive measures against Russia.<sup>59</sup>”

Therefore, not only did Serbia refuse to align with the sanctions regime, it was also questionable for the EU whether Serbia would not take advantage of the situation in order to pursue its own interests. Increased trade levels with Russia could prove to be

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<sup>58</sup> Montenegro 2014 Progress Report: Chapter 31, *European Commission*, 8 October 2014

<sup>59</sup> Serbia 2014 Progress Report: Chapter 31, *European Commission*, 8 October 2014

likely as Serbia's relations with Russia have been and continue to be more proactive than other countries' in the region:

“High-level contacts with Russia continued. Russia’s President visited Serbia in October 2014. Serbia’s President attended the celebration of Victory Day in Moscow and members of the presidential guard participated in the military parade. Serbian and Russian airborne forces held joint military drills in November 2014 and together with Byelorussians forces in September 2015.<sup>60</sup>”

What concerns the FYROM, alignment record was remarkable before 2014 and even reached full alignment (100%) in 2012. From then on, however, FYROM has aligned with about 70% of EU CFSP declarations, positions and decisions. These do not include sanctions against the Russian Federation:

“The country did not align itself with the Council decisions introducing restrictive measures in response to Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea and events in eastern Ukraine. The country voted in favour of the UN General Assembly Resolution on the territorial integrity of Ukraine [...] The country’s alignment with EU declarations and Council decisions in the field of foreign and security policy deteriorated as compared with previous years and needs to be improved.<sup>61</sup>”

The 2015 FYROM progress report concluded that even though the country generally aligned with EU's positions on Russia and condemned its actions in neighbouring countries, there is still no alignment in relation to economic sanctions against Russia:

“On the common foreign and security policy, the country aligned itself, when invited, with 27 out of 40 EU declarations and Council Decisions (68% alignment). On the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia and events in eastern Ukraine, the country aligned its foreign

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<sup>60</sup> Serbia 2015 Progress Report: Chapter 31, *European Commission*, 10 November 2015

<sup>61</sup> The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2014 Progress Report: Chapter 31, *European Commission*, 8 October 2014

policy in broad terms with the EU's stance but not with the Council Decisions introducing restrictive measures over those issues.<sup>62</sup>”

Out of the two current potential candidate countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina is the only one whose CFSP alignment is tracked and noted in progress reports. Bosnia and Herzegovina's alignment trend has not been overly positive in the past, but the record is generally progressive. In 2011, Bosnia and Herzegovina aligned with 58% of EU foreign policy decisions and/or declarations, but in 2016 it already decided to align with 77%. The country has not, however, joined sanctions against Russia, largely due to the opposition of the Serb majority in Republika Srpska:

“Bosnia and Herzegovina did not align itself with Council decisions introducing EU restrictive measures in the context of Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and events in eastern Ukraine, as there was no consensus within the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia and Herzegovina was absent at the vote on the UN General Assembly Resolution on the territorial integrity of Ukraine.<sup>63</sup>”

As mentioned, Kosovo is the only country from the case selection whose alignment is not recorded as it is not invited to align with EU CFSP declarations, positions and Council decisions due to its status.<sup>64</sup> However, the Stabilisation and Association Agreement signed between EU and Kosovo just last year also includes the necessity to progressively align with EU policies and take part in the political dialogue.<sup>65</sup> The overall CFSP alignment record during the period 2011-2016 can therefore be concluded as follows:

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<sup>62</sup> The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2015 Progress Report: Chapter 31, *European Commission*, 10 November 2015

<sup>63</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina 2014 Progress Report: Relations between the EU and Bosnia and Herzegovina, *European Commission*, 8 October 2014

<sup>64</sup> Marc Champion, 'Recognize Kosovo or Pay the Price', *Bloomberg*, 29 February 2016 <<https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2016-02-29/recognize-kosovo-or-pay-the-price>> [accessed 6 May 2017]

<sup>65</sup> Art. 11 (2), Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Union and Kosovo, OJ L 71, *EUR-Lex*, 2016 <[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22016A0316\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22016A0316(01)&from=EN)> [accessed 29 April 2017]

**Table 1. Enlargement country EU CFSP alignment 2011-2016.**

Country	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Sanctions (Russia)
Serbia	N/A*	99%	89%	62%	65%	59%	No
Montenegro	99%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	Yes
FYROM	99%	100%	94%	73%	68%	73%	No
Albania	95%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	Yes
BiH	68%	56%	66%	52%	62%	77%	No
Kosovo	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes**

Data: European Commission country-specific progress reports

\* The 2011 Serbia progress report did not specify a percentage, but noted: “Serbia has in most instances, when invited, aligned itself with Council decisions, EU declarations and démarches.”<sup>66</sup>

\*\* Even though Kosovo is not invited to align with CFSP yet, it has introduced sanctions against Russia on its own initiative.<sup>67</sup>

The statistics of alignment presented in Table 1 clearly show that before 2014 there was no large scale opposition to EU policies. Generally the (potential) candidate countries even aligned with sanctions, but when restrictive measures were put in place against Russia, some Western Balkan countries failed to act in solidarity with current EU member states. In conclusion, there were only three states that aligned with the sanctions regime – Montenegro, Albania and Kosovo. Among these, Montenegro is the most advanced candidate state (most *acquis* chapters already opened), Albania is still waiting for a positive decision from the EU to start the accession negotiation process and Kosovo is still not recognised by five EU member states and is not an official candidate. Their overall progress is therefore very different and this in turn shows that the political decision to align could be made very early in the accession process to show commitment and respect for EU values.

## **4.2 EU sanctions on Russia and their perceived legitimacy**

European Union imposed sanctions against the Russian Federation in response to the annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and Russia's actions aimed at destabilising eastern Ukraine. These sanctions consist of a variety of different measures. They include

<sup>66</sup> Serbia 2011 Progress Report: Chapter 31, *European Commission*, 20 October 2011

<sup>67</sup> 'Hoxhaj met Žbogar, praised Kosovo's position towards its allies', *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo*, 24 September 2017 <<http://www.mfa-ks.net/?page=2,217,2472>> [accessed 6 May 2017]

diplomatic measures (e.g. the suspension of Russia's negotiations to join OECD, cancelling the EU-Russia summit and the G8 meeting in Sochi and holding a G7 meeting in Brussels instead), asset freezes for 150 people and 37 entities, visa bans, measures targeting specific sectors of Russian economy (major banks, energy and defence companies, and their subsidiaries), etc. In relation to the annexation of Crimea, there are sanctions in place that restrict different types of economic cooperation with the peninsula (including in the field of infrastructure, tourism, transport, telecommunications and energy).<sup>68</sup> As the sanctioned individuals, entities and companies are carefully listed in order to target specific people involved in destabilising the situation in eastern Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea, the linkage between the reason for sanctioning and its normative background should be clear.

There are different actors in the EU who are voicing their concerns over whether sanctions are effective enough to bring changes to Russia's policy in eastern Ukraine and Crimea, but until now the EU with its 28 member states has managed to extend sanctions after every 6 months. What is more, the EU still regularly re-evaluates the list of individuals against whom sanctions are put in place as six members of the State Duma from Crimea were added to the list in November 2016.<sup>69</sup> Overall, even though member states have voiced concerns about extending sanctions, they have still acted in solidarity during the unanimous voting process in the Council. As foreign policy remains in the competence of member states and any one member state would be able to affect the continuation of restrictive measures, the certainty that sanctions will be extended is rather low. Therefore, it is important that EU officials remind member states of the necessity of these sanctions and the values they stand for. Until now, the union has managed to set aside their individual concerns and “speak in a single voice” when it comes to foreign policy on Russia - and this is what the EU would expect from any new members as well, including the Western Balkan candidate countries.

Even though individual member states generally confirm the need to align with EU CFSP and sanctions against Russia during their bilateral meetings with (potential)

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<sup>68</sup> EU sanctions against Russia over Ukraine crisis, *European Union Newsroom*, 2017  
<[http://europa.eu/newsroom/highlights/special-coverage/eu-sanctions-against-russia-over-ukraine-crisis\\_en](http://europa.eu/newsroom/highlights/special-coverage/eu-sanctions-against-russia-over-ukraine-crisis_en)> [accessed 20 April 2017]

<sup>69</sup> EU restrictive measures in response to the crisis in Ukraine, *European Council*, 2017  
<<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/ukraine-crisis>> [accessed 20 April 2017]

candidate states, the strong signal from EU high officials concerning the need to align with EU *acquis* is even more important. This is so due to the European Commission's power to direct enlargement policy and monitor the compliance of candidate states on a day-to-day basis in between the Council meetings where enlargement might not be on the agenda very often. The work of Enlargement Commissioners and High Representatives for Foreign and Security Policy is most notable in this aspect as they are the officials who speak on behalf of the EU in this matter the most often.

What concerns the focus of this thesis, the most important high officials of the EU after the 2014 Ukrainian crisis have been the previous Enlargement Commissioner Štefan Füle (2010-2014) and the current commissioner Johannes Hahn (2014-). Among other notable high officials that have been tasked with actively advocating to keep the Western Balkan integration on the agenda have been the previous and current High Representatives Catherine Ashton (2010-2014) and Federica Mogherini (2014-). Although some have been more active than others in supporting future enlargement, the following paragraphs include a short concluding overview of their general positions and statements on the subject of EU CFSP alignment in the Western Balkans. These are included in order to conclude whether the EU pressures the WB countries to align with CFSP or if a general agreement is in place that candidate countries are not required to fully align and should therefore join sanctions when they are ready.

Soon after the Ukrainian crisis started in March 2014, Enlargement Commissioner Štefan Füle and High Representative Catherine Ashton both visited Serbia where it was concluded from meetings that Brussels understands the difficult position Serbia is in, but still reminds the candidate country that the EU expects enlargement states to support its policies, including in relation to restrictive measures. Therefore, it can also be concluded that the EU did not publicly insist too much as commissioner Füle announced that “the EU respected the position of Serbia as a sovereign country with regards to this issue.”<sup>70</sup> Even though this might be seen as too soft of an approach from the EU that does not pressure candidate states to explain their position, Serbia still explained its reasoning by reminding that Serbia supports the territorial integrity of Ukraine, but their

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<sup>70</sup> Maja Poznatov, 'Serbia's careful balancing act on Ukraine', *Euractiv*, 9 May 2017  
<<http://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/serbia-s-careful-balancing-act-on-ukraine>>  
[accessed 6 May 2017]

own territorial integrity might also be in danger if Serbia would put sanctions in place against Russia and consequently lose Russia's support in the United Nations Security Council over the Kosovo status issue.

After the next Enlargement Commissioner Johannes Hahn took over, the position of the EU has not radically changed as he as well claimed to understand Serbia's policy position. In addition, he did not seem to have a clear plan on how to address the issue of CFSP alignment in Serbia and in other non-aligning Western Balkan states. During the 3-hour-long hearing in the Foreign affairs committee of the European Parliament, Hahn indicated that “the fact that Serbia did not follow the EU's position is something we need to discuss. This will take time.”<sup>71</sup> His answer did not include any specific ideas, but it is still very telling as it illustrates once more that the EU does not know how to approach this problem and accepts that not aligning with CFSP may be acceptable in certain situations. The fact that in 2017 the alignment record has not changed and the EU is still in the same situation is not surprising as during his first visit to Serbia, Hahn concluded during a press conference that “the situation is as it is and the European Union will expect Serbia to gradually harmonise its foreign policy, but this takes time.”<sup>72</sup>

However, the following quote has also been attributed to Commissioner Hahn: “Serbia has taken a legislative commitment within the EU accession negotiations to bring its positions in line with those of the EU. Harmonisation includes the tough issues as well, like the tough issue of sanctions against Russia. We are expecting of Serbia to hold on to these commitments.”<sup>73</sup> High Representative Federica Mogherini has also noted during her visits to Western Balkan countries that alignment in all policy areas is not a suggestion, but a legal obligation that these countries have agreed to when they applied for EU membership:

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<sup>71</sup> Adelina Marini, 'Enlargement Will Never Be the Same Again', *euinside*, 5 October 2014 <<http://www.euinside.eu/en/news/nothing-will-ever-be-the-same-with-enlargement-johannes-hahn-hearing>> [accessed 6 May 2017]

<sup>72</sup> Maja Poznatov, 'EU still not pressuring Serbia over Russia', *Euractiv*, 21 November 2014 <<http://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/eu-still-not-pressuring-serbia-over-russia>> [accessed 6 May 2017]

<sup>73</sup> "Blackmail": EU Trying to Force Serbia into Russia Sanctions Club', *Independent.mk*, 20 November 2014 <<http://www.independent.mk/articles/11606/Blackmail+EU+Trying+to+Force+Serbia+into+Russia+Sanctions+Club>> [accessed 6 May 2017]



“There is a legal obligation of progressive harmonization with EU positions, and we expect Serbia to comply with these obligations.”<sup>74</sup>

Even though EU politicians do not usually publicly demand that Serbia or any other candidate country aligns with sanctions on Russia as soon as possible, there have been reports of EU being firm on the policy of progressive alignment with EU CFSP. Thus, despite numerous reports from Russia-friendly media that the EU regularly threatens Serbia and gives the Western Balkans ultimatums,<sup>75</sup> there have not been any threats to countries that do not align. Serbia's Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić has also refuted allegations that EU gives him ultimatums by insisting that this has not happened nor would he ever even allow it:

“Our friends do not speak to us using the language of ultimatums. Nobody talks to me that way, and I would rather not be president of the Serbian government than allow something of that kind.”<sup>76</sup>

Therefore, while Serbia claims to understand the accession conditions and promises to align in due course, the reluctance of government officials to accept coercive pressure from the EU is notable. This reluctance is even more visible in Bosnia and Herzegovina's entity Republika Srpska as its President Milorad Dodik openly criticises Western sanctions on Russia and has promised never to join these unjust sanctions.<sup>77</sup>

When candidate states align, however, the EU is very vocal in praising them about joining sanctions against Russia. In January 2017, during Montenegro's Prime Minister Duško Marković's visit to Brussels, the President of the European Council Donald Tusk was not shy on praising Montenegro for its 100% alignment with EU CFSP:

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<sup>74</sup> 'EU's Mogherini Tells Serbia to Hasten Reforms', *Balkan Insight*, 27 March 2015  
<<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/mogherini-visits-serbia-to-supports-eu-reforms>> [accessed 16 May 2017]

<sup>75</sup> 'Serbia given ultimatum over Russia sanctions', *B92 via Večernje Novosti*, 23 July 2014  
<[http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2014&mm=07&dd=23&nav\\_id=91071](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2014&mm=07&dd=23&nav_id=91071)> [accessed 6 May 2017]

<sup>76</sup> 'PM denies there's 'language of ultimatums'', *B92 via Tanjug*, 23 July 2014  
<[http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2014&mm=07&dd=23&nav\\_id=91072](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2014&mm=07&dd=23&nav_id=91072)> [accessed 6 May 2017]

<sup>77</sup> 'Dodik: There will be More Referendums in the RS', *Sarajevo Times*, 1 December 2016  
<<http://www.sarajevotimes.com/?p=111666>> [accessed 7 May 2017]

In foreign policy, Montenegro is already a de-facto EU Member. You are steadfast in protecting our values and interests, your troops serve alongside ours off the coast of the Horn of Africa and soon in Mali and you apply our sanctions against Russia. I thank you for your loyalty and support. [...] I expressed the wish that your neighbours could follow you on this peaceful track and turn towards the future.<sup>78</sup>,

In general, the EU is not openly pushing candidate states to align with EU sanctions against Russia, but it does not forget to praise those that do. Albania and Montenegro have both consistently received positive comments from EU high officials, but in order not to distract candidate states from their overall accession process or push them away, no harsh criticism for non-alignment with sanctions against Russia is given to Serbia, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It is possible to conclude from statements by government officials in response to the EU that increased pressure from Brussels would be seen very negatively by candidate states. This in turn enables to assume the legitimacy of EU's conditions in relation to foreign policy is weak and candidate states align only with policies that are not against their own national interests. As a result three WB states are either ignoring EU conditions in this area, promise to align, but at a later date or refer that they would never agree to align with everything the EU wants – especially when it is against their rational interests. The following subchapter will focus on the ethnic divisions and public opinion in the Western Balkans which is presented in order to ascertain whether the populations are united in their EU membership bids or if there are domestic actors who might not support the EU and the different reforms and policy changes their countries are requested to make. As the presence of a unified main agenda of a state has also helped previous candidate states in CEE countries to join the union despite frequent government changes, it is an important aspect that works in favour of a candidate.

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<sup>78</sup> 'President of European Council Donald Tusk: Montenegro can set example to other countries of region', *Government of Montenegro*, 26 January 2017 <<http://www.gov.me/en/search/168760/EU-Donald-Tusk-following-his-meeting-with-PM-Markovic.html>> [accessed 6 May 2017]

### 4.3 Ethnic divisions and public support for EU membership

The Western Balkan countries share many similarities, but it is important to note that there are also many differences. Table 2 illustrates that there are countries where one ethnicity strongly dominates (e.g. Serbia and Albania), but there are also countries where there are two (e.g. Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo) or even three major ethnic groups (e.g. Bosnia). This in turn influences the political structure in a society and political disagreements can become influential factors that create divisions in a country. This is especially so when one or more ethnic groups feel their concerns have not been addressed to a sufficient degree. The issue of national languages and foreign relations of a country are policy areas which can most often develop into important state-dividing factors that characterise a nation state where one ethnic group dominates over others. In addition, Table 2 also illustrates ethnic divisions in the Western Balkan (potential) candidate states by indicating with a “Yes” those countries where there is more than one major ethnic group.

**Table 2. Ethnic divisions in the Western Balkans.**

Country	Ethnic groups	Notable divisions <sup>79</sup>
Serbia	Serbs 83.3%, Hungarians 3.5%	No
Montenegro	Montenegrin 45%, Serbian 28.7%, Bosniak 8.7%,	Yes
Macedonia	Macedonian 64.2%, Albanian 25.2%,	Yes
Albania	Albanian 82.6%, unspecified 15.5%	No
BiH	Bosniak 50.1%, Serbian 30.8%, Croat 15.4%	Yes
Kosovo	Albanians 92.9%, Bosniaks 1.6%, Serbs 1.5% <sup>80</sup>	Yes

Data: CIA World Factbook country profiles.<sup>81</sup> Data from 2011.

Exceptions: Albania (2002), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2013)

Table 2 showed that there is a higher chance of political disagreements which could result from ethnic divisions in Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. Serbia and Albania are expected to be more united in their decision-making, or at least different political positions would not result from ethnic divisions. Overall, there

<sup>79</sup> “Yes” is indicated where the second major ethnic group composes at least 25% of the population.

<sup>80</sup> The 2011 Kosovo National Census did not include Northern Kosovo where most of the Serb population lives. The % of Serbs in Kosovo is therefore larger than the national census reports as most Serbs live in northern Kosovo where they constitute the majority ethnic group in some municipalities.

<sup>81</sup> The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kv.html>> [accessed 11 May 2017]

might be some truth in this assumption that the more different ethnic groups exist in a state, the bigger the chances that there will be a difference in opinions on what path should the state take in foreign policy. Table 3 introduces data about alignment with sanctions against Russia in order to compare whether there are any notable trends which might generally explain foreign policy choices.

**Table 3. Notable divisions compared with sanctions alignment.<sup>82</sup>**

Country	Notable divisions	Sanctions (Russia)
Serbia	No	No
Montenegro	Yes	Yes
Macedonia	Yes	No
Albania	No	Yes
BiH	Yes	No
Kosovo	Yes <sup>83</sup>	Yes

Data: Table is composed based on data in Table 2 and sanctions alignment data from European Commission progress reports.

There are two states which do not have major ethnic divisions and four states that have, including Kosovo where divisions are mostly present in the northern part of the country. As we can conclude from this data, EU CFSP does not entirely depend on the existence or non-existence of ethnic divisions as Serbia does not align and Albania does align with sanctions against Russia. Furthermore, in Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo there is more than one major ethnic group, but their alignment record also varies. Therefore, we can conclude that ethnic divisions might in some cases be the determining factors in the Western Balkans concerning unity in foreign policy agenda, but they do not tell us much without actually looking into the severity of cleavages in foreign policy positions or the power of different actors to influence the state's agenda. Ethnic divisions, however, could help us to determine whether unity might be achieved in these countries.

The next important factor that gives an insight into the possible cleavages in the Western Balkan states concerning their foreign policy positioning is public support to EU membership. In Albania, support for EU is very high – the 2015 Eurobarometer

<sup>82</sup> “Yes” is marked when there are two or three groups that constitute more than 25% of society.

<sup>83</sup> Kosovo is not divided according to 2011 Kosovo National Census, but is divided when taking into account northern Kosovo and the Serbian population who boycotted the national census.

indicates that 81% would see EU membership as a good thing, but there is less agreement other countries whose governments have been working towards EU membership. In the FYROM only 47% of people see future membership as a good thing while in Montenegro (38%) and Serbia (21%) support is even lower. However, it is important to note that when asked about the benefits of EU membership from Croatian people in 2013, the agreement among the population was also questionable (52%).<sup>84</sup>

**Table 4. Public opinion survey: “Do you think that EU membership would be a good thing, a bad thing or neither good or bad?”**

Country	... a good thing (A)	... a bad thing (B)	Net support (A-B)
Serbia <sup>85</sup>	21%	31%	-10%
Montenegro <sup>86</sup>	38%	18%	20%
Macedonia <sup>87</sup>	47%	15%	32%
Albania	81%	6%	75%
BiH <sup>88</sup>	33%	21%	12%
Kosovo	83%	2%	81%

Data: Balkan Barometer 2016, Regional Cooperation Council<sup>89</sup>

Therefore, the mere presence of very high public support towards the EU is not a prerequisite of its membership bid, but it certainly helps the government to introduce necessary reforms in order to move forward in the accession process. Table 4 presented

<sup>84</sup> Eurobarometer 79 (Question: 'Taking everything into account, would you say that (our country) would benefit or not from being a member of the European Union?'), *European Commission*, May 2013

<sup>85</sup> Poll conducted by the Serbian Integration Office in 2016 indicates the percentage of people supporting EU membership to be 47% while 29% would be against – '47% of Citizens support Serbian Membership to the EU', *European Western Balkans*, 6 February 2017  
<<https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2017/02/06/47-of-citizens-support-serbian-membership-to-the-eu>> [accessed 7 May 2017]

<sup>86</sup> Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro reports that the support for EU membership is as high as 62% while 21% of responders do not support membership - 'Local opinion poll: continuous rise in support for Montenegro's EU accession', *European Western Balkans*, 19 January 2017  
<<https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2017/01/19/local-opinion-poll-continuous-rise-in-support-for-montenegros-eu-accession>> [accessed 7 May 2017]

<sup>87</sup> Alternative opinion polls suggest that support for membership is as high as 77% while there are still 17% who would oppose their country's membership - Analysis of public opinion on Macedonia's accession process to the European Union (2014-2016), *Institute for Democracy 'Societas Civilis'*  
<<http://idsos.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/EN-Alysis-public-opinion-Macedonia-Accession-EU-2014-2016.pdf>> [accessed 7 May 2017]

<sup>88</sup> Directorate for European Integration of BiH has reported that in 2012 support for EU membership was 76.5% - Frequently Asked Questions, *Directorate for European Integration*, 14 November 2015  
<<http://dei.gov.ba/dei/faq/default.aspx?id=10942&langTag=en-US#10>> [accessed 7 May 2017]

<sup>89</sup> Balkan Barometer 2016, *Regional Cooperation Council*  
<[http://www.rcc.int/seeds/files/RCC\\_BalkanBarometer\\_PublicOpinion\\_2016.pdf](http://www.rcc.int/seeds/files/RCC_BalkanBarometer_PublicOpinion_2016.pdf)> [accessed 8 May 2017]

public support for EU membership as well as the percentage of responders who marked that they would be against their country's membership. Table 5 further explains the general support for EU by indicating the support for future EU membership and an indication of when the population expects enlargement to take place.

**Table 5. Public opinion: “In general, when do you expect the accession to EU to happen?”**

Country	By 2020	By 2025	By 2030	Never
Serbia	13%	18%	13%	32%
Montenegro	36%	21%	8%	14%
Macedonia	26%	25%	16%	28%
Albania	41%	29%	13%	11%
BiH	20%	18%	15%	33%
Kosovo	52%	23%	15%	6%

Data: Balkan Barometer 2016, Regional Cooperation Council<sup>90</sup>

The Balkan Barometer is an EU-funded study of public opinion in the Western Balkans. As can be seen from Table 4, the study revealed that with the exception of Albania and Kosovo, less than half of the populations in these countries support EU membership. However, when we look at additional public opinion surveys, funded by governmental or other institutions in the Western Balkans (e.g. Serbian Integration Office, European Delegation to Montenegro and/or the Institute for Democracy “Societas Civilis” in Macedonia) we are able to see quite different results. In these cases, the support of the local population is higher when the study is carried out by local actors or funded by institutions that are interested in moving forward in the enlargement process.

From Table 5 we could see that the people in Montenegro, Albania and Kosovo are the most hopeful that their respective countries will be members of the EU by 2020. It is interesting to note that while Montenegro's accession process has been the fastest among these six states, Albania has not even started its negotiations yet and Kosovo is still a potential candidate state. What is more, 32% of Serbian people do not expect their country to ever join the EU even though the accession negotiations are ongoing and Serbia's government is eagerly pushing for opening negotiations on multiple new chapters every year.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

## **4.4 Official foreign policy positions in the Western Balkans**

The purpose of this subchapter is to analyse country-specific government policies in relation to CFSP alignment and sanctions against Russia. This is illustrated through statements and official policy positions that shed light on a country's general commitment to pursue EU membership and respect for EU norms and values in relation to foreign policy. More specifically, the arguments of high government officials concerning EU sanctions against Russia are introduced in order to support the distinction between rational and normative explanations. Research shows that although all countries understand the consequences of introducing sanctions against Russia on their economic and political situation, some countries have chosen to stand with the EU when it comes to protecting the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity, but some have still opted for protecting their economic relations first which they see as being in the interest of their citizens.

### **4.4.1 Serbia**

Serbia can be considered the candidate country whose leadership is the most vocal against EU sanctions on Russia. Their president, prime minister and ministers frequently voice their opinion concerning EU sanctions policy and reiterate their support for ending restrictive measures by hoping that the two Slavic nations, Ukraine and Russia, would find a peaceful solution and make these measures all together unnecessary. During the opening of the Development Center of the Russian Geographical Society in Serbia in October 2016, Serbian President Tomislav Nikolic indicated that Serbia will never join sanctions against Russia as it continues to place importance on friendship and cooperation with Russia which should become even more meaningful in the future. According to him, Russia has been one of their most important pillars of support during their entire history and Serbian-Russian cooperation is rooted in their hearts. What concerns Serbia's strategic considerations, he claimed:

“We are aware that, without cooperation with Russia, we would not be able fully to achieve our national interests, among which the most important one is the preservation of our sovereignty and territorial

integrity, especially before international organizations.<sup>91</sup>”

In conclusion, therefore, the official arguments can be divided into both categories – normative and rational, but what Serbs see as “appropriate” is not necessarily the values that the EU carries, but are more concerned with their own history, their friendship or even brotherhood with Slavic nations. During an interview for Al Jazeera, President Tomislav even indicated that if alignment with EU restrictive measures is an obligation, Serbia might reconsider its membership bid:

“There are two conditions Serbia will not meet even if that means it will not become an EU member. The first one is to recognise the independence of Kosovo and Metohija. We will never do that. The second one is to have a quarrel with countries that the EU quarrels with. Here, I primarily refer to the sanctions against the Russian Federation or any other sanctions the EU may impose.<sup>92</sup>”

Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić has explained the question of Serbia's sovereignty and territorial integrity by explicitly stating that

“for Serbia to impose sanctions on its greatest political partner, Russia, on whom our national interest depends - the person who would do that in Serbia would act directly against our national and state interest” [...] “who will support Serbia in the UN Security Council if Serbia were to turn away from its allies, Russia and China, who stand as the only barrier to Kosovo joining the UN.<sup>93</sup>”

This quote indicates that even though Serbia might not recognise Crimea as part of Russia, it does it for selfish reasons as it would not be possible to claim Kosovo does not have the legitimate right to statehood. Serbia's relations therefore are deeply rooted

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<sup>91</sup> 'Serbia will "never" join anti-Russia sanctions – president', *B92 via Tanjug*, 18 October 2016 <[http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2016&mm=10&dd=18&nav\\_id=99430](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2016&mm=10&dd=18&nav_id=99430)> [accessed 16 April 2017]

<sup>92</sup> 'Tomislav Nikolic: Serbia won't align with East or West', *Al Jazeera*, 26 November 2016 <<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/talktojazeera/2016/11/tomislav-nikolic-serbia-won-align-east-west-161124105054362.html>> [accessed 16 April 2017]

<sup>93</sup> 'FM: Sanctions against Russia would harm Serbia', *B92 via RTS and Tanjug*, 8 October 2014 <[http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2014&mm=10&dd=08&nav\\_id=91830](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2014&mm=10&dd=08&nav_id=91830)> [accessed 16 April 2017]



in Serbia's internal problems, but also in its history during the dissolution of Yugoslavia:

“We respect the territorial integrity of every country member of the UN, including Ukraine, but Serbia will not join any sanctions on Russia, as that state is not just our friend and economic and political partner but a state that never imposed sanctions on Serbia.”<sup>94</sup>

This statement speaks volumes of the recent history of Serbia, 1999 NATO bombing campaign in Serbia and EU sanctions.<sup>95</sup> The solution for Serbia is to not choose sides and claim their sovereign right to be neutral while they continue pursuing friendly relations with all parties – Russia, Ukraine and the EU as they argue that Serbia is a small country whose policies would not impact international relations anyway.<sup>96</sup> The quest of neutrality, however, loses its legitimacy when taking into account military cooperation between Serbia and Russia. The latest high level meeting between Prime Minister Vučić and President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin is just another example of their enhanced military cooperation, because among other topics discussed at the meeting, the military and technical cooperation was a key issue.<sup>97</sup> Russia has also sold military equipment to Serbia at low cost<sup>98</sup> and Serbia on its part hosted military exercises with Russia in parallel to NATO training exercises in neighbouring Montenegro.<sup>99</sup>

As Dačić was preparing for the official visit of Vladimir Putin to Belgrade, he shed light to Russia-Serbia bilateral topics which would be discussed during the meetings and therefore, are potentially additional parts of the reason why Serbia would not join

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<sup>94</sup> Marija Ristic, 'Serbia Rules Out Joining Sanctions on Russia', *BalkanInsight*, 30 April 2014 <<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/serbia-stays-neutral-towards-ukraine-crises-dacic>> [accessed 19 April 2017]

<sup>95</sup> Common Position 98/240/CFSP, OJ L 95, EUR-Lex, 1998 <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:31998E0240&from=EN>> [accessed 6 May 2017]

<sup>96</sup> Marija Ristic, 'Serbia Rules Out Joining Sanctions on Russia', *BalkanInsight*, 30 April 2014

<sup>97</sup> 'Peskov: Military cooperation discussed at top level', *Tanjug*, 17 April 2017 <<http://www.tanjug.rs/full-view.aspx?izb=324365>> [accessed 19 April 2017]

<sup>98</sup> 'Russia seeks 'Slavic brotherhood' with advanced arms sales to Serbia', *Deutsche Welle via AP, Reuters*, 22 December 2016 <<http://www.dw.com/en/russia-seeks-slavic-brotherhood-with-advanced-arms-sales-to-serbia/a-36879634>> [accessed 19 April 2017]

<sup>99</sup> Aleksandar Vasovic, 'Serbia hosts joint military exercises with Russia', *Reuters*, 3 November 2016 <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-serbia-defence-russia-idUSKBN12Y1JX>> [accessed 19 April 2017]

sanctions against Russia. Instead of aligning with EU CFSP, Serbia plans to even further liberalise trade with Russia. Among other topics discussed were the South Stream gas pipeline, Serbia's Gazprom debt to Russia which could be compensated by giving Russia a stake in Serbia's petrochemical company HIP- Petrohemija, securing fuels for the upcoming winter, price cuts for industrial gas consumers, Russia's loan to Serbian Railways etc.<sup>100</sup> Foreign Minister Dačić claimed that close bilateral relations with Russia are important as Western countries lack interest in Serbia - the last British Prime Minister to visit Belgrade was Margaret Thatcher and there are no recent visits by American presidents.<sup>101</sup> Therefore, as harmonising with EU CFSP is not in the interests of Serbia, the government claims to follow the examples of other previous enlargement countries by aligning only by the end of their membership negotiations which will probably not happen in the near future.<sup>102</sup>

In 2014 when the sanctions regime was initially put in place following the annexation of Crimea, presidential foreign policy adviser Ivan Mrkić insisted in an interview that

“I am decisively against sanctions on Russia. Not only for historical and numerous moral reasons, but also because of a rational economic calculation. What would be the effect of our sanctions against a country like Russia? It goes without saying that in economic terms, this could not harm Russia. It seems to me that with such sanctions we would effectively impose sanctions on ourselves.”<sup>103</sup>

Mrkić therefore also implied that there are both moral reasons not to “turn their backs on their brotherly Slavic nation” as well as legitimate economic reasons. In addition, he claimed that even though international media reported that the EU and its officials pressure Serbia to join sanctions on Russia by blackmailing the country using future EU membership as leverage, this is not the feeling domestic actors received after meetings with EU officials:

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<sup>100</sup> 'FM: Sanctions against Russia would harm Serbia', *B92 via RTS and Tanjug*, 8 October 2014

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> 'We would hurt ourselves by imposing sanctions on Russia', *B92 via Večernje Novosti*, 5 August 2014 <[http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2014&mm=08&dd=05&nav\\_id=91197](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2014&mm=08&dd=05&nav_id=91197)> [accessed 16 April 2017]

“No meeting of our President Tomislav Nikolić with foreign officials has been marked by 'insistence.' [...] During the visit of U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Ms. Victoria Nuland nothing of the kind was demanded at all. On the contrary, full understanding was expressed for our friendship and our special ties with Russia. There has been countless speculation in the media that Federica Mogherini, Italy's foreign minister and current EU chair, came to 'blackmail' us, but nothing like that has happened.<sup>104</sup>”

This implies that Serbia does not intend to impose sanctions on Russia nor does it feel real pressure from the EU or U.S. to align.<sup>105</sup> Former Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić (taking office in 31 May 2017 as President of Serbia) has reiterated the official stance of Serbia on numerous occasions and has given his insight into the numerous reasons why Serbia is not getting ready to nor will ever join sanctions against Russia:

“But you're right; we did not impose any sanctions over Russia... because of many political, economic, historical and all the other reasons.<sup>106</sup>”

More specifically, he stated that although Serbia “supports and respects the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and Crimea as a part of Ukraine,” it is very dependent on Russia economically and politically and does not intend to harm itself:

“[Serbia] is very dependent on Russia, on Russian gas, on our export to Russia, particularly of our agricultural products.<sup>107</sup>”

Serbia's exports to Russia amount to 5.4% of the country's total (main trading partners are Italy with 15%, Germany with 12% and Bosnia and Herzegovina with 7.7%) and its import share is even larger – Russia is Serbia's third largest importer with 8.7% (only

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> 'Vucic: McCain did not request recognition of Kosovo', *Tanjug*, 11 April 2017

<<http://www.tanjug.rs/full-view.aspx?izb=323265>> [accessed 19 April 2017]

<sup>106</sup> 'PM: Serbia won't join sanctions against Russia', *B92 via Tanjug*, 5 August 2014

<[http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2014&mm=08&dd=05&nav\\_id=91191](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2014&mm=08&dd=05&nav_id=91191)> [accessed 16 April 2017]

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

Germany and Italy import more to Serbia with respectively 12% and 9.7%).<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, following the sanctions regime put in place in 2014 the President of the Serbian Chamber of Commerce Željko Sertić advocated that the Russian-initiated ban on agricultural products from EU and third countries that have joined the sanctions regime against it would be to Serbia's advantage:

“[Serbian exporters have room for tremendous growth] and now even more so when it is definitely clear that Russia will need to import new products to substitute the current imports.<sup>109</sup>”

Therefore, Serbia uses both normative and rational arguments, even though the latter clearly dominates the domestic discourse on sanctions against Russia. As noted, Serbia has a longstanding and close relationship with Russia as they are both Slavic nations, but it is also important to keep in mind the support Russia has offered for Serbia. Russia's support is most vital in relation to the status issue of Kosovo and it is effectively the only actor that is able to keep the dream of a united Serbia and Kosovo alive. Furthermore, Russia sells military equipment to Serbia as the latter is unsure of its ability to defend itself. This in turn is closely related with Serbia's recent history, the 1999 NATO bombing campaign and the resulting mistrust among the citizens of Serbia towards the West and NATO.

#### **4.4.2 Montenegro**

Montenegro is currently on the path to becoming the newest NATO member as there was only one country left whose parliament had not yet ratified the accession approval needed in order to formally accept Montenegro in 2017.<sup>110</sup> On 12 May, Spain's parliament also ratified Montenegro's NATO Accession Protocol.<sup>111</sup> Further NATO

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<sup>108</sup> Serbia, *The Observatory of Economic Complexity* <<http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/srb>> [accessed 6 May 2017]

<sup>109</sup> 'Serbia sees chance to increase food exports to Russia', *B92 via Tanjug*, 8 August 2014 <[http://www.b92.net/eng/news/business.php?yyyy=2014&mm=08&dd=08&nav\\_id=91234](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/business.php?yyyy=2014&mm=08&dd=08&nav_id=91234)> [accessed 16 April 2017]

<sup>110</sup> Emily Tamkin, 'Montenegro Has the U.S. Greenlight to Join NATO. Now What?', *Foreign Policy*, 12 April 2017 <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/04/12/montenegro-has-the-u-s-greenlight-to-join-nato-now-what>> [accessed 22 April 2017]

<sup>111</sup> 'Spain ratified accession protocol', *European Western Balkans*, 12 May 2017 <<https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2017/05/12/spain-ratified-accession-protocol>> [accessed 12 May 2017]

expansion, however, is seen by Russia as the newest provocation and move towards worsening relations between NATO and Russia. As a consequence, these developments have brought about more active Russian propaganda in Montenegro – not to mention accusations of Russian orchestrated coup attempt during the last general elections<sup>112</sup> – and the Western Balkans in general in order to increase doubts about the genuine wish of the Western military alliance to defend small Western Balkan countries when push comes to show. Despite notable doubts among several opposition parties in Montenegro, NATO expansion is expected to take place and the government supports their country's membership, and this can be seen as the main objective behind Montenegro's foreign policy positions.

As Montenegro has completed several reforms in order to be eligible for NATO membership, this is only possible if there is political support for the Western alliance and its decisions. The U.S. and EU have both sanctioned Russia in relation to its actions in Crimea and eastern Ukraine and Montenegro's membership in this military alliance would only be possible if the country fully supports sanctions and shows willingness to act in solidarity with the actions and policies of EU and NATO. Understanding this, Montenegro has been an EU candidate state that has aligned with its CFSP 100% before the Ukrainian crisis and decided to join the following sanctions regime as well. This firm commitment to EU, the West in general and its norms and values has continued despite possible economic reasons to not align.

Montenegro joined sanctions against Russia right after they were introduced in 2014 and has been forced to defend its alignment both internationally and in response to domestic concerns. After Montenegro's governmental visit to the United States in April 2014 to bid for its membership in NATO, Prime Minister Milo Đukanović was faced with blatant criticism from Russian authorities who were “deeply disappointed” as they saw PM Đukanović's statements towards Russia as “hostile”.<sup>113</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro responded with claims that their decision to join sanctions is not

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<sup>112</sup> Ben Farmer, 'Russian state bodies' behind Montenegro coup plot says prosecutor', *The Telegraph*, 20 February 2017 <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/02/20/russian-state-bodies-behind-montenegro-coup-plot-says-prosecutor>> [accessed 22 April 2017]

<sup>113</sup> 'Montenegro denies conducting anti-Russian policy', *B92*, 16 April 2017 <[http://www.b92.net/eng/news/region.php?yyyy=2014&mm=04&dd=16&nav\\_id=90012](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/region.php?yyyy=2014&mm=04&dd=16&nav_id=90012)> [accessed 22 April 2017]

anti-Russian in their character, but rather a foreign policy decision that was in the interests of Montenegro and its citizens:

“Everything that the prime minister stated publicly and in his talks with U.S. officials is in accordance with the national interests of Montenegro and its foreign policy orientation toward NATO and EU membership, and is not anti-Russian in tone.”<sup>114</sup>

This practical viewpoint was reinforced during the 2015 meeting between Deputy Prime Minister Igor Lukšić and the Russian Ambassador to Montenegro:

“I believe that Russia understands our foreign policy objectives, because Montenegro’s prospective membership of the EU and NATO is not directed against anyone, but is intended to strengthen stability, security, and further development of Montenegro and the region.”<sup>115</sup>

Montenegro's decision to align with EU CFSP and sanctions on Russia can therefore be interpreted as necessary and rational when taking into account their membership bids to NATO and EU, but Montenegro has also officially confirmed their commitment to norms and values as it insists on the “appropriateness” of their foreign policy. After Russia added Montenegro to the list of countries whose agriculture products are banned from Russia for a year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded to state their regret in relation to this decision, but confirmed that

“harmonising with EU positions was the country's foreign policy priority, and that sanctions which Montenegro introduced against Russia at no point had an anti-Russian character, but rather came out of respect for the principles and values the country stands for in international relations.”<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> 'Lukšić – Gricaj: Strengthening cooperation while respecting each other's foreign policy decisions', *Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration*, 11 September 2015  
<<http://www.mvpei.gov.me/en/search/152797/Luksic-Gricaj-Strengthening-cooperation-while-respecting-each-other-s-foreign-policy-decisions.html>> [accessed 22 April 2017]

<sup>116</sup> 'Montenegro to be affected by Russian sanctions', *B92 via Tanjug*, 7 August 2014  
<[http://www.b92.net/eng/news/region.php?yyyy=2014&mm=08&dd=07&nav\\_id=91226](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/region.php?yyyy=2014&mm=08&dd=07&nav_id=91226)> [accessed 22 April 2017]

Montenegro's decision to join sanctions against Russia was not accepted lightly by all domestic parties. The main opposing side to this foreign policy position have been the ethnic Serb parties in Montenegro and the representatives of Serb Orthodox Church. Following the alignment in 2014, the PM was criticised by Metropolitan of Montenegro Amfilohije who described him as a traitor:

“Đukanović is a big traitor of the historical memory of our people. Never in the history has the Serb people - and the Montenegrin nation is part of the Serb people - been against Russia. It is great treachery that he will answer for on Judgment Day.”<sup>117</sup>

Metropolitan's speech was presented in Belgrade during the promotion of Leonid Reshetnikov's book “To Return to Russia” as he quoted the words of Montenegro's 18th and 19th century ruler and military and religious leader Petar I Petrović Njegoš:

“May he who is not loyal to the same-language, same-blood Russia, have the living flesh fall off him, may he be cursed thrice, and 3,000 times by me.”<sup>118</sup>

Montenegro's foreign policy position and its NATO accession bid are also questioned by the main opposition parties which have boycotted the parliament's work since the October 2016 elections due to the accusation of a coup attempt by Russian nationalists. What is more, representatives of the opposition parties have visited several high officials in Moscow and supported the idea of holding an anti-constitutional referendum on NATO membership in Montenegro, but gave up due to lack of financial resources.<sup>119</sup> In 2017, the leader of the major ethnic Serb party Democratic Front Andrija Mandić and his ally Milan Knezević wrote a letter to the U.S. White House chief strategist Steve Bannon to ask for support in blocking NATO enlargement to Montenegro as in their point of view the country is not ready to join and the high popular support for NATO is

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<sup>117</sup> 'Montenegrin PM blasted over Russia policy', *B92*, 29 April 2014

<[http://www.b92.net/eng/news/region.php?yyyy=2014&mm=04&dd=29&nav\\_id=90152](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/region.php?yyyy=2014&mm=04&dd=29&nav_id=90152)> [accessed 22 April 2017]

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> 'DF gave up NATO referendum', *CDM*, 21 April 2017 <<https://www.cdm.me/english/df-gave-nato-referendum>> [accessed 22 April 2017]

questionable in Montenegro.<sup>120</sup> As is known, President Trump has approved Montenegro's membership, but Montenegro's domestic actors have still not reached a consensus in relation to their country's foreign policy positions and the opposition's boycott continues.

During his interview for the Time magazine in February 2017, the Prime Minister for Montenegro further confirmed the position of Montenegro and shed light on the reasons why his country has opted for NATO membership even though it negatively affects Montenegro's relations with Russia. He also confirmed that sanctions should not be seen in Russia as a threat:

“It is all about the strategic conflict between global interests, the power game between NATO and the West on one side and Russia on the other. Montenegro has cherished for more than 300 years its good friendship with Russia and we would never allow our territory to be misused in order to disrupt Russian security in any way.”<sup>121</sup>

Describing restrictive measures against Russia and Russian propaganda against NATO enlargement as “a strategic conflict between global interests” demonstrates that Montenegro has chosen a side in this power game, but has done so not because of the norms and values behind sanctions that were put in place following the annexation of Crimea and Russia's meddling in the internal affairs of Ukraine, but more due to its own strategic interests. While Montenegro is hopeful that its relations with Russia will get better in the future, it firmly demands that Montenegro should not be taken advantage of during this “power play” and ultimately, the sanctions are not against Russia, but mainly correspond with Montenegro's own interests:

“It is completely wrong to interpret cooperation with someone as automatically meaning action against others. Montenegro and its

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<sup>120</sup> Predrag Milić, 'Pro-Russian leaders in Montenegro seek Bannon's help against NATO', *The Star*, 3 March 2017 <<https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2017/03/03/pro-russian-leaders-in-montenegro-seek-bannons-help-against-nato.html>> [accessed 22 April 2017]

<sup>121</sup> 'Prime Minister Marković in interview with US-based Time magazine: Montenegro has no doubt about EU, NATO accession', *Government of Montenegro*, 17 February 2017 <<http://www.gov.me/en/search/169491/Prime-Minister-Markovic-in-interview-with-US-Time-magazine.html>> [accessed 22 April 2017]



citizens have their own interests and the state leadership is working to implement those interests. Membership of the EU and NATO is not directed against Russia or anyone else, but corresponds to the needs of society for enduring peace and stability, a wish to essentially, and not only geographically, belong to the world's most developed countries and cherish the values of the Western civilisation.<sup>122</sup>”

In conclusion, Montenegro supports sanctions against Russia for both normative and rational reasons, but the government more often uses rational arguments in order to win domestic support and show that their policy is in the interests of Montenegro first and foremost. These rational arguments, however, are not related with the economic situation of Montenegro as Russia is far from being Montenegro's first trading partner (imports from Russia amount to 1.3% and exports less than 1%<sup>123</sup>), but rather with their security and future membership of NATO. The leaders of Montenegro have argued that their policies are not intended to be against Russia, but are what is needed to be done in order to protect national interests. Therefore, the underlying national interest for them is membership in EU and NATO for which they are willing to set other interests aside.

#### **4.4.3 Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**

Macedonia places future membership in NATO as first and commencement of negotiations for EU membership as second on its list of government's priorities.<sup>124</sup> However, as noted in a previous subchapter, the country's alignment with EU CFSP declarations, positions and Council decisions has been decreasing as it went from 94% in 2013 to 73% in 2014 and has more or less stayed on that level since then. FYROM's National Programme for the Adoption of the *Acquis* (NPAA) from 2016 indicates that currently it regularly aligns with EU policies and it will continue to do so:

“The Republic of Macedonia regularly joins the declarations,

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<sup>122</sup> 'Montenegro's accession to NATO is not anti-Russian, PM Marković stresses in interview with CorD', *Government of Montenegro*, 1 February 2017 <<http://www.gov.me/en/search/168870/Montenegro-s-accession-to-NATO-is-not-anti-Russian-PM-Markovic-notes-in-interview-with-CorD.html>> [accessed 22 April 2017]

<sup>123</sup> Montenegro, *The Observatory of Economic Complexity* <<http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/mne>> [accessed 6 May 2017]

<sup>124</sup> Надворешни работи, европски и евро-атлански интеграции, *Government of the Republic of Macedonia* <<http://vlada.mk/node/92?language=mk>> [accessed 1 May 2017]

statements and decisions of the EU, with which restrictive measures and sanctions against countries, entities and individuals are being imposed.<sup>125</sup>,

This statement of course is not wrong and the FYROM indeed does align with certain EU sanctions, but has done so generally in relation to countries that they have superficial or no relations with. What concerns the country's trade relations with Russia, there is little to confirm that Macedonia would not impose sanctions due to its large scale import and export relations with Moscow. In 2015, the main export destinations for Macedonia were Germany (38%), Serbia (6.9%), Bulgaria (5.5%), the Czech Republic (4.3%) and Greece (4.3%).<sup>126</sup> Exports to Russia amounted to only 1% of FYROM's total exports. Same goes for imports which mostly came from Germany (13%), the United Kingdom (11%), Serbia (7.9%) and Greece (7.7%) while Russia's imports only amounted to 2.1% of total imports. This would imply that FYROM does not have a lot to lose trade-wise if it would put sanctions in place on Russia, but economic relations cannot be seen as the main driver for decision-making in the Western Balkans.

While analysing government press releases and news reports on the possible joining with EU sanctions against Russia, the thesis concludes that the leaders of Macedonia are unusually silent as there are limited to no English-language press releases or speeches intended for international audiences on government websites that would draw attention to the conflict in Ukraine, condemn related violence or insist that action should be taken in response to annexation of Crimea. The lack of attention given to the crisis in Ukraine is notable as it visibly differs from other countries in the region, as even those that have also not joined sanctions are still actively taking part in the discussion. This could be interpreted in many ways as FYROM has chosen to pursue EU and NATO membership and officially praises the values that these organisations carry. During a NATO day event organised by the Euro-Atlantic Council of Macedonia in cooperation with the Ministry of Defence and NATO contact embassies in Macedonia, Defence Minister

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<sup>125</sup> 'National Programme for Adoption of the *Acquis Communautaire*', *Government of the Republic of Macedonia*, 2016 <[http://www.sep.gov.mk/data/file/NPAA/NPAA2016\\_EN\\_17\\_03\\_2016.zip](http://www.sep.gov.mk/data/file/NPAA/NPAA2016_EN_17_03_2016.zip)> [accessed 1 May 2017]

<sup>126</sup> Macedonia, *The Observatory of Economic Complexity* <<http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/mkd>> [accessed 6 May 2017]

Zoran Jolevski noted that integration is a top priority for his country due to the values it protects:

“NATO membership guarantees the prosperity and security not only of Macedonia, but also of the countries in the region and beyond, and as a result the Alliance must resume its open-door policy [...] Nowadays, NATO is considered a crucial alliance in maintaining global peace, improving relations between nations, preventing wars and advancing human rights and overall progress of the countries.”<sup>127</sup>

Public support for NATO membership is very high in Macedonia – some polls have even shown that 90% of the people of Macedonia supported NATO membership some years ago.<sup>128</sup> This support, however, has decreased as in 2016 only about 73% endorsed Macedonia's possible future membership. These numbers indicate that foreign policy discourse in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has been closely related with possible NATO membership, but there is little discussion on the foreign policy of the EU and its sanctions on Russia. In general, however, there is little difference between the values that these two organisations promote and therefore, publicly supporting the policies of both organisations should be equally acceptable to FYROM.

Macedonia's lowering support for NATO membership and their frustration with EU's decision to postpone their opening negotiations with the EU are closely related with a bilateral issue FYROM has with Greece. Even though the European Commission recommended already in 2009 to start negotiations with FYROM, Greece has blocked it the same way it has blocked the country's membership in NATO.<sup>129</sup> What has resulted is a deep frustration in Macedonia with their overall progress in the accession process that has offered no guarantees that they can ever become members if they do not solve the issue of FYROM's name in cooperation with Greece. In 2012, Greece was joined by

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<sup>127</sup> 'Macedonia marks NATO Day', *Government of the Republic of Macedonia*, 4 April 2017  
<<http://vlada.mk/node/12753?language=en-gb>> [accessed 1 May 2017]

<sup>128</sup> Survey of Macedonian Public Opinion (Question: “Do you support Macedonia becoming a member of NATO?”), *Center for Insights in Survey Research, International Republican Institute*, 2016  
<[http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/iri\\_macedonia\\_survey\\_april\\_2016\\_0.pdf](http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/iri_macedonia_survey_april_2016_0.pdf)> [accessed May 2017]

<sup>129</sup> Sally A. Painter, 'Time to unblock Macedonia's accession to NATO', *Euractiv*, 2 April 2013  
<<http://www.euractiv.com/section/all/opinion/time-to-unblock-macedonia-s-accession-to-nato>> [accessed 6 May 2017]

Bulgaria in blocking the start of the accession negotiations with FYROM on the grounds that the latter “had failed to nurture good neighbourly relations.”<sup>130</sup>

During an interview for the Austrian Die Press, Foreign Minister Nikola Poposki said that the European Union made a mistake in 2009 by allowing Greece to veto opening of negotiations with Macedonia as the reform process in his country has suffered because of it:

“Now we have received the eighth EC recommendation to open accession negotiations. We received the first EC recommendation in 2009. European Council then made big mistake by not accepting the recommendation. And Greece sought postponement of the start of accession negotiations [...] the greatest progress was achieved during the negotiations for EU membership. Therefore, the biggest mistake was postponement of the start of accession negotiations with Macedonia for 8 years.”<sup>131</sup>

Discussions on future progress in integrating the country have largely been put on hold due to the name issue of FYROM and resulting from this, many policy areas receive little attention, including the CFSP alignment of Macedonia. Today, Macedonia is facing a government crisis as both influential political parties received the backing of a similar amount of Macedonian voters and are unable to agree on who should be the future prime minister and who forms the government. As a result, Macedonia is now believed to be much further away from opening negotiations as it had been several years before when the European Commission recommended starting the negotiations, but one EU member state blocked it due to bilateral disputes.

While high officials of Macedonia generally avoid discussing EU sanctions on Russia, Moscow has used its fair share of opportunities to draw parallels and interpret the situation in Macedonia from their point of view. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov indicated that he believes the current problems in Macedonia are the result of

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<sup>130</sup> Sinisa Jakov Marusic, 'Bulgaria and Greece Block Macedonia's EU Talks', *Balkan Insight*, 12 December 2012 <<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bulgaria-joins-greece-in-blocking-macedonia-s-eu-bid>> [accessed 6 May 2017]

<sup>131</sup> 'Poposki: There are changes in relations with Greece', *Government of the Republic of Macedonia*, 16 November 2016 <<http://vlada.mk/node/12571?language=en-gb>> [accessed 6 May 2017]

Western powers trying to meddle in the affairs of third states by provoking colour revolutions and supporting opposition parties in order to produce a government that would align with EU's policies:

“Developments in Macedonia are result of the desire to influence the Government of Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski regarding his refusal to join the sanctions against Russia.<sup>132</sup>”

In addition, it is claimed that after former PM Gruevski lost the support of the EU following his wiretapping scandal, there are no alternative choices for him to stay in power than to accept support from Russia.<sup>133</sup> This viewpoint was introduced after the 2015 anti-government protests in Skopje when the leader of the opposition, Zoran Zaev demanded that the current Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski steps down from office due to his alleged abuse of power. As Russian FM Lavrov explained it:

“Gruevski was under fire because he has refused to support the EU’s sanctions against Russia over its involvement in Ukraine... Support for a pipeline delivering Russian gas to Europe via Turkey, which is competing with an EU-supported project for Azeri gas, is also a factor.<sup>134</sup>”

On its part, the Foreign Minister of Macedonia Nikola Poposki noted already in 2012 that Macedonia has a special relationship with Russia, and this has not changed following the Ukrainian crisis and the annexation of Crimea:

“Moreover, it has been announced that Macedonia will be part of strategic gas pipeline project 'South Stream', which is expected to contribute to the development of numerous industrial branches and

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<sup>132</sup> 'Russian Foreign Minister: Developments in Macedonia Are Controlled from Outside', *Independent.mk*, 20 May 2015 <<http://www.independent.mk/articles/17706/Russian+Foreign+Minister+Developments+in+Macedonia+Are+Controlled+from+Outside>> [accessed 6 May 2017]

<sup>133</sup> Boris Georgievski, 'Macedonia: A pawn in the Russian geopolitical game?', *Deutsche Welle*, 26 May 2015 <<http://www.dw.com/en/macedonia-a-pawn-in-the-russian-geopolitical-game/a-18476013>> [accessed 6 May 2017]

<sup>134</sup> Boris Cerni and Ilya Arkhipov, 'Russia Blames Macedonia Crisis on Foreign Influence', *Bloomberg*, 20 May 2015 <<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-05-20/macedonian-pm-opposition-leader-agree-to-focus-on-eu>> [accessed 6 May 2017]

energy in general.<sup>135</sup>,”

In conclusion, there is little debate in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia concerning the sanctions against Russia and whether Macedonia should join them. If taking into account trade relations between Macedonia and Russia, sanctions would have caused little to no problems for Macedonia, but since there is no reason to join sanctions as the country would not be any closer to EU and/or NATO membership anyway, the government of FYROM has chosen to non-align with EU CFSP in this matter. What is more, Macedonian exports to Russia have risen as countries who have not sanctioned Russia are taking the place of other EU states and the U.S. that have.<sup>136</sup> Therefore, the decision concerning whether to join EU sanctions against Russia is made based on a cost-benefit calculation whereby Macedonia might benefit from increased trade relations and the Turkish Stream project,<sup>137</sup> but will not gain anything from aligning as Greece will continue blocking its accession to both organisations until they solve the name dispute.

#### **4.4.4 Albania**

Albania joined restrictive measures against Russia in 2014 and therefore has had a 100% alignment with EU CFSP both before and after the Ukrainian crisis. Furthermore, as Albania has been a member of NATO since 2009, its foreign policy is in line with the general positions of the West, including both EU and NATO. Although press releases and news articles about Albanian alignment with EU foreign policy are rather infrequent, there is reason to trust that joining restrictive measures was not a policy position up for debate in this Western Balkan country. On its part, Russia has introduced counter-sanctions against both Albania and Montenegro, but has not been very vocal about the Albanian government's decision to align with the EU in this matter nor has it questioned popular support to it. Albania and Russia have not had very close relations in comparison with many other Western Balkan countries and as a result there

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<sup>135</sup> 'FM Poposki: Macedonia has special interest in building friendly relations with Russia', *NOA.al*, 11 March 2012 <<http://noa.al/lajmi/2012/03/160325.html>> [accessed 6 May 2017]

<sup>136</sup> 'Macedonian exports of fruits and vegetables to Russia increased by 228 percent', *Kurir*, 26 February 2015 <<http://kurir.mk/en/?p=42711>> [accessed 6 May 2017]

<sup>137</sup> The South Stream project was abandoned in 2014 mainly due to obstacles faced from the EU and Bulgaria, and was replaced with proposals to build the Turkish Stream. An additional project called the Tesla pipeline would then connect Central Europe with Turkish Stream while passing also Macedonia and Serbia.

is little to suggest Albania could have seriously calculated whether to ruin relations with “a brotherly nation” or stand firmly behind NATO and the West which effectively ensure its security. Foreign Minister Ditmir Bushati sees Albania as “the most developed democracy in the Western Balkans” and “a bastion against Russia's influence in Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia and Croatia.”<sup>138</sup>

When analysing statements after various visits by EU high officials to Albania and also Albanian ministers abroad, its 100% alignment record is regularly mentioned and Albania is praised for its commitment to promoting EU values. During the December 2014 meeting of Foreign Minister Ditmir Bushati and High Representative Federica Mogherini in Brussels, the minister reported afterwards that

“geopolitical clarity is key, if we want to build a state of common purpose and common values in the Western Balkans. As the High Representative noted, Albania is proud of its record of full alignment with EU foreign policy.”<sup>139</sup>

In addition, during an open lecture in the Tirana University's Faculty of Social Sciences, Minister Bushati focused on Euro-Atlantic cooperation and shared values as he explained the origins of Albania's foreign policy. The main policy positions of his country, he claims are based on the democratisation and transformation of Albanian society:

“Based on our years of experience as NATO members, I can tell you that the participation in the Alliance has transformed Albania into a country, which generates and should radiate stability. Meanwhile, the process of EU membership is a national objective, in view of the democratisation and transformation of the Albanian society, in accordance with the values and principles of the united Europe. An

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<sup>138</sup> 'Albania pitches itself as bastion against Russian influence', *B92 via Tanjug*, 20 April 2017 <[http://www.b92.net/eng/news/region.php?yyyy=2017&mm=04&dd=20&nav\\_id=101074](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/region.php?yyyy=2017&mm=04&dd=20&nav_id=101074)> [accessed 22 April 2017]

<sup>139</sup> 'Minister Bushati meets Vice President of the European Commission and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Ms. Federica Mogherini', *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania*, 2 December 2014 <<http://www.punetejashtme.gov.al/en/press-office/news/minister-bushati-meets-vice-president-of-the-european-commission-and-eu-high-representative-for-foreign-affairs-and-security-policy-ms-federica-mogherini1417539840&page=30>> [accessed 22 April 2017]



essential element in this regard is the fact that during these past two years, we have remained consistent in the 100% alignment of our views with those of the European Union.<sup>140</sup>,”

Furthermore, in his speech he quoted Ismail Kadare, an Albanian novelist and poet, as he indicated his full support to this understanding. He declared that Albanian foreign policy is oriented towards the promotion of peace, security and prosperity, above all in our region and therefore, “Europe is the natural condition of Albania. The only one.”<sup>141</sup>,”

When analysing Albania's seemingly unconditional support to EU CFSP and sanctions against Russia which seem to be based on the norms and values Albania upholds, it needs to be taken into account that there might also be more rational explanations to these policy choices. The most obvious one is Albania's deep and brotherly relationship with neighbouring Kosovo where the majority of the population consist of Albanians and which unilaterally declared independence from Serbia in 2008 and relies on the West to guarantee the continuation of its statehood. Furthermore, as Albania and Russia have organised intergovernmental committees to advance trade and economic cooperation, it can be argued that rational interest to strengthen bilateral ties is not out of the picture, at least as an official position.<sup>142</sup>

#### **4.4.5 Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The decision-making to align with CFSP is particularly difficult in Bosnia and Herzegovina due to its tripartite Presidency where three ethnic representatives all have an equal say in the foreign affairs of the country. As all three presidency members – a Bosniak, a Serb and a Croat are effectively able to block any decision they might expect to be against their interest, it is not surprising that Bosnia and Herzegovina has not joined EU sanctions regime against Russia. Therefore, even though the potential candidate country has managed to agree aligning with 77% of EU CFSP positions, declarations and Council decisions, sanctions are firmly blocked by the Serb entity

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<sup>140</sup> 'Open lecture of Minister Bushati at the Faculty of Social Sciences: 'Does Albania have a foreign policy?', *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania*, 28 October 2015

<<http://www.puneteshatme.gov.al/en/press-office/speeches/open-lecture-of-minister-bushati-at-the-faculty-of-social-sciences-does-albania-have-a-foreign-policy&page=5>> [accessed 22 April 2017]

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> 'Albania, Russia seek to boost sanctions-hit trade, investment ties', *Tirana Times*, 5 April 2017 <<http://www.tiranatimes.com/?p=131870>> [accessed 22 April 2017]



Republika Srpska, led by President Milorad Dodik. The President of Republika Srpska, on his part, has been committed to not aligning with EU sanctions against Russia in order to maintain his entity's good relations with Moscow:

“I do not intend to deal with the topic of Crimea, because it does not concern me.”<sup>143</sup>,

After the annexation of Crimea, Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the “Declaration on the political situation in Ukraine” which did not include any kind of condemnation of Russia's involvement in destabilising eastern Ukraine nor the annexation of Crimea, but only general calls for a peaceful solution to the Ukrainian crisis.<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, the Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina Mirsada Čolaković left the room when the United Nations started its vote on the referendum in Crimea in March 2014.<sup>145</sup>

The conflicting understanding about the country's future and relations with other states is also evident from the general directions and principles of implementing foreign policy of their tripartite presidency country as these do not include any specific alignments plans related to the EU. The foreign policy agenda does not declare the EU membership as a goal for Bosnia and Herzegovina, but rather sees the integration process as a tool to reform the country and create links with other European nations:

“Bosnia and Herzegovina foreign policy has been aimed at promoting and preserving the lasting peace, security and stable democratic and the entire development in the country, in other words, at the accession into contemporary European, political, economic and security integration flows.”<sup>146</sup>,

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<sup>143</sup> 'Serbs won't let Bosnia join sanctions against Russia', *B92 via Tanjug*, 26 April 2016 <[http://www.b92.net/eng/news/region.php?yyyy=2014&mm=03&dd=26&nav\\_id=89781](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/region.php?yyyy=2014&mm=03&dd=26&nav_id=89781)> [accessed 16 April 2017]

<sup>144</sup> Dragan Đukanović, 'The Process of Institutionalization of the EU's CFSP in the Western Balkan Countries during the Ukraine Crisis', *Croatian International Relations Review*, 21.72, (2015), 81-106 (p. 91)

<sup>145</sup> 'BiH izbegla glasanje u Ujedinjenim nacijama o legalnosti referenduma na Krimu', *Blic via Tanjug*, 31 March 2014 <<http://www.blic.rs/vesti/svet/bih-izbegla-glasanje-u-ujedinjenim-nacijama-o-legalnosti-referenduma-na-krimu/6tjr4ly>> [accessed 6 May 2017]

<sup>146</sup> 'General directions and priorities for implementation of foreign policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina', *Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 2003 <<http://www.predsjednistvobih.ba/van/default.aspx?id=13612&langTag=en-US>> [accessed 7 May 2017]

In 2016 Milorad Dodik held an anti-constitutional referendum in Republika Srpska (RS) on celebrating the National Day of RS which marks the day of their entity's declaration of independence in 9 January 1992. This prompted strong criticism from the West due to the divisive nature of the referendum. Following these developments, the U.S. imposed sanctions on Milorad Dodik which it explained were put in place due to Dodik's complete ignorance of the 1995 Dayton Accords that ended the bloody war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>147</sup> On his part, Dodik has also called for the creation of Greater Serbia: "There is a wonderful idea ... and that is to separate RS [from Bosnia] and to form a union with Serbia and that is together with four municipalities of Kosovo<sup>148</sup>," and insists that Western sanctions against Russia are unjust as he hopes Russia might support its bid for independence in the future:

“..injustice of Western sanctions against Russia and the fact that the RS in the BiH institutions did not give a consent to such an act.”<sup>149</sup>

As Bosnia and Herzegovina is run by a tripartite presidency that decides all foreign policy matters together, whereas each member of the presidency has a veto, it is not surprising that the country does not align with EU sanctions against Russia. Following statements from Bosniak and Croat representatives of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the second powerful entity, it is clear that overall the foreign policy objective is to join the EU in the future and although Milorad Dodik has not completely excluded the possibility of membership, it is highly unlikely that he would agree to align with EU CFSP in order to progress in the accession talks with EU. Former Foreign Minister Dr. Zlatko Lagumdžija, however, has confirmed that integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina should conclude with membership in both organisations not only due to security and economic concerns, but the values these organisations uphold:

“Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot remain unfinished story of the European Union and NATO and integration process of our country

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<sup>147</sup> 'U.S. imposes sanctions on Bosnian Serb nationalist leader Dodik', *Reuters*, 17 February 2017 <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-sanctions-bosnia-dodik-idUSKBN1512WI>> [accessed 7 May 2017]

<sup>148</sup> Andrew Rettmann, 'Republika Srpska defies EU and US', *EU Observer*, 10 January 2017 <<https://euobserver.com/foreign/136490>> [accessed 7 May 2017]

<sup>149</sup> 'Dodik: There will be More Referendums in the RS', *Sarajevo Times*, 1 December 2016

and the entire region must be implemented project in sense of full implementation of European values where our thoughts about European values will become our words and our actions.<sup>150</sup>”

He has also confirmed that even though European values are currently not a reality in his country, every effort should be taken to make them a reality in Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>151</sup> Ignorance of some actors in the country towards the Ukrainian crisis and the annexation of Crimea in 2014 is also displayed though increased trade with Russia, despite EU's insistence that the future candidate state should not take advantage of the situation.<sup>152</sup> Trade relations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Russia are not overly significant as the major trading partners are still Serbia and the EU countries (e.g. Germany, Italy, Austria, Croatia and Slovenia) as only 4.9% of overall imports come from Russia and 1.2% of exports go to Russia.<sup>153</sup> When comparing the trading partners of each entity, however, it is clear that Russia as a trading partner is more important for Republika Srpska than for the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Russia's value concerning trade numbers has even increased after sanctions were put in place as RS has ignored the demands from the EU that this situation should not be taken advantage of trade-wise. The food producers are keen to use sanctions to their advantage and the presidency of RS does not object to it:

“These sanctions were welcomed very much. Thanks to some other problems in Europe, we have been fortunate enough and able to use the opportunity and rapidly orient ourselves towards this market and win it.<sup>154</sup>”

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<sup>150</sup> 'Dr. Lagumdžija: Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Balkans cannot remain unfinished story of the European Union and NATO', *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 1 December 2014 <[http://www.mvp.gov.ba/aktuelnosti/top\\_news/default.aspx?id=26228&template\\_id=16&pageIndex=1](http://www.mvp.gov.ba/aktuelnosti/top_news/default.aspx?id=26228&template_id=16&pageIndex=1)> [accessed 7 May 2017]

<sup>151</sup> 'Dr. Lagumdžija participated in the Croatia Forum: The EU solidarity with B&H must be a permanent category', *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 13 February 2014 <[http://www.mvp.gov.ba/aktuelnosti/top\\_news/default.aspx?id=28078&template\\_id=16&pageIndex=1](http://www.mvp.gov.ba/aktuelnosti/top_news/default.aspx?id=28078&template_id=16&pageIndex=1)> [accessed 7 May 2017]

<sup>152</sup> 'EU Warns BiH Not to Take Advantage of Russia Sanctions – Oslobodenje', *BiH Dayton Project*, 21 August 2014 <<http://www.bihdaytonproject.com/?p=2756>> [accessed 7 May 2017]

<sup>153</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina, *The Observatory of Economic Complexity* <<http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/bih>> [accessed 7 May 2017]

<sup>154</sup> 'B&H Fruit Producers winning the Russian market', *Sarajevo Times*, 20 August 2015 <<http://www.sarajevotimes.com/?p=82602>> [accessed 7 May 2017]

Similarly to other countries in the region, there is very little attention given to values and norms that the EU CFSP is based on, at least in RS. Decisions are taken in order to advance own interests and keep different lines of communication open in order to ensure governance is possible, progress in other areas of EU integration is not blocked and what is most important for the President of Republika Srpska, that all options for future statehood are kept alive.

#### **4.4.6 Kosovo**

Considering the status issue of Kosovo and its difficult relations with Serbia and Russia, it is not surprising that in March 2014, its foreign ministry officially and clearly condemned the aggression in Ukraine by openly condemning the actions of Russia which Kosovo sees a threat to peace and security not only in Ukraine, but also in the wider region:

“The Republic of Kosovo condemns aggression on the territory of Ukraine from the Russian Federation, and the violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine in violation of the Russian Federation obligations, under the UN Charter, of the Helsinki Final Act and the Memorandum of Budapest, 1994. Actions taken by the Russian Federation are a threat to peace and security of Ukraine and the wider region. Republic of Kosovo calls on all parties to respect international promises and resolve any concerns about security through dialogue and international mediation respecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine.<sup>155</sup>”

What is more, not only did Kosovo condemn the violence perpetrated in Ukraine, it joined sanctions against Russia on September 17, 2014. This decision was made in order to clearly show the West that Kosovo supports the EU and U.S., shares the values they aim to protect in the world and hopes to become a part of the European Union in the future. The former Foreign Minister of Kosovo Enver Hoxhaj noted during his meeting with the Head of the European Delegation to Kosovo Samuel Žbogar that

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<sup>155</sup> 'Republic of Kosovo condemns the aggression on Ukraine', *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo*, 2 March 2014 <<http://www.mfa-ks.net/?page=2,217,2316>> [accessed 6 May 2017]

Kosovo is ready to continue its support to international partners in all activities that aim stability and world peace by emphasising that

“Recent commitments undertaken by the Government of Kosovo regarding the sanctions against Russia [...] are proofs of a proactive and dynamic approach of Kosovo's foreign policy.<sup>156</sup>”

During a summit of the foreign and defence ministers of the Baltic and Western Balkan states which was held in Lithuania in 2014, minister Hoxhaj confirmed that he hopes Kosovo is able to move forward in its accession process towards NATO as well as emphasised the difficult security situation in Europe after the annexation of Crimea by Russia. In relation to this event, the press release by the Foreign Ministry of Kosovo stated:

“Regarding the current security concerns in Europe, Minister Hoxhaj emphasised that after the annexation of Crimea by Russia, Europe is no longer as safe as it was intended, calling this step of Russia as one of the most dangerous acts after the Cold War. Russian annexation of the territory of Ukraine, according to him, constitutes a threat to stability and peace in Europe and the challenge for democratisation efforts of the EU and NATO.<sup>157</sup>”

These statements carry a strong commitment to EU norms and values, but on Kosovo's part it is also rational to support the EU and U.S. in relation to their foreign policy positions as they guarantee the continuation of the country's unilaterally declared independence from the year 2008 and its security in the region.

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<sup>156</sup> 'Hoxhaj met Žbogar, praised Kosovo's position towards its allies', *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo*, 24 September 2014 <<http://www.mfa-ks.net/?page=2,217,2472>> [accessed 6 May 2017]

<sup>157</sup> 'Hoxhaj: Nato to open the doors for the membership of Kosovo', *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo*, 4 April 2014 <<http://www.mfa-ks.net/?page=2,217,2345>> [accessed 6 May 2017]

## 5. Comparison

Reasons for alignment or non-alignment with European Union Common Foreign and Security Policy in the Western Balkan countries have similarities, but it is also possible to highlight many differences. In general, the foreign policy agenda of all countries researched in this Master's thesis is future EU membership, but several states have competing national interests that strongly clash with the conditions set forth by the European Union. Furthermore, it can be noted that the researched states more often use rational rather than normative arguments in order to explain their alignment record. As a result, it is questionable whether these states are ready to defend EU values abroad when only half of the current enlargement countries align with EU foreign policy themselves.

When analysing the perceived legitimacy of EU accession conditions it was expected that non-aligning countries have a clear understanding that they would be able to become future member states only by fulfilling certain conditions. In order to draw conclusions about the perceived legitimacy of EU demands, the speeches and press releases of EU high officials were analysed in order to determine whether or not public pressure was applied by the EU. It can be concluded that despite progressive alignment being part of the conditions that allow candidate states to move forward in the accession progress, it is notable that media generally reports that EU officials claim that they understand the reasoning behind non-alignment of certain states and therefore, do not push for alignment at any cost - at least not before the very end of the accession process. Furthermore, it seems to be acceptable that alignment in foreign policy matters takes time and/or candidates are not able to align due to their close relations with Russia. Resulting from this weak public pressure from the EU, various ministers and other politicians from enlargement states report that they will not align or will align in due course, but are not going to change their policy in the near future.

The countries which do not align with CFSP in relation to sanctions introduced against Russia are Serbia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Among these, Serbia is the most vocal about EU sanctions against Russia and has repeatedly confirmed that they do not currently plan to nor will ever align with EU foreign policy in this matter. As Serbia's non-alignment with CFSP is closely related

with the status issue of Kosovo, some government members have even publicly announced that if the EU would pressure them into aligning, they would probably accept that they are not able to become member states at all. Therefore, for Serbia the conditions concerning Chapter 31 of the accession criteria are not legitimate and it is likely that perhaps Serbia would be more interested in changing EU conditions in this matter or wait for the Ukrainian crisis resolves rather than align with policies they do not agree with.

The other non-aligning states, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the FYROM are generally less vocal in this matter, but for these countries the possibility of becoming member states in the near future is even more questionable. As Bosnia and Herzegovina is not even an official candidate state and is not able to align due to the firm opposition of the President of one of their entities, Republika Srpska, there is little hope that the country would join sanctions against Russia. What concerns Macedonia, it needs to be noted that its path to EU membership has been blocked by Greece since 2009 and resulting from this, the name issue of the country has become the most important obstacle in their accession process. Therefore, it is not possible to confirm that the legitimacy of EU condition concerning progressive alignment with EU CFSP is high or low because foreign policy alignment gets little attention from their respective governments due to other more pressing limitations in their accession process which they need to address first.

What concerns the Western Balkan countries that align with CFSP and sanctions against Russia, the EU is very vocal in praising their solidarity. For these three countries, alignment with sanctions is important as their track record is often pointed out by EU officials and alignment positively sets them apart from other countries in the region. While in the case of Montenegro, there is increased pressure and criticism from Russia in relation to their sanctions policy, in Albania and Kosovo there is little discussion about the necessity of maintaining this policy as they do not have friendly or very beneficial bilateral relations with Russia. Overall, EU conditions concerning foreign policy are legitimate in these three countries and they understand the benefit this brings to their overall integration perspective. What concerns Montenegro, however, there are many domestic actors who actively seek to discredit this foreign policy agenda and

therefore, the EU should continue explaining the links between values and its foreign policy.

The second and third hypotheses argued that aligning countries are more likely to use normative arguments and non-aligning countries are more likely to use rational arguments when explaining their alignment record to the EU. Empirical analysis of the official positions of Western Balkan states shows that this is not the case most of the time. While non-aligning countries mainly use rational explanations for their track records, there are also examples of countries that use normative arguments, or both, but the norms generally referred to are not EU norms. In the case of Serbia, its cultural link as a Slavic nation and close historical cooperation with Russia is very important. Even though Russia might not be their main trading partner, there is an agreement among different actors in Serbian society that close cooperation with Russia is both necessary and moral. Furthermore, there are many references to past relations of Serbia and the West which have resulted in deep mistrust in EU's objectives in foreign policy matters among the Serbian people and some government members.

While Montenegro would seem to be the most obvious case to confirm the hypothesis that aligning countries are more likely to use normative arguments, there is little to confirm this. In an extensive amount of news articles, speeches and press releases, the focus is more on the national interest of Montenegro and their rational calculation than on EU norms and values. Furthermore, when criticised by Russia for their alignment with CFSP, Montenegro has generally argued that they have nothing against Russia, but they did not have any other option than to align as they would not be able to join NATO if they did not show commitment to Western values. It must be said, however, that EU norms and values also seem to be respected and therefore discussed in a notable amount of occasions and in several documents. Overall, Montenegro's main talking points are focused on the rational interests of the country rather than the normative aspect of its foreign policy agenda.

All in all, there are two countries in the Western Balkans where the focus on norms and values is dominant in the discourse on CFSP and Western sanctions against Russia. These countries are Albania, which is a member state of NATO since 2009 and Kosovo. Due to its status issue and the Western support that has allowed Kosovo to declare and



defend its sovereignty, it remains firmly committed to the EU and NATO. In Albania and Kosovo, the question of whether or not to join sanctions against Russia does not seem to be difficult as both countries have condemned Russia's actions in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea. Furthermore, their relation with Russia is superficial (e.g. Russia's trade share in their economies is next to nothing). Therefore, the focus is more on values like stability, prosperity, integrity and territorial sovereignty. Kosovo, on its part, is the most critical of Russia's actions in Ukraine and has issued statements by their government that confirm their commitment to EU values and strong position towards Russia and the Ukrainian crisis.

As was noted, Western sanctions against Russia are barely discussed in the local news of FYROM and this could be interpreted in many ways. What is interesting about Macedonia, however, is that even though their government does not focus much on the option to join sanctions, Russia's government is more vocal when it comes to Macedonia. As the position of FYROM's government is not clearly stated in domestic media, it is not possible to conclude their main arguments in this matter, but it is important to note that in recent years the government has started working more closely with their Russian counterparts in several issues concerning their economies and cooperation in the field of energetics. Therefore, it can be concluded that the government is much more interested in economic benefits than on upholding and publicly advocating for EU norms and values despite these being included in their official foreign policy agenda.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a distinct case as it seems the governments of the two entities have developed exactly the opposite positions in this matter. While the President of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina publicly speaks about joining EU as soon as possible and reaffirms the necessity to respect and support the EU also in foreign policy and norms protection, the President of the Republika Srpska does not agree. The latter is recorded as openly declaring that Western sanctions are unjust and therefore, his country would never align with this policy. Furthermore, Bosnia and Herzegovina, or parts of it, have taken advantage of the sanctions regime in order to increase their own trade and level of cooperation with Russia.

When comparing the ethnic compositions of these countries, it can be noted that there are three countries that are mostly populated by one major ethnic group – Serbia, Albania and Kosovo (not including northern Kosovo which is populated by Serbs and lacks power to influence the decision of the central government). Based on the empirical data used in this thesis, it can be noted that these three countries are also the ones which do not have any large-scale debate in their respective societies about whether to change their foreign policy agendas. Serbia is firmly committed to not supporting the sanctions regime and in contrast, Albania and Kosovo are not actively discussing whether sanctions should be dropped on their parts. Therefore, there is little hope for a policy change in the near future.

As expected, countries with more than one major ethnic group are more or less split when it comes to the national foreign policy agenda as a variety of opinions is not uncommon. In Montenegro, CFSP alignment continues to be 100%, but this does not mean that all groups in the society are supportive of the government in this decision. This thesis argues the opposite – there is an extensive debate going on in the society about possible NATO membership and sanctions on Russia, but even the boycott by the opposition has not changed the government's official position as the opposition lacks power and resources to influence the agenda more effectively. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the situation is more or less the same when it comes to competing opinions, but the difference lies in the state structure which allows all parties to veto any policy they see as against national interest or the interest of their specific ethnic group.

All in all, CFSP alignment is an important issue the Western Balkan states need to address in the future and the EU should ensure that enlargement countries understand that commitment to its norms is non-negotiable. When comparing this enlargement round with the two previous ones in 2007 and 2013, we can observe that Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania were all aligning with the EU CFSP long before their accession<sup>158</sup>, but it has to be noted of course that they did not have to put sanctions in place against a possible major cultural or trading partner. However, in 2017, all these newest member states are committed to supporting common EU policy in this matter.

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<sup>158</sup> Đukanović, p. 87

## Conclusion

The Western Balkan enlargement has been an objective for both the European Union as well as for the potential and official candidate states themselves. This has been confirmed in multiple declarations and statements and by the continuous work done by all parties. While further enlargement might not take place in the near future and candidates will not probably join all at once like the CEE countries did, the long-term goals are clear. Furthermore, as the domestic politics in the Western Balkan countries have become more unstable in the last few years, attention from the EU is becoming more and more vital each year as integration into the Western values space could potentially stabilise these societies.

Keeping these objectives in mind, the European Union needs to further emphasise that the accession conditions are not negotiable and that all *acquis* and policy positions need to be adopted in order to ensure the union will remain an actor that is able to “speak in a single voice” and achieve its goals both in the region as well as in the world. Norms and values are an important part of EU CFSP as the EU is founded upon these values and they form the basis of its foreign policy positions and instruments. Therefore, the need to ensure full alignment is necessary for both the enlargement countries to keep their membership perspective alive and for the EU to remain a legitimate actor that protects these norms by setting an example for third countries.

The aim of this Master's thesis was to shed light on the difficulties the EU and its candidate countries have in reaching a consensus on what should be the aim and instruments of EU foreign policy. While for the EU it is important that all members and possible members align with its policies and help to promote norms outside the union, it has proven somewhat difficult for half of the potential and official candidate states to progressively align with EU *acquis* in this field. There are numerous reasons for this and each country researched in this Master's thesis has a specific historical background that has resulted in obtaining a specific perspective on foreign policy issues, but the overall purpose was to analyse whether the reasons for aligning or non-aligning have rational or normative explanations. While normative understanding of the necessity to align would be preferred by the union, there is little to confirm that the EU and the

enlargement countries focus on the deeply rooted reasons for putting sanctions in place against Russia, following the Ukrainian crisis and the annexation of Crimea.

Research shows that out of six current enlargement countries only two align with sanctions policy in relation to Russia due to their internalisation of EU norms and values. While Montenegro could also be considered a country that upholds these norms, the general discourse of their government focuses more on rational explanations and the national interest of the state and its citizens. The remaining three countries have either avoided discussing these sanctions, have voiced their complete opposition to them or are blocked by domestic opposition. As foreign policy positions and decisions are taken by consensus in the EU, it is clear that further enlargement to some of these Western Balkan states could result in member state veto on important decisions in the future. Therefore, the EU could only adopt positions that are not controversial or that would not be contrary to the interest of even one member state.

While the ethnic composition of the current enlargement countries is an important factor for reaching a domestic consensus, it does not mean that states with one major ethnic group are more likely to align with EU policies. Serbia has proven the opposite as their population is firmly against sanctions on Russia. Furthermore, while its government supports EU membership, public opinion polls show that Serbian people have not internalised this goal and are not ready to reconsider their cultural relations as a Slavic nation in order to join the EU no matter what. In addition, in Serbia's neighbouring states with a clear Slavic minority, there is also strong opposition to sanctions on Russia which has resulted in non-alignment in Bosnia and Herzegovina and vocal opposition to sanctions and NATO membership in Montenegro. It can be concluded, therefore, that some parts of the EU CFSP are not only against the rational interest of these states, but are out of sync with the values currently upheld in those societies or among certain ethnic groups. As their populations have not generally agreed upon the norms which should be seen as appropriate, the continuous debate might result in policy shifts in Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The end goal of the EU should be that the Western norms and values are deeply rooted in these societies. This is needed since it is only then that people in these countries would understand that certain decisions might not be in their interests in the short term

perspective, but are important for the continued role the EU plays in the world as a normative power. Since politicians are not independent from their voters and they generally act in accordance with the popular opinion, it is needed that these norms are internalised on the individual level. As noted in the theory chapter, change in policy positions can be achieved through having domestic actors that have an alternative understanding and a possibility to voice their opinion. These opposing sides exist in certain WB states and therefore the top-down pressure from the EU which has currently resulted in a deadlock should focus on giving a voice to domestic players in non-aligning states who could influence their governments' decision-making or at least trigger a debate in these societies.

Further research on enlargement policy, the Western Balkans and the process of norm transfer in the region is needed in order to analyse the role the European Union has played in the socialisation of these countries and promoting its values among their populations. Although this thesis focused on analysing both the top-down pressure by the EU as well as bottom-up response from the representatives of governments, it could prove useful to study the internal developments and alternative views of non-governmental actors more in depth. Furthermore, while it was not possible to include many foreign language news and statements in this thesis, it would certainly complement this analysis if this type of data was also included.

All in all, as the ethnic divisions in a society are just one possible way how to differentiate the various domestic positions on a policy field, it is by no means the only option. Deeper and more-broad based knowledge of the region and their reasoning behind alignment choices is needed in order to draw more elaborated conclusions on this subject in the future. If the EU would continue its current discourse on CFSP that does not seem to have an effect on the foreign policy positions nor the values of some of these countries, the latter would likely remain hesitant to choose between the West and Russia, and their foreign policy positions might not be suitable for membership in the European Union whose aim is to promote its values and norms in the region.

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