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Lost in Dialogue: Studying the Development of Identity Discourse in the
Kosovo-Serbia Conflict

MA thesis

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Authorship Declaration

I have prepared this thesis independently. All the views of other authors, as well as data from literary sources and elsewhere, have been cited.

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Abstract

This study explores the role of identity discourses and language in conflict resolution as a potential explanation for the observed practical failure of the EU-led Normalization Dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. While existing scholarship focuses predominantly on the European Union's mediating role in the dialogue, this study adopts a constructivist approach by emphasizing the agency of Kosovo and Serbia in shaping conflict dynamics through identity discourses instead. This study is grounded by the two foundational theoretical claims that identity formation of states matters in the normalization of relations, and that these relations can only normalize if identity discourses and language normalize. This study, therefore, examines the development of discursive encounters between Kosovo and Serbia in the UN Security Council from January 2011 to February 2024 to conclude whether the discourses and language usage of both have normalized as a prerequisite for the normalization of relations. Findings reveal a clear antagonistic trend in both Kosovo's and Serbia's identity discourses, evolving from predominantly constructive partnership to mutual threat perception, thus framing each other increasingly as existential threats to the Self. Therefore, the Normalization Dialogue has failed to, first and foremost, normalize Kosovo's and Serbia's discourses and language on the international arena. The study underscores the significance of identity and discourse in conflict resolution and contributes by providing insights in the importance of the normalization of discourses and language for conflict resolution. In line, it suggests that the European Union should prioritize discourse and language normalization, prior to the implementation of agreements.

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Introduction

The conflict between Kosovo and Serbia is an ongoing and dynamic issue in international politics and conflict resolution. Kosovo and Serbia have been in conflict for decades already over the exclusive territory and the unilateral declaration of independence of the Republic of Kosovo. Therefore, since 2011, under UN General Assembly Resolution 64/298 (2010), the European Union (EU) has taken the responsibility to facilitate a process of dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, the so-called “Normalization Dialogue”. The aim of the Normalization Dialogue is to “normalize” the relations between the two countries. The mediation efforts by the EU and their effectiveness within the Normalization Dialogue and beyond have been extensively studied. Many have concluded that the dialogue so far has failed because of differing reasons (Guzina & Marijan, 2014; Bashota & Hoti, 2021; Gashi, Musliu & Orbie, 2017; Visoka & Doyle, 2016).

Existing scholarship mostly focuses on the content of the agreements made and the actual implementation of these agreements on the ground, concluding that the agreements are filled with “constructive ambiguity” which creates mismatching interpretations of the agreements made (Shelest, 2016; Elgström et al., 2018; Makhashvili, 2017). Moreover, the EU’s peacebuilding framework lacks coherence which leads to inconsistency and a lack of political will in the construction and implementation of agreements (Visoka & Doyle, 2016; Bergmann & Niemann, 2015; Bergmann & Niemann, 2013; Bashota & Hoti, 2021). Given these weaknesses, it is therefore even more concerning that currently, tensions between Kosovo and Serbia are rising again. The recent attacks on 24 September 2023 by armed Serbian men show that years of talks between Kosovo and Serbia within the EU mediation framework have not improved the relations, but have rather worsened it. Little progress had been made in the earlier years of the dialogue, but now normalization seems to be further away than ten years ago. This makes the studying of the normalization process between Kosovo and Serbia especially relevant.

Plethora of existing studies ignore the role of the parties in conflict - Kosovo and Serbia - with their discourses about oneself in relation to the Other in the process. Therefore, this study fills a notable puzzling literature gap by particularly focusing on the development of Kosovo’s and Serbia’s identity framing in the international arena during the normalization process, and whether, despite its observed practical failure, the Normalization Dialogue managed to, first and foremost, “normalize” the discourses and language the parties use regarding the conflict and prospects of peace. By shifting the emphasis to Kosovo’s and

Serbia's agency in shaping the conflict dynamics through their identity discourses and narratives, this research thus becomes academically relevant for several reasons. It departs from conventional approaches and adopts a constructivist approach instead to understand the complexities of the Kosovo-Serbia conflict. Emphasizing the significance of identity and discourse in conflict resolution is particularly relevant in the Kosovo-Serbia conflict where the power of discourses and narratives is especially significant given the conflict's ethnicity- and identity-driven nature. This makes the study also societally meaningful since it aims to explore whether the Normalization Dialogue has succeeded in normalizing the identity discourses and language. Thus, the study's relevance lies in the identity-driven nature of the conflict and the power of narratives in shaping relations, and thus contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of identity, discourse and language in conflict resolution processes. This results in the following research question that forms the basis of this study: *To what degree has the Normalization Dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia managed to normalize Kosovo's and Serbia's identity discourse on the international arena?*

The aims and objectives of the thesis are thus to study the identity discourses of Kosovo and Serbia related to the normalization process and its observed failure, and examine what discourses are dominant in what stages of the Normalization Dialogue to evaluate the degree to which the dialogue has normalized the parties' discourses and language use as a first step. To put it differently, this study aims to examine how the Normalization Dialogue has impacted the discourses and language used by Kosovo and Serbia in framing the Self in relation to the Other regarding the conflict and prospects of peace. Therefore, this study provides insights into the role of identity, discourse and language as determinants in the dynamics of the Kosovo-Serbia conflict.

The study is built upon two foundational theoretical claims derived from constructivist theory. Firstly, identity is the main driver behind a state's interests, actions and thus state relations. Therefore, identity-framing of states matters in the normalization of relations. Secondly, this study is built upon the idea that before Kosovo-Serbia relations can be normalized, the parties' discourses and language use needs to normalize as a prerequisite for the normalization of relations. The study therefore underlines the importance of discourse in conflict dynamics and settlement and addresses the role of identity, discourse and language in the normalization process between Kosovo and Serbia. In line with the research question and based on the situation on the ground, I expect that the Normalization Dialogue failed to create the conditions for prospects of peace between Kosovo and Serbia since both parties' discourses have become increasingly antagonistic to one another. In order to analyze this, this

study adopts a constructivist research design as stipulated by Lene Hansen (2006), with the Kosovo-Serbia conflict as case, wherein I treat Kosovo and Serbia as individual parties. I focus on the discursive encounters between Kosovo and Serbia as a historical development from the initiation of the dialogue in 2011 until the last meeting that took place as of the time of writing: February 2024. Considering the importance of discourse, I employ discourse analysis as the methodological approach of the study. With the international community as the primary audience, the UN Security Council (UNSC) serves as the arena of analysis. Therefore, I use UNSC Meeting records as the main data sources to examine how Kosovo and Serbia construct their identity discourses towards the international community. In this study, I find that the discourses and language used by both Kosovo and Serbia demonstrated an increasing tendency from constructive partnership towards mutual threat perception. This indicates a clear antagonistic trend, and thus a failure of the Normalization Dialogue to normalize the identity discourses and language of Kosovo and Serbia as a prerequisite for normalization of relations.

In the first chapter of the thesis, I lay down the theoretical framework based on the two foundational theoretical claims that the study is grounded by. I elaborate on these claims while using constructivist theory which I will further explore in the first chapter. In the second chapter, I will provide an in-depth literature review on the development of the Kosovo-Serbia conflict from the 1990s on, followed by an elaborate exploration of the Kosovo-Serbia Normalization Dialogue in which I discuss the goals of the normalization process, the actors involved and their interests, together with the main stages of the Normalization Dialogue and what has been achieved. The second part of this chapter will focus on EU mediation techniques and its strengths and weaknesses in the Kosovo-Serbia conflict and beyond. In the third chapter, I discuss the research design of the study, where I argue the merits of conducting discourse analysis and I will further elaborate on the data sources used within the given time frame. After setting the theoretical and methodological foundations of the study, I present my analysis in the fourth chapter. Finally, I will draw conclusions which will form the answer to the research question, together with the limitations of the study and the recommendations for future research.

Chapter 1: Constructivist Theory and Identity in International Relations

This study is grounded by two foundational theoretical claims that I further elaborate on in this chapter. Firstly, from a constructivist lens, the international system is socially constructed, and therefore, identity framing of states influences relations with other states. And secondly, before Kosovo-Serbia relations can be normalized, the parties' language needs to normalize. Hence, in conflict resolution, the normalization of parties' discourse is a prerequisite for normalization of relations between parties. This chapter will theoretically build further upon these assumptions.

1.1 Constructivist theory and identity

Constructivism, as an alternative framework, comes in many varieties and forms, all characterized by a strong social, ideational and holistic ontology (Wendt, 1999; Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001; Fierke, 2013). According to constructivist theory, the world and reality are socially constructed through intersubjective meanings formed by processes of interaction (Fierke, 2013; Onuf, 2015). Wendt (1992) laid the foundation for a constructivist approach to International Relations (IR) by advocating for viewing the international structure as endogenously, intersubjectively and socially constructed through collective meanings that arise out of processes of interaction. Therefore, constructivist theory in IR posits that international politics is not given but rather "socially constructed" through processes of interactions (Wendt, 1999; Fierke, 2013). Within this structure, given that states are social beings that interact with each other, states act towards others depending on the intersubjective meaning and perception that they have of others (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001; Wendt, 1992). In its interaction with others, states intersubjectively form identities that are the main driver behind their interests and actions. These identities are subject to change depending on the interaction, making the international system dynamic (Wendt, 1992).

The main fundamental tenets of constructivism can therefore be described as follows. Firstly, interaction between states is primarily determined by ideational factors, not merely material ones (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2011; Fierke, 2013; Wendt, 1994). Therefore, discourses and shared ideas, norms, beliefs and understandings play a central role in shaping the international system (Wendt, 1999; Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001). Secondly, agency and structure mutually constitute each other (Hopf, 1998; Fierke, 2013). Constructivists put more emphasis on the agency of states to influence their environments than neorealists (Hopf, 1998; Fierke, 2013) but also proclaim that this agency is constrained by the understanding of

the practices, identities, and interests of other actors in cultural, social, political, and material circumstances (Hopf, 1998; Fierke, 2013). Thirdly, identities and interests are intersubjective and socially constructed through shared meaning, beliefs and ideas that arise out of interaction and are subject to change (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001; Hopf, 1998; Wendt, 1999). According to constructivists, identity formation as a social practice is the main driver for state interests, action and thus relations (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001; Hopf, 1998; Wendt, 1994).

The concept of identity has, therefore, a prominent place in this study and constructivism in general. However, importantly, there is no agreed upon definition of the concept of identity in IR (Alexandrov, 2003). Identity may mean too much or too little; a pluralistic, catch-all term that explains a diverse range of actions, yet remaining largely unspecified (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001). According to Berenskoetter (2010), having an identity depends on the perception of one's "self-sameness" and "continuity" in time, but also on others' recognition of these, making it an intersubjective process. Jepperson, Wendt & Katzenstein (1996, p. 11, in Berenskoetter, 2010) agrees by stating that identity indicates "the image of individuality and distinctiveness held and projected by an actor". However, in contrast, Lebow (2016) argues that identities are inherently unstable and constantly rewritten as they are shaped by our life experiences depending on our social cues and needs. Therefore, there is no "uniqueness" of the "true" Self since identities, memory and the narratives to express them are socially and intersubjectively created, and therefore dependent on our social environment (Berenskoetter, 2010; Lebow, 2016). Hence, identities are internally heterogeneous and therefore better understood as a "a composite of numerous self-identifications" that depend on our roles and relationships with others (Lebow, 2016, p. 79).

States perform or are assigned a role, and express and (inter)act upon these, based on their identities. This identity can be constructed by state officials and/or citizens on the sub-state, state, and international level. All instrumentally produce discourse and narratives to bolster identities that support their political goals, resulting in multiple conflicting discourses and narratives (Lebow, 2016). Through identity politics these identifications are promoted - all rising and falling in importance depending on the context - to ingrain them in collective memory (Lebow, 2016). Since I treat identity as such, "role identity" is the dominant type of identity within this study, defined by Wendt (1999) as identities that are "the product of dyadic relationships among countries" which are inherently social in relation to another (Wendt, 1999 in Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001, p. 399). Therefore, "identity is multiple, fluid,

and constantly re-negotiated” (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, p. 34) since it depends on various social and political contexts (Hopf, 1998). Based on this, identities are inherently relational. Identities can therefore not be understood as something isolated on itself but always as a construction and reproduction of the Self in relation to and interaction with other states (Hopf, 1998; Bucher & Jasper, 2017; Wendt, 1992). Given its relationality, according to Foucault (in Lebow, 2008) identities are always created and reproduced through discourses of “deviance”, meaning that the construction of the identity of the Self always is in need of “otherness”. This creates the Us/Other binary - the creation of an in- and outgroup as another frequently mentioned element of identity (Lebow, 2008). Hence, the construction of a state identity depends on the existence of an Other (Lebow, 2008; Steele, 2008). Taken all these characteristics together with the constructivist nature of the study, I believe that the definition of state identity given by Alexandrov (2003, p. 39) fits the study’s purposes and scope the best: “a set of broadly accepted (often symbolic or metaphorical) representations of a state, in particular in its relation to other states, together with the corresponding beliefs about the appropriate behavior, rights or responsibilities”.

In short, I treat the concept of state identity as something that can be instrumentally reshaped depending on a state’s roles and relationships with others and the social environment they are embedded in. Therefore, states have multiple, sometimes competing identities that all rise and fall in importance depending on the context, and thus are bolstered to support political goals through politics. This relates to the concepts of performativity and identity politics. The concept of “performativity”, pioneered by Judith Butler (2009), confirms that identities are not inherited, given or pre-determined (also: Weber, 1998) but rather intentionally and deliberately created. The formation of a state’s identity is a performative and discursive act which is not stable but subject to change over time through complex citational processes (Butler, 2009; Bucher & Jasper, 2017; Gregson & Rose, 2000; Weber, 1998). Given its intentionality, identities do not exist before they are being expressed through visible and discursive speech acts such as practices of communication, self-representation and storytelling in interaction with others (Fierke, 2013; Hopf, 1998; Rose-Redwood & Glass, 2014). The concept of performativity, therefore, underlines the prominent role of agency in the construction of identity (Bucher & Jasper, 2017). Given that these multiple sometimes competing identities are discursively, intentionally and instrumentally performed in certain social and political contexts in order to achieve political goals, politics is involved. “Identity politics” can be defined in a narrow sense as “more or less explicit attempts to influence state identity” (Alexandrov, 2003, p. 39). However,

Alexandrov (2003, p. 39) argues for the broad definition of identity politics: “the conduct of policies that have been linked to the particular representations of state ends up, depending on the consequences of those policies, either reinforcing or weakening those representations”.

1.2 The importance of normalization of discourse and language in conflict resolution

The second foundational theoretical claim of this study is that, in conflict resolution, the normalization of parties’ discourse is a prerequisite for normalization of relations between parties; before relations between states can be normalized, the parties’ language needs to normalize. For that, I will start by conceptualizing and explaining discourse and language and their role in conflict resolution. As elaborated on earlier, states construct shared meanings and by doing so make sense of the material world they live in through discourse (Foucault, 1970 in Dunn & Neumann, 2016a). Therefore, in line with the concept of performativity, discourses are central in the identity formation of states; identities are intentionally and discursively created through shared meaning (Epstein, 2010). However, there is still much disagreement on what the concept of discourse means. Therefore, many different definitions exist. Plainly, “a discourse entails the representational practices through which meanings are generated” (Dunn & Neumann, 2016a, p. 2). According to Schmidt (2008), discourse is an interactive process of communicating a certain set of ideas. Another pioneer is Foucault, defining it as “practices that systemically form the objects of which they speak”, or “a system of dispersion between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices that form a regularity” (Foucault, 1970, p. 18 in Dunn & Neumann, 2016b).

The piece by Dunn & Neumann (2016a) attempted to bring a set of different definitions together, by acknowledging the importance of language in discourse. Language can be seen as “a set of signs which are part of a system for generating subjects, objects, and worlds” (Dunn & Neumann, 2016a, p. 2). Moreover, as they state: “language is social, a series of collective codes and conventions through which things—objects, subjects, material realities, and so forth—are given meaning and endowed with particular identities” (Dunn & Neumann, 2016a, p. 2). However, language is not the same as discourse. Discourses, as “meaning in use”, are not just signs, speech acts or texts but rather social practices linked to these where people make sense of the material world by attaching meaning to it through representation (Holzscheiter, 2014; Dunn & Neumann, 2016a). Discourses as speech acts are not just texts or speeches, but also “narratives, myths, frames, collective memories, stories, scripts, scenarios, images, and more”, and thus both verbal and written (Schmidt, 2008, p.

309; Onuf, 2015). Moreover, discourses are structured and socially constructed, making them emergent and contingent, and therefore, always shifting and never completely closed (Dunn & Neumann, 2016a).

All in all, Dunn & Neumann (2016a, p. 2) conceptualize “discourse” as the following: “systems of meaning-production that fix meaning, however temporarily, and enable actors to make sense of the world and to act within it”. Hence, discourses are systems that generate a group of statements and practices that shape the perception of its subjects and maintain a degree of consistency in social relationships (Dunn & Neumann, 2016a). Therefore, discourse is not just “text” but also “context”; not just what is said but also where, when, how, why and by whom, and thus focuses not only on the representation of ideas but also on the communicative interactions through which these ideas are generated and conveyed (Schmidt, 2008). In IR, given its political nature, the emphasis is on communicative exchange and processes (Holzscheiter, 2014; Schmidt, 2008). Therefore, the definition given by Dunn & Neumann (2016a) fits this study the best since it explicitly emphasizes meaning-making in interactions in a socially constructed world.

States shape their Self in relation to another through these discursive and performative constructions. To understand why certain identities are created and why they persist, I delve into the concept of “ontological security”. The Self is created by states to safeguard their ontological security, which is the security of the Self as “being” rather than survival as physical security denotes (Gustafsson & Krickel-Choi, 2020; Steele, 2008). According to Giddens (1990, p. 92 in Mitzen & Larson, 2017), ontological security is “the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action”; it is about the search for continuity and order in events. States try to establish this continuity through discourses and biographical narratives (Giddens, 1991 in Steele, 2008). Ontological security is thus the ability to organize the Self, to develop and navigate within a social setting, and to place the Self in this setting accordingly through biographical narratives (Steele, 2008). However, through critical situations this continuation is disturbed, which threatens state identity and results in anxiety and insecurity (Steele, 2008; Gustafsson & Krickel-Choi, 2020; Kazharski, 2020). Therefore, being ontologically secure is more about adaptability with dislocatory events and change rather than stability (Browning & Joenniemi, 2013). Here, paradoxically, discourses on existential danger and collective memory of traumas are an important source to reach ontological security (Kazharski, 2020). In critical situations, states usually identify internal or external strangers that problematically disturb the order and frame them as a tangible threat to

preserve the Self (Steele, 2008). Especially in identity-related conflicts, the creation of the Self depends on an “evil Other” to reach ontological security. Then, the concept of antagonism comes into play; antagonistic forces then become part of a state’s identity (Laclau, 1990 in Roskamm, 2014; Mitzen & Larson, 2017).

However, to resolve conflicts, the aim is to establish conditions where states feel ontologically secure in peaceful rather than hostile relations. Yet, conversely, in conflict resolution processes, prospects of peace can bring a state’s ontological security in danger. Thus, physical insecurity can provide ontological security (Mitzen & Larson, 2017). Physical insecurity creates an enemy that serves as an antagonistic Other, aiming to strengthen a state’s ontological security. Conversely, prospects of peace change the status quo, threatening the established routines and hostile discourses and narratives about the antagonistic Other that the creation of the Self was built on. Considering that this makes states ontologically insecure, the desire for ontological security may hamper conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Mitzen & Larson, 2017). Thus, antagonization and ontological security are not opposed to each other but go hand in hand. Although antagonization may negatively affect prospects of peace, it may positively affect a state’s ontological security.

As argued above, especially in critical situations, the ontological security of the Self depends on a hostile Other where the discourses and language that the parties in conflict use are inherently antagonistic. Since identity is the primary driver behind state relations, conversely, relations cannot be normalized if the states’ discourses are purely antagonistic to one another. This makes the “normalization” of parties’ discourse a prerequisite for normalization of relations between parties (Kelman, 1996; Lederach, 2005). However, according to Lederach (2005), states often fail to address psychological cleavages between parties before trying to reach peace, leading to antagonism and hostility. This misunderstanding of the importance of discourse leads to a less accurate perception of the Other, and a decreased ability to understand the Self, threatening states’ identity and ontological security (Lederach, 2005). Therefore, addressing the normalization of discourse is important to understand the Self and the Other which will eventually bolster peaceful state relations. However, the concept of “normalization” of language is often overlooked in academia (Visoka & Lemay-Hébert, 2023). Normalization is related to “normalcy”, which is defined by Visoka & Lemay-Hébert (2023, p. 500) as “a desirable state of affairs linked to the concepts of peace, order, stability, and progress”. Hence, normalization means: “a gradual process of returning to an optimal condition of normalcy” (Visoka & Lemay-Hébert, 2023, p. 500). What normalcy and normalization more specifically entail depends on the context,

making them fluid and contingent concepts; “what is normal is what people consider it as such” (Visoka & Lemay-Hébert, 2023, p. 501). Therefore, what normalization entails and what conditions are set for it depend on how normalization is defined in a certain context. However, more generally, normalization of discourse refers to discourses of peace, order, and stability (Visoka & Lemay-Hébert, 2023). The usage of antagonistic discourses that frame the Other as an enemy does therefore not contribute to the normalization process. Hence, in this study, with normalization of identity discourse related to the conflict between Kosovo and Serbia, I mean the gradual process of shifting away from purely antagonistic discourse about one another towards discourses related to peace, order, and stability.

1.3 Summary and expectation

From a constructivist lens, the international system is socially constructed based on intersubjective beliefs, ideas, and meanings formed by processes of interaction. Identities are considered to be the main driver for a state’s interests and action. They are the product of dynamic relationships between states and are thus intersubjectively created depending on a state’s role within a certain social context. Therefore, multiple - sometimes competing - identities can exist. The concept of performativity underlines that state identity is a discursive and performative act that is intentionally performed depending on the interactional processes. Hence, identities are fluid and continuously negotiated through discourse. Through identity politics, these identities are instrumentally reshaped and bolstered to support political goals, and thus the several competing identities of a state all rise and fall in importance depending on the social or political context they are embedded in.

Given that state identities are performed and expressed through discourse, discourse has the primarily role in the construction of the Self in its relation with an Other. States have the desire to preserve this Self within ever-changing contexts. Hence, all face a constant struggle to achieve its ontological security by maintaining continuity and order. However, in times of critical disjunctions (for example, a conflict), state identity is threatened which leads to (existential) anxiety. Then, states primarily rely on the creation of a highly antagonistic Other, and by time the Self is built upon established routines and hostile discourses and narratives about that antagonistic Other. These discourses and narratives may make peace prospects less likely. Peace prospects may change the status quo in times of conflict, threatening these established routines and hostile narratives, and thus threatening a state’s

ontological security. Thus, the desire for ontological security hampers conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Therefore, to reach normalization of relations, conditions for peace, order, and stability should be created. However, in the process of doing so, states often fail to address psychological cleavages and discursive constructions that conflicts are built upon. Given the importance of discourse in identity formation of states as the primary driver behind state interests, actions and thus relations, this shows that normalization of discourse is a prerequisite for normalization of relations between parties. Before Kosovo-Serbia relations can be normalized, the parties' language needs to normalize. This results in the following expectation of the study: *The EU Normalization Dialogue has failed to create the conditions for prospects of peace between Kosovo and Serbia since both Kosovo's and Serbia's identity discourses have become increasingly antagonistic throughout the dialogue.*

Chapter 2: The Kosovo-Serbia Conflict and the Normalization Dialogue

The aim of this chapter is to provide a more elaborate background of the main stages of the Kosovo-Serbia conflict from the 1990s onwards, and the Normalization Dialogue initiated in 2011. Furthermore, the aims of and actors in the dialogue will be analyzed. Afterwards, I will address the academic literature on EU mediation effectiveness and apply it to the Kosovo-Serbia conflict. Finally, I will dive more into the scholarship related to Kosovo's and Serbia's identity discourse.

2.1 The Kosovo-Serbia conflict

Prior to the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Western Balkans had always been characterized by constant power struggles between diverse ethnicities. The struggle between Kosovo and Serbia about Kosovo's statehood is a significant example of this; Kosovo is seen as "the heart of Serbia" by Serbians while simultaneously having an overwhelming ethnic Albanian majority (Badger, 2009). Although the Albanian state was formed after the Balkan wars (1912-13), Kosovo became part of Serbia (Gulyás, 2012). While being part of the Republic of Serbia, Kosovo was granted an autonomous status (Rogel, 2003 in Badger, 2009; Gulyás, 2012). However, from 1989 on, Kosovo's autonomy and constitutional rights were cut which heightened tensions between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo (Badger, 2009; Wheeler, 2000 in Badger, 2009; Woehrel, 1999).

Together with the fall of the USSR in 1991, the FR of Yugoslavia started to dissolve; Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and North Macedonia all declared their independence (Badger, 2009; Gulyás, 2012). In Kosovo, the Democratic League of Kosovo was formed to peacefully protest in favor of Kosovo's independence. However, since Milosevic did not support most of these successions, the Yugoslav Wars broke out in the early 1990s, which started the "ethnic cleansing" of the Muslim population in Kosovo (Badger, 2009; Gulyás, 2012). The environment radicalized quickly; the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was established resulting in more violent and confrontational protests (Woehrel, 1999).

Over ninety percent of Kosovo's ethnic Albanian population was displaced (Kim & Woehrel, 2008). As a response, NATO launched the air bombing campaign "Operation Allied Force" from 24 March to 9 June 1999, without the authorization of the UNSC (Roberts, 1999 in Badger, 2009; Gulyás, 2012). This operation led to many casualties and caused Milosevic's surrender (Badger, 2009). Afterwards, the UNSC adopted its Resolution 1244 (1999), which

put Kosovo under jurisdiction of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). UNMIK administered the territory of Kosovo under the “Constitutional Framework” until the problem of Kosovo’s status is resolved; the establishment of autonomous institutions and a system of local administration as part of the “standards before status” policy (UNMIK, 2001; Gulyás, 2012; Kim & Woehrel, 2008). Furthermore, NATO’s peacekeeping mission KFOR was established with the primary goal to maintain security in Kosovo (Kim & Woehrel, 2008). However, the situation did not considerably improve; Kosovo still desired independence, which Belgrade refused to give (Gulyás, 2012).

In March 2007, the Ahtisaari Report recommended that Kosovo should become gradually independent under UN supervision with rights to apply for membership in international organizations and its own army and police forces, while taking into account equal rights for the Serb minorities and provisions to respect their religious and cultural heritage (Badger, 2009; Gulyás, 2012). However, due to divisions in the international community due to Russia’s and China’s non-consent in the UNSC, the Ahtisaari Plan never got accepted by the UN (Badger, 2009).

Kosovo unilaterally declared independence from Serbia on 17 February 2008. International recognition for Kosovo’s independence was followed by mainly the US and allies, but also underlines a split within the international community; mainly Russia, China and allies have not recognized Kosovo’s independence (Badger, 2009; Gulyás, 2012). Overall, Serbia states that Kosovo’s declaration of independence is a violation of Serbia’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, desiring to be treated as an equal in international law (Badger, 2009). Therefore, Serbia asked the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for an advisory opinion on whether the declaration of independence was in accordance with international law. The ICJ concluded that it did not violate international law and that there were “no compelling reasons for it to decline to exercise its jurisdiction” in respect of the request (International Court of Justice, 2008). After the decision of the ICJ, the normalization process between Kosovo and Serbia was initiated. Since 2011, the EU has had the right under UN General Assembly Resolution 64/298 (2010) to facilitate a process of dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, the so-called “Normalization Dialogue”, with the aim to normalize the relations between the two countries.

2.2 The EU's Kosovo-Serbia Normalization Dialogue

After the ICJ's advisory opinion, Serbia supported the UN General Assembly Resolution 64/298 that paved the way for the EU "to facilitate a process of dialogue between the parties" (Gashi, Musliu & Orbie, 2017, p. 537; Kodrazi & Heler, 2015). The Normalization Dialogue has been a top priority on the EU's foreign policy agenda (Gashi, Musliu & Orbie, 2017). The EU as mediator, Kosovo and Serbia all have agreed that the Dialogue should aim "to promote cooperation between the two sides, help them achieve progress on the path to Europe and improve the lives of the people"; to achieve "peace, security and stability in the region" (Gashi, Musliu & Orbie, 2017, p. 537-538).

Yet, despite Serbia's commitment towards dialogue, Serbia strongly rejects Kosovo's statehood (Kodrazi & Heler, 2015). Moreover, Serbia advocates for the establishment of an autonomous Serb entity in Serb-majority municipalities with extensive self-government rights (Kodrazi & Heler, 2015; Baliqi, 2016). Likewise, Kosovo fully supports the normalization talks with Serbia, yet noting that its territorial integrity should be respected with the integration of North Kosovo into the Republic of Kosovo. In exchange, Kosovo supports the Ahtisaari plan to protect the rights for ethnic Serbs in Kosovo (Kodrazi & Heler, 2015; Baliqi, 2016).

However, as stated by many, the primary objective for both parties in the Normalization Dialogue is not normalization of relations on itself, but rather EU accession (Kodrazi & Heler, 2015; Gashi, Musliu & Orbie, 2017). Therefore, the EU's policy of incentive-based conditionality links the normalization of Kosovo-Serbia relations to EU accession; only visible progress in the normalization of the relations will enable both to move towards EU accession (Kodrazi & Heler, 2015). According to Gashi, Musliu & Orbie (2017, p. 548), EU accession is "the overarching" ideal that motivates the parties to continue "to actively take part in the dialogue". Thus, the greatest incentive for the parties' to sit on the negotiation table is possible EU accession (Baliqi, 2016).

The progress of the Normalization Dialogue can be divided into several stages. The beginning stage that followed after the adoption of the Resolution, is known as the "technical talks" (Baliqi, 2016). Agreements were reached on regional cooperation, freedom of movement and rule of law, such as mutual recognition of ID cards, driver's licenses, customs stamps and university diplomas, and free movement of products (Bashota & Hoti, 2021). The aim was to limit to merely technical issues in order to build trust among the parties (Bashota & Hoti, 2021; Kodrazi & Heler, 2015; Baliqi, 2016). Moreover, in 2011, a crucial

advancement was made with the reach of IBM (Integrated “Border” or “Boundary” Management). This agreement aimed to stop parties from smuggling and trafficking (Bashota & Hoti, 2021). In addition, an agreement on the regional representation of Kosovo was made: the Regional Representation and Cooperation Agreement, which removed obstacles for mutual representation in the region for both (Bashota & Hoti, 2021; Kodrazi & Heler, 2015).

The second phase is known as the “Brussels Agreement”, officially the “First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations”, concluded in 2013. The agreement consists of fifteen points in which Serbia commits towards normalization of relations with Kosovo. Moreover, Serbia claims to stop facilitating its parallel structures in Serb-majority municipalities and thus “the dismantling of parallel police, judicial and security structures” (Bashota & Hoti, 2021, p. 12). In return, Kosovo would grant these municipalities self-government rights through the establishment of the Association/Community of the Serb Municipalities. Moreover, the agreement would enable both Kosovo and Serbia to continue their way towards EU accession without intervention by the other (Gashi, Musliu & Orbie, 2017; Kodrazi & Heler, 2015). However, the agreement was not signed by any of the parties (Gashi, Musliu & Orbie, 2017).

The third phase focused on the implementation of the Brussels Agreement and remaining agreements (Bashota & Hoti, 2021). However, the Kosovo-Serbia negotiations were occasionally put on halt due to internal political crises and social unrest in and between Kosovo and Serbia, making progress fluctuating instead of linear (Bashota & Hoti, 2021; Baliqi, 2016). Moreover, there is a gap between the agreements on paper and the situation on the ground; just four out of seventeen agreements have been entirely implemented, two not at all and the remaining very little (Bashota & Hoti, 2021). Furthermore, Serbs in Northern Kosovo strongly question the legitimacy of the normalization process and its outcomes due to insecurity, dissatisfaction with aspects of normalization and exclusion from the Dialogue, leading to local resistance in the municipalities (Menezes, 2020).

2.3 EU mediation efforts and effectiveness

Especially since the 2000s, the EU has been increasingly active in peace negotiations (Bergmann & Niemann, 2015; Bergmann & Niemann, 2013). Within the European External Action Service, mediation is one of the instruments at the EU’s disposal for its peacebuilding activities. The EU’s motives to engage in mediation are driven by normative concerns and self-interest, especially in conflicts where the EU has most economic interests and can

exercise normative power (Niemann, Haastrup & Bergmann, 2018; Shelest, 2016; Scalera & Wiegand, 2018; Manners, 2002 in Visoka & Doyle, 2016). The EU's Common Security and Defense Policy aims to assist, complement, bridge and stabilize existing UN peacekeeping operations and gives the EU the operational capacity to conduct peacekeeping missions for conflict prevention and international security (Shelest, 2016). Within these frameworks, the EU uses the “neo-functional peace” approach for conflict settlement by breaking down politically laden issues into technical terms with the goal to conclude mutually agreeable agreements (Visoka & Doyle, 2016). The EU also applied this approach to the Normalization Dialogue and has been effective in getting the parties on the negotiation table to normalize their relations (Visoka & Doyle, 2016).

The EU uses a repertoire of mediation strategies, dependent on its role in relation to conflicting parties and other mediators, the conflict environment and the EU's institutional capabilities, resulting in a multiplicity of roles (Niemann, Haastrup & Bergmann, 2018). It mostly uses peacebuilding activities, crisis management, conflict prevention, confidence-building measures and post-conflict reconstruction instruments, mostly related to facilitation (Shelest, 2016; Visoka & Doyle, 2016). The EU has also widely used formulation and manipulation strategies by using material incentives such as development aid and EU accession conditionality (Niemann, Haastrup & Bergmann, 2018; Visoka & Doyle, 2016).

EU mediation effectiveness is dependent on the context and the utilization of its capabilities in this context (Niemann, Haastrup & Bergmann, 2018). In the Dialogue, the EU has been mostly effective in concluding agreements related to technical matters, which contributed to confidence-building (Visoka & Doyle, 2016). Another contributing factor is the EU's use of ambiguous language to build leverage towards Kosovo and Serbia to achieve agreements so that the agreements could be interpreted in their own terms of success (Visoka & Doyle, 2016; Bashota & Hoti, 2021). This has helped in depoliticizing sensitive issues into technical matters, making it easier for the parties to conclude agreements (Visoka & Doyle, 2016). However, this flexibility also leads to conflicting interpretations of agreements, hampering the process of implementation of the agreements. Because of this ambiguity, it is not clear what the Dialogue and agreements mean for each party leading to a mismatch in Kosovo's and Serbia's interpretations of agreements (Gashi, Musliu & Orbie, 2017; Kodrazi & Heler, 2015; Bashota & Hoti, 2021). This has caused problems later in the implementation phase when issues become more political (Visoka & Doyle, 2016).

Another major weakness of EU mediation activities is the inability to find a common position among EU Member States. Given that the EU consists of individual, separate

member states with diverse and contradicting interests and concerns, it is difficult for the EU to act as a single player (Shelest, 2016; Elgström et al., 2018; Makhashvili, 2017). This divided nature of the EU leads to inconsistency and a lack of political will, which negatively affects EU mediation effectiveness (Shelest, 2016; Makhashvili, 2017). This also applies to the Normalization Dialogue, where the EU has been unable to find a coherent, common view on the issue of Kosovo given the EU's five non-recognizers (Bergmann & Niemann, 2015; Bergmann & Niemann, 2013; Gashi, Musliu & Orbie, 2017). This results in an "awkward" relationship between the EU and Kosovo (Gashi, Musliu & Orbie, 2017). Therefore, the EU remains neutral, but in a highly inconsistent way; sometimes the EU refers to "Kosovo" and "Serbia", sometimes "Belgrade" and "Pristina" (Bergmann & Niemann, 2015; Bergmann & Niemann, 2013; Van Elsuwege, 2017). Another example, also related to the EU's constructive ambiguity, the EU refers to Kosovo with an asterisk (*) in official documents and meetings; the EU frames Kosovo as a virtual country without recognizing it as a state (Van Elsuwege, 2017). Moreover, the Member States are not united on whether Serbia should become a member of the EU (Bergmann & Niemann, 2015; Bergmann & Niemann, 2013).

A widely used manipulation strategy by the EU is the use of conditionality with the prospect of EU accession (Shelest, 2016). However, according to Niemann, Haastrup & Bergmann (2018, p. 6), this is ineffective in the short-term, counterproductive in the long-term, and highly depends on the credibility and substance of the accession prospects (Niemann, Haastrup & Bergmann, 2018). The effectiveness of EU mediation strategies therefore depends on the legitimation and credibility of the EU as a mediator, which depends on EU's unity and consistency (Niemann, Haastrup & Bergmann, 2018). EU conditionality in the Dialogue has contributed to its effectiveness; it has increased the EU's leverage over Kosovo and Serbia given their membership aspirations by using incentives and rewards (Bergmann & Niemann, 2015; Bergmann & Niemann, 2013; Bergmann, 2018). This conditionality was especially effective in the initial phase of the Dialogue since it substantially encouraged the parties to actively engage in normalization of relations (Kodrazi & Heler, 2015; Bashota & Hoti, 2021). Overall, conditionality to EU accession has been a powerful soft power incentive that the EU can use to their advantage to settle the conflict.

Another weakness of EU mediation is that the EU's peacebuilding framework, decision-making and goals are highly incoherent and poorly defined (Visoka & Doyle, 2016). Related to the Dialogue, the EU has been effective in goal attainment regarding narrowly defined objectives but highly ineffective regarding broadly defined objectives as the normalization of relations (Bergmann & Niemann, 2015; Bergmann & Niemann, 2013). One

of the reasons is that “normalization” as an end is not properly defined. Therefore, it remains unclear what is understood as “normal”, for whom it should be normal and by what means (Gashi, Musliu & Orbie, 2017). This leaves room open for diverging interpretation of normalization (Bashota & Hoti, 2021). Moreover, the agreements that were made had little to do with real normalization of relations. In the Brussels Agreement, only two out of fifteen points were directly linked to the normalization of relations, making the agreement rather a “relationship management plan” (Bashota & Hoti, 2021, p. 12).

Finally, many agreements have not been fully implemented or not at all, resulting in a gap between the agreements made and the situation on the ground (Bashota & Hoti, 2021; Baliqi, 2016). This especially counts for the Kosovo Serbs who feel excluded from the Dialogue because of their absence in EU discourse. This leads to dissatisfaction and societal unrest between the ethnic groups, which have interrupted the normalization process and thus hamper mediation effectiveness (Bergmann & Niemann, 2015; Bergmann & Niemann, 2013; Kodrazi & Heler, 2015).

2.4 Identity discourse in the Kosovo-Serbia conflict

As opposed to the majority of scholarship, this study focuses on the agency of Kosovo and Serbia as individual actors rather than the EU in the Normalization Dialogue. Therefore, knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the EU as a mediator in the dialogue, I review the main literature on Kosovo’s and Serbia’s identity discourse in this section.

Narrative 1: multi-ethnic character

A first common identity narrative produced by the Republic of Kosovo is that Kosovo is a multi-ethnic state that provides inclusive rights for minority communities (Baliqi, 2014). This narrative aims to overcome ethnic divisions and consequently to create and strengthen democracy, institution-building and peace (Baliqi, 2014). It is bolstered in the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo which defines Kosovo as an inclusive state of its citizens, thus emphasizing that Kosovo’s identity is related to citizens rather than ethnicities (Baliqi, 2014). An example of a state symbol that expresses this multi-ethnic nature is the Kosovo flag, which consists of six stars that each symbolizes the major ethnic groups in Kosovo (Baliqi, 2014).

In contrast, Serbia currently does not produce a prevalent narrative that is in line with a certain multi-ethnic character of the state.

Narrative 2: antagonistic narrative

In another common narrative Kosovo frequently points out that their territorial sovereignty and integrity are increasingly under threat and that the state Kosovo can only remain to exist under the supervision of the international community. This narrative is filled with antagonism as a securitization strategy, with elements of threats to sovereignty, self-victimization, blame, innocence, and war remembrance (Stockdale, 2009; Bauer, 2017; Baliqi, 2018; Jalušič, 2004).

A degree of collective victimhood and victimization is instrumentally created through shared trauma and war remembrance for identity construction (Stockdale, 2009; Baliqi, 2018). Ethnic Albanians claim Kosovo as an integral part of their “homeland” that should be protected (Stockdale, 2009). An example is Kosovo’s shared traumatic experience under Milosevic’s repressive policies against Kosovar Albanians and the cut of Kosovo’s autonomy (Stockdale, 2009). Moreover, pride is also a common element related to Kosovo’s successful creation of governance and autonomy structures and the KLA as a sign of resistance to Serbia’s oppression (Stockdale, 2009). Besides, the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 is often referred to, fueling the antagonistic relations between Albanians and Serbs in and beyond Kosovo (Kadic, n.d.). War remembrance is expressed through commemoration and glorification of heroes of the armed resistance against Serbian oppression through, for example, memorials, street names and folk songs (Baliqi, 2018).

Serbia shows a similar narrative. The *First Serbia* discourse as a source to construct national identity consists of nationalist, conservative identity narratives filled with references to the past, outside threats to autonomy, victimhood, resilience and Serbian nationalism (Mitrovic, 2010; Obradovic & Howarth, 2018; Vujačić, 2003). Moreover, through Serbia’s “obsession with suffering”, self-victimization is deeply ingrained in Serb consciousness (Stockdale, 2009, p. 5). This highly nationalistic narrative points out that Kosovo is exclusively part of Serbia’s territory; for Serbians, Kosovo represents their “homeland” defining their national identity (Baliqi, 2014; Stockdale, 2009; Vujačić, 2003). An example is Serb’s genocidal experience during World War II (Stockdale, 2009). Moreover, they often refer to themselves as “the slaughtered people” and “victims” since the Battle in Kosovo of 1389, a frequently mentioned event to express national suffering (Obradovic & Howarth, 2018; Kadic, n.d.). Another event is the 1999 NATO bombing campaign that killed many innocent Serb civilians, referred to as “aggression” and “terrorism” (Stockdale, 2009; Baliqi, 2018). Instead of using heroism and sacrifice narratives, Serbia uses more victimhood, particularly since the NATO intervention (Baliqi, 2018). This narrative is also expressed by

the Serbs in Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo through monuments of Serbian national heroes in Serb-majority municipalities, but also memorials of victims of “NATO aggression” and Albanian “terrorists” (Baliqi, 2018, p. 478).

Narrative 3: European future

Finally, Kosovo frequently frames itself as a Western, strong, independent, and democratic country, desiring to become an EU member. Kosovo does so by expressing their core Western-oriented, European values (Albertini, 2012; Kadric, n.d.). Kosovo describes itself as part of the West, aligning with the EU and the US: “Kosovo will be a democratic, multi-ethnic state moving rapidly toward EU and Euro-Atlantic integration” (Albertini, 2012, p. 14). Therefore, the EU’s policy and the European future have become a significant basis for the reconstruction of Kosovar national identity for the creation of a modern nation-state (Kadric, n.d.). An example of how Kosovo expresses this narrative through symbols is the statue of Bill Clinton and other Western officials which are portrayed as national heroes (Albertini, 2012). Another example is the flag: it is blue and consists of stars, resembling the flag of the EU, indicating Kosovo’s “Europeanized” nature (Kadric, n.d.). It also expresses multiculturalism and diversity as a central Western value (Albertini, 2012; Kadric, n.d.).

Serbia shows a similar pattern with the *Second Serbia* discourse which emphasizes Serbia’s pro-European identity, desiring to become part of the EU (Mitrovic, 2010; Obradovic & Howarth, 2018). The discourse frames Serbia as being a peaceful and friendly country that meets and recognizes European standards and values (Mitrovic, 2010). Serbia is a western European country, part of the western culture, closely connected to liberal values (Ristic, 2007). It, moreover, emphasizes that the majority of the Serbian population is in favor of accession to the EU (Markovic, Jovanovic & Matijevic, 2019). Serbia uses several platforms, such as the Eurovision Song Contest, to improve its image towards the EU by framing themselves as a pro-European country which is the “the new face of Serbia” (Mitrovic, 2010, p. 172) Other gestures to express Serbia’s so-called “very ambitious agenda” was the placement of the European flag next to the Serbian flag on the Parliament building to express the desire to become part of Europe (Subotic, 2011).

Relation to normalization

Kosovo and Serbia show similar patterns in their identity narratives. On the one hand, they both frame themselves as democratic, pro-European, Western countries that desire to become part of the EU. Kosovo also stresses its multi-ethnic character and formally aims to be

ethnically neutral. On the other hand, they both express narratives filled with antagonism with elements of threats to sovereignty and autonomy, self-victimization, war remembrance, nationalism, conservatism, references to the past and victimhood.

The pro-European, multi-ethnic narratives are constructive for the normalization of relations since they focus primarily on societal progress, economic well-being and mutual trust among ethnic communities (Baliqi, 2014). Here, the states step over the social and emotional barriers in order to settle the conflict and thus contribute positively to the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia (Baliqi, 2014). This narrative is therefore most likely to make a peaceful coexistence between ethnic Albanians and Serbs possible (Albertini, 2012).

The antagonistic narrative, however, is problematic since the Other is framed as a potential major outside threat for the Self. This narrative increases ethnic tensions between the different ethnic groups (Baliqi, 2014). In this narrative, two opposing groups are created filled with mistrust (Stockdale, 2009; Baliqi, 2018). Under these circumstances, Kosovo and Serbia are unwilling to compromise on issues on the negotiation table (Stockdale, 2009; Jalušič, 2004). Moreover, the injection of victimhood narratives in identity- and ethnic-driven conflicts make conflict highly intractable and thus harder to settle (Stockdale, 2009). This leads to mutual antagonism and ongoing disputes which results in the lack of political will for conflict settlement, failing to normalize the relations between the countries (Stockdale, 2009; Baliqi, 2018).

The discussed scholarship focuses mainly on the identity constructions about oneself and the Other in their own societies or bilaterally with one another. The remainder of this study, in contrast, will therefore focus on how Kosovo and Serbia construct their identity discourses about oneself and the Other in relation to the conflict multilaterally, on the international level, in the UNSC. From a constructivist view, the audience and context wherein this identity is performed matters. In a bilateral context this only concerns the other conflicting party, while in a multilateral context this concerns the international community. Thus, the audience is multiple states which can be enemies or allies, including influential powers such as the Permanent Five Members of the UNSC. A different audience results in different interactions and thus I expect potentially different identity discourses. Moreover, in this multilateral context, Kosovo and Serbia perform or are assigned a different role than in a bilateral context. Roles also influence the identity construction of states. For example, in the UNSC, Serbia is a state but Kosovo is an “individual actor”, and thus they perform a different role in a different context. In relation to this, Baliqi (2014) asserts that the international

community has an influence on the development of state identity since the relations that states have with external powers influences their identity discourses (Baliqi, 2014). Thus, the different context, audience and role in the international community give a substantial reason to expect a potential difference between internal, bilateral and multilateral identity construction. Yet, existing scholarship has not explored the multilateral dimension extensively yet and therefore it should be studied.

Chapter 3: Research Design, Methodological Approach and Data

3.1 Research design and case selection

Given the study's constructivist and interpretivist nature, relying on Lene Hansen's (2006) approach in studying discourse during the Bosnian War. She argues that four dimensions need to be considered in such an approach: 1) the intertextual model, 2) the number of the Selves, 3) the temporal perspective, and 4) the number of events (Hansen, 2006).

Firstly, I will use the first intertextual model described by Hansen (2006), called "Official Discourse". This consists mainly of discourses by heads of states, governments and other official statements by governmental, international, or other (inter)state-related bodies (Hansen, 2006). I will therefore mainly study discourses from official foreign policy records wherein identity discourses are generated.

Considering the second dimension, I will not merely focus on one particular Self. Since this study has a comparative focus I take multiple Selves. The study will examine two Selves; the individual parties are the Republic of Kosovo and the Republic of Serbia. Then, the choice is between a comparison of different, individual Selves or a focus on *discursive encounters* (Hansen, 2006). I choose for *discursive encounters*. A study using *discursive encounters* "contrasts the discourse of the Self with the Other's 'counter-construction' of Self and Other" (Hansen, 2006, p. 68). This fits the most since the study examines the role of identity discourse in the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, and thus studies the interaction between these parties. The normalization of relations can be seen as a repetitive process in which Kosovo and Serbia produce and reproduce their identity discourses in interaction with the Other, in which the parties additionally respond to what the Other has produced. Therefore, the two do not produce their narratives in isolation, but over the course of the time frame they rather produce and reproduce their discourses based on their prior discourses and discourses by the Other. Thus, the meetings and discourses produced are not separate, stand-alone, isolated instances but are rather an interrelated and a continuous process of interaction. Therefore, I will not take the meetings as one-time, individual data points but rather as a continuation of encounters between Kosovo and Serbia. Given that I study *discursive encounters*, I take the Kosovo-Serbia conflict as the case of my study in relation to the Normalization Dialogue, with Kosovo and Serbia as individual parties.

The temporal dimension determines whether the study will examine merely one moment, comparative moments or a historical development (Hansen, 2006). Since I aim to

focus on the development and evolution of identity discourse, merely examining one particular moment does not fit. Although I take into account the different stages and events during the Normalization Dialogue, my aim is not necessarily to compare these stages one to another. Rather, the aim is to study whether and how the discourses and language the parties' use have developed over these different stages towards normalization, and whether this can explain the observed failure of the Normalization Dialogue. Therefore, it is more relevant to focus on a longer historical development over the period of the initiation of the ongoing Normalization Dialogue until present.

Finally, considering the number of events, given the focus on historical development, the study will not analyze merely one event but rather multiple events related to the Normalization Dialogue and the conflict. Given the primacy of the Normalization Dialogue, I study only events that are related to the issue - the Normalization Dialogue - but studied at different stages (Hansen, 2006).

In short, the thesis examines the *discursive encounters* between Kosovo and Serbia as a historical development from the initiation of the Normalization Dialogue until the last meeting that took place as of the time of writing: February 2024. Within this historical development, I study several stages and events that all relate to the issue of the Normalization Dialogue.

3.2 Methodological approach

Since I will particularly focus on the development and evolvement of Kosovo's and Serbia's identity discourses about oneself related to the Other and whether this has constructively developed towards normalization of relations, I will conduct discourse analysis on Kosovo's and Serbia's identity discourses towards the international community in the UNSC. Given the features of discourse analysis, I argue that discourse analysis is the most suitable method within the defined scope and purposes of the study.

In general, discourse analysis incorporates both material and ideational factors and underlines that discourses are not isolated but rather related to one another (Hansen, 2006; Dunn & Neumann, 2016c). From the constructivist point of view of this study, language and discourse play a crucial role in the identity construction of states and relations between them (Hansen, 2006). Therefore, this study of the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia is particularly linked to the study of language. Discourse analysis primarily deals with

the in-depth analysis of discursive structures and is therefore the most suitable to analyze the patterns in discourses that are produced while putting them into context (Hansen, 2006).

Discourse analysis is usually done within three steps: 1) to identify the discourse, 2) to identify the representations that the discourse consists of, and 3) to uncover the layering within the discourse (Dunn & Neumann, 2016a). To identify the discourses, I will use the main discourses identified by the existing scholarship as explained in Chapter 2. Therefore, the multi-ethnic discourse, the pro-European discourse and the antagonistic discourse by both Kosovo and Serbia serve as main analytical, ideal-type versions of the discourses produced. However, I will remain open for alternative discourses if these will be identified. While doing so, I will identify the main phases and events of the Normalization Dialogue and the broader conflict. The context will be taken into account to analyze how these discourses have evolved over time into more specific versions and variations of these ideal-types. Thus, over the different stages and events during the Normalization Dialogue and the broader conflict, how these analytical, ideal-type discourses of Kosovo and Serbia evolve into different, more detailed variations as the governments face these events within each stage. While doing so, in line with the purposes of this study, I will examine whether and how primarily the discourses and language use of the parties has evolved over time towards normalization of relations.

3.3 Time frame

This study primarily examines a historical development of Kosovo's and Serbia's identity discourse about oneself and the Other alongside the ongoing EU Normalization Dialogue. Therefore, the timeframe of the study will be from the initiation of the EU Normalization Dialogue in 2011 to the last meeting that took place as of the time of writing, which is February 2024. Since the time frame is relatively long (thirteen years), it is useful to "divide" the time frame in the different stages of the EU Normalization Dialogue. These phases will help to show how the identity discourses of Kosovo and Serbia have evolved over these phases within this time frame. As in line with Bashota & Hoti (2021), the time frame will be divided by the following stages:

Phase I: Initiation of the Dialogue / "Technical Talks"	(March 2011 - September 2012)
Phase II: the Brussels Agreement	(October 2012 - April 2013)
Phase III: Implementation phase	(May 2013 - December 2021)
Phase IV: Recent issues	(January 2022 - February 2024)

Since the division made by Bashota & Hoti (2021) stems from 2021 but the time frame extends until February 2024, I added the final phase “Recent issues” myself to encompass the developments after 2021.

3.4 Data and normalization of identity discourse

To study Kosovo’s and Serbia’s identity narratives about oneself and the Other towards the international community, I will analyze the UNSC meetings about Kosovo from 2011 to February 2024. In this section, I will argue why the UNSC is the most suitable arena, elaborate on the data collection and determine how to measure “normalization of identity discourse” using this data.

3.4.1 UN Security Council meetings

The central arena in the analysis is the UNSC. The UNSC holds the principal responsibility to maintain global peace and security. The UN international body consists of fifteen members (United Nations Security Council, n.d.-a; United Nations, n.d.). The thematic issues discussed in the UNSC range from arms control and counter-terrorism to human rights and civilian protection all related to peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and security (Security Council Report, 2024b). In the UNSC meetings, interstate disputes are discussed and aimed to settle by peaceful means. Moreover, the right for the use of force can only be authorized by the UNSC with the goal “to maintain or restore international peace and security” (United Nations Security Council, n.d.-b).

One of the most frequently discussed disputes is the Kosovo-Serbia conflict. Already since 2006, the UNSC has met regularly to discuss how to settle the conflict by peaceful means (Security Council Report, 2024a). Although the marginal effectiveness of the UNSC because of its deadlocks and disunity over the Kosovo issue among its members and the international community must be acknowledged (Hellmüller & Wählich, 2022), the UNSC is the most suitable arena for the purposes of the study. As opposed to existing scholarship that mostly focuses on the identity construction of Kosovo and Serbia primarily internally or bilaterally, this study broadens the scope and looks beyond the nation-state. It primarily focuses on how Kosovo and Serbia, regarding the conflict, construct their identity discourses about oneself in relation to the Other multilaterally, towards the international community. The UNSC is the only multilateral platform where Kosovo and Serbia regularly meet with the

international community to discuss the conflict and the normalization process. This makes the UNSC the most suitable arena for the purposes of this study.

To analyze Kosovo's and Serbia's identity narratives in the UNSC, I will use "UN Documents for Kosovo: the Security Council Meeting Records about Kosovo" (Security Council Report, 2024a). These meeting records mainly consist of debates and briefings on the conflict. I will analyze all meetings that took place from 2011 to February 2024. Within this time frame 41 meetings have taken place, resulting in a wide availability of data. At the beginning of each meeting, the representatives of both Kosovo and Serbia have the right to speak; first Serbia, Kosovo follows. The following representatives speak for Serbia and Kosovo:

Name representative	Function representative	Meeting period
Mr. Jeremić	Minister of Foreign Affairs (2007-2012)	2011, 2012
Mr. Mrkić	Minister of Foreign Affairs (2012-2014)	2012
Mr. Dačić	Minister of Internal Affairs (2008-2014) Minister of Foreign Affairs (2014-2020) Prime Minister of Serbia (2014-2020)	2012-2019, 2023
President Nikolić	President of Serbia (2012-2017)	2014, 2017
Mr./President Vucić	Prime Minister of Serbia (2014-2017) President of Serbia (2017-present)	2014, 2018
Ms. Kuburović	Minister of Justice (2016-2020)	2017
Mr. Selaković	Minister of Foreign Affairs (2020-2022)	2021-2022

Table I: Representatives of the Republic of Serbia in the UNSC

Name representative	Function representative	Meeting period
Mr. Hoxhaj	Minister of Foreign Affairs (2011-2014)	2011-2012, 2014
Mrs. Çitaku	Minister of European Integration (2011)	2011, 2015-2019

	Ambassador of Kosovo to United States (2015-2021)	
Mr. Thaçi	Prime Minister of Kosovo (2008-2014) Minister of Foreign Affairs (2014-2015) President of Kosovo (2016-2020)	2013-2015, 2018
Ms. Jahjaga	President of Kosovo (2011-2016)	2014
Ms. Osmani-Sadriu	President of Kosovo (2020-present)	2021
Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz	Minister of Foreign Affairs (2021-present)	2022

Table II: Representatives of the Republic of Kosovo in the UNSC

3.4.2 Normalization of identity discourse

In the data, I will study the discourse produced by the representatives of Kosovo and Serbia to measure whether the discourses constructively develop towards normalization of relations. Then the question remains of what I consider “normalization of language” and what not.

As mentioned earlier, Kosovo and Serbia show similar patterns in their identity narratives: 1) the narrative that Kosovo/Serbia is a liberal, democratic, pro-European, Western country with the desire to become part of the EU, 2) the antagonistic narrative with elements of threats to sovereignty and autonomy, self-victimization, war remembrance, nationalism, conservatism, and references to the past. Mainly Kosovo also constructs a third narrative that the Republic of Kosovo is a multi-ethnic state (3).

As in line with Baliqi (2014) and Albertini (2012), I consider narrative 1 and 3 constructive for the normalization of relations since a Self is created without necessarily relying on an antagonistic Other. Narrative 2, however, is problematic for the normalization of relations since it is primarily aimed at creating an antagonistic Other. This naturally hampers the normalization of relations. Therefore, if the discourse produced by the representatives indicates narrative 1 and/or 3, it can be considered helpful for normalization of relations, while discourse produced corresponding to narrative 2 hampers the normalization process.

Chapter 4: Kosovo's and Serbia's Identity Discourse to the International Community

The chapter will follow a chronological structure along the phases starting with the “initiation of the dialogue” followed by “Brussels Agreement”, “the implementation phase” and “recent issues”. At the outset of each phase, the political context and climate will be elaborated on. Importantly, the phases and the events that took place will result in a timeline that is used methodologically as critical instances to study a discourse's stability over time in order to display the historical development of identity discourse. Afterwards, I discuss the discourses and language use of Kosovo and Serbia in separate subsections. These sections will be organized along arguments I make based on the meeting records to avoid a mere descriptive analysis of the discourses produced. Finally, I will bring arguments together into a coherent whole to assess how the discursive encounters between Kosovo and Serbia have evolved over the time frame. Appendix 1 lists the meeting records employed in the analysis, including Kosovo's and Serbia's speakers respectively and the meeting dates, allowing for easy verification of the sources and data.

4.1 Initiation of the EU Normalization Dialogue

In this phase from March 2011 until September 2012, seven meetings took place. Kosovo was represented by Mr. Hoxhaj, Mrs. Çitaku and Mr. Thaçi. Mr. Jeremić and Mr. Dačić represented the Government of Serbia.

The beginning of the phase is characterized by political instability and uncertainty in Kosovo's domestic politics (Mr. Zannier, 16 February 2011). In December 2010, Kosovo authorities organized the first Assembly elections outside of the Resolution 1244 (1999) framework. However, the elections saw widespread vote manipulation, with minimal participation from Serbs in North Kosovo (Mr. Zannier, 16 February 2011; Deloy & Levy, 2010). Afterwards, a process of Government formation started (Mr. Zannier, 12 May 2011). Also the Serbian general and presidential elections took place within the phase, where Kosovo Serbs were also allowed to vote. A few months later, a new government was formed in Serbia (Deloy & Levy, 2012). Serbia was also granted candidate status to the EU (Mr. Zarif, 14 May 2012; Mr. Zarif, 21 August 2012).

While the situation slightly improved, the overall security situation in Kosovo remained fragile over the phase, leading to several instances of heightened insecurity. The

phase is characterized by the most serious security incidents since Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence in 2008 (Mr. Zarif, 30 August 2011; Mr. Zarif, 29 November 2011). This especially applies to North Kosovo which saw an increase of security incidents related to minority communities, fueling mistrust, fear and frustration between ethnic Albanians and Serbs, hindering their reconciliation (Mr. Zarif, 30 August 2011; Mr. Zarif, 29 November 2011). Moreover, Kosovo Serbs refused to integrate into Kosovo institutions as indicated by the 2012 referendum which almost unanimously rejected the Kosovo government's authority in the North (France24, 2012a).

Both Belgrade's and Pristina's Parliaments expressed their readiness and goodwill to engage with the dialogue. The initial meetings made progress on technical matters like regional cooperation, freedom of movement and rule of law: for instance, mutual recognition of ID cards, driver's licenses, customs stamps and university diplomas, and free movement of products (Mr. Zannier, 16 February 2011). Moreover, the IBM and the Regional Representation and Cooperation Agreement were significant milestones (Bashota & Hoti, 2021; Mr. Zannier, 12 May 2011). However, because of the fragile security situation, the dialogue was put on halt several times (Mr. Mulet, 8 February 2012). Another significant event was the publication of the Dick Marty report, which described the extensive presence of "organized criminal activities" by KLA members in 1999, related to human organ trafficking and smuggling in Kosovo, which negatively influenced the negotiation environment (Mr. Zannier, 16 February 2011; Mr. Zannier, 12 May 2011; Pineles, 2022).

The international community was characterized by vulnerability of global financial systems - the European Debt Crisis (2010-2012) - due to the accumulation of public debt and unsustainable deficits of several European countries (Alessi & McBride, 2015). This crisis mainly highlighted economic interdependence in the EU and contributed to a deepening sense of an unstable and eurosceptic political climate in European countries, resulting in increasing popular unrest (Alessi & McBride, 2015). Another major event was the start of the Syrian Civil War, considered a significant challenge to regional and global stability and security. The intervention of major powers largely affected the dynamics within the international community, especially the UNSC, and deepened international divides. It showcased efforts of, for instance, Russia to contest the existing liberal world order, which disrupted the Council's unified and effective efforts for conflict resolution (Asseburg, 2013).

4.1.1 Phase I: Kosovo's identity discourse

Phase I is characterized by Kosovo expressing constructive discourse and language regarding the normalization of relations. One frequently expressed element is expressing the importance of good neighborly relations with Serbia for domestic and regional stability: “Kosovo wants *friendly* relations with all of its *neighbors*. We recognize that as a *precondition* for a *stable* and *peaceful* Balkans” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 12 May 2011). Therefore, for example, Kosovo sees Serbia as a potential “*major* trading partner” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 12 May 2011). Hence, in order to normalize relations, Kosovo stresses the need for cooperation: “now is the time to *shake hands again*” and to see each other as “*equal* partners” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 12 May 2011). Moreover, Kosovo asks Serbia to join efforts in combating “*nationalist* language”, “*violence*”, and extremism (Mr. Hoxhaj, 12 May 2011). In line with this, Kosovo frequently demonstrates a strong commitment to engaging in the Normalization Dialogue: “Kosovo recognizes the importance of this dialogue with Serbia and is taking part in the discussions at the highest level” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 12 May 2011). Kosovo refers to the Normalization Dialogue as a “*unique opportunity*” in a “*window of opportunity*” (Mrs. Çitaku, 16 February 2011) and sees it as a “*fundamental* condition of European integration” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 12 May 2011). For this reason, Kosovo frames the dialogue as an opportunity “to put the past behind us”: “Our focus is on a future that will see both the Republic of Kosovo and the Republic of Serbia enter the European Union as equals, as independent States” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 12 May 2011). Kosovo states that the people are “*tired* of conflict and propaganda”, that they therefore “want to look *forward* and *engage* in a process of reconciliation with Serbia” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 12 May 2011) and stress that this is needed for “*a better future*” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 29 November 2011). Moreover, Kosovo stresses multiple times that it wants to reach this not through the use of force but with peaceful means. This kind of language is constructive since it creates the Self without necessarily relying on an antagonistic Other.

The second primary element that is repeatedly used in Kosovo's discourse is how Kosovo frames itself as a state. Although Serbia and Kosovo disagree on the legal status of Kosovo's statehood, I consider this discourse as constructive since, here, the creation of the Self does not rely on a potential antagonistic Serbia. First of all, Kosovo frames itself as a “*Republic*” (Mr. Thaçi, 21 August 2012) and a “*country* in the *European* continent” (Mrs. Çitaku, 16 February 2011). While doing so, Kosovo refers to the legality of the declaration of independence as expressed by the ICJ, meaning that Kosovo is also seen as independent by legal bodies. To bolster its image as a state, it consistently portrays itself as a “*success story*”

for nation-building (Mr. Hoxhaj, 14 May 2012). Moreover, Kosovo frames itself as a normal state in the international community and refers to the process of international recognition as an “*irreversible*” process (Mrs. Çitaku, 16 February 2011). According to Kosovo, given its active role in several international organizations, it is “*rapidly* becoming a *new* and *responsible* member of the international community” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 30 August 2011). The following quote underlines Kosovo as part of the international community very well:

We have been and we remain a responsible member of the international community. The size and geographic scope of Kosovo’s recognition is global, which demonstrates that Kosovo’s independence is a geopolitical reality (Mr. Hoxhaj, 29 November 2011)

In general, Kosovo often produces discourse in which it addresses the international community as the audience with language like “the *world* has witnessed” (Mrs. Çitaku, 16 February 2011). It frequently points out that the development of statehood of Kosovo “is good for Kosovo, good for the region and good for the world” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 12 May 2011).

In line with this, each of the meetings, Kosovo dedicates the vast majority of the time on framing itself as a stable, Western, European, democratic, country that supports further European integration: “I would like to inform the Council that Kosovo today is a functional, multi-ethnic State with a diverse society and with the most stable political landscape in the Balkans” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 30 August 2011). It frequently points out that Kosovo is a liberal, democratic country that strengthens its institutions and democracy and is “*responsive*” to its citizens’ needs (Mr. Hoxhaj, 30 August 2011). This works together with the narrative that Kosovo is a multi-ethnic country; that Kosovo is a “functional multi-ethnic democracy that *celebrates* and draws *strengths* from its diversity” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 12 May 2011). Related to this, Kosovo claims to “*protect* minorities” and calls for “full participation of the Serb community” in its democratic processes (Mrs. Çitaku, 16 February 2011): “For the first time in the history of Kosovo, the Government also includes a Deputy Prime Minister and three ministers from the Serb community. Kosovo Serbs are represented at all levels of the Government and civil service” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 12 May 2011). All in all, Kosovo claims that “the [democratic] system functions” and that Kosovo is “an *energetic, stable* and *forward-looking* society where individual freedoms are respected and institutions function in the interest of all the citizens of Kosovo, irrespective of their ethnic or religious background” (Mrs. Çitaku, 16 February 2011).

Related to its ambitions for Euro-Atlantic integration and the bolstering of its statehood, Kosovo frequently points out that the country is developing fast in economic, social and political fields. It frames itself as a “*young Republic*” in progress with lots of possibilities that upholds progressive liberal values (Mr. Hoxhaj, 12 May 2011). For example, it multiple times states that Kosovo President Jahjaga was the first female President in the Balkans (Mr. Hoxhaj, 30 August 2011). Moreover, economically, it points out that “Kosovo has the *fastest growing economy* in the Balkans and in Europe” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 12 May 2011) with a considerable annual GDP growth: “Kosovo has maintained macroeconomic stability and continuous economic growth. While Europe is facing a debt crisis, Kosovo remains the least indebted country in the Balkans” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 29 November 2011). Politically and legally, it expresses that it has booked considerable progress in institution-building and rule of law; “in aligning Kosovo’s legislation with European standards” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 14 May 2012). It tries to construct a “New” Kosovo which is in sharp contrast with Kosovo in the past: “We are aware that some people still associate Kosovo with war, refugees and crisis, but, as any visitor to the new, independent Kosovo can report, the new country is dynamic, young, growing and open for business” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 12 May 2011).

In contrast, Kosovo also produced antagonistic discourse towards Serbia. Kosovo here and there still refers to the past, framing themselves as “*oppressed people*”, using words as “*liberation*” from Serbia and framing Serbia as the “*oppressor*” that caused “*drama*” and is responsible for past atrocities (Mrs. Çitaku, 16 February 2011). For example: “We should *never* forget that Milošević first began his *campaign of terror* in Kosovo in 1989, and it is in Kosovo that he ended, in the *most tragic way imaginable*, his plan for a greater Serbia, taking the lives of thousands of *innocent* people” (Mrs. Çitaku, 16 February 2011). Here, the creation of Kosovo’s Self is clearly reliant on an antagonistic Serbia in the past.

Kosovo, moreover, frames Serbia as a threat to stability with its “*politics of division*” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 12 May 2011). Kosovo refers to the Serbian Government as “*radicals* who *refuse* democracy” and who employ “intimidation and violence to prevent the local communities and their residents from joining Kosovo’s institutions” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 12 May 2011). Therefore, Kosovo claims that Serbia is aiming to divide Kosovo and disrupt the process of normalization. In this way, Serbia blocks Kosovo from further progress, which is according to Kosovo “in flagrant violation of Resolution 1244” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 8 February 2012). Thus, Kosovo claims that Serbia is violating international norms and rules.

Related, most of Kosovo’s antagonistic discourse towards Serbia refers back to Serbia’s “*parallel structures*” in Northern Kosovo. According to Kosovo, Serbia turns

Northern Kosovo into a “*black hole* where *criminals* of all ethnicities can flourish” with “no legal certainty for any citizen” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 29 November 2011). It refers to it as a “*smugglers’ paradise*” where “*ordinary* citizens live in very bad conditions” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 30 August 2011). Kosovo emphasizes its commitment to resolving the situation but that it is unable to implement it fully due to Serbia’s illegal structures, stating that “Serbia never showed any interest in improving the lives of local Serbs” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 29 November 2011). Serbia is escalating and conducting illegal activities in the North, undermining Kosovo’s independence and territorial integrity, also by violating the Resolution 1244 (1999), and is therefore an existential threat to Kosovo:

I must voice grave concern at the escalation of rhetoric and violent acts that are coming from Belgrade and its illegal structures in the north of the Republic of Kosovo. Belgrade finances, leads and controls these structures. These are the biggest challenges Kosovo faces at the present moment (Mr. Hoxhaj, 30 August 2011).

4.1.2 Phase I: Serbia’s identity discourse

To start with Serbia’s constructive discourse and language use regarding the normalization of relations, Serbia frequently expressed support for and the importance of established institutions for conflict management and resolution, like UNMIK, KFOR, and EULEX. For example, Mr. Jeremić stated the following on 12 May 2011: “We believe it is critical for all responsible stakeholders on the ground, together with the Security Council, to reaffirm support for the UNMIK as an indispensable pillar of peace and stability”. The representatives of the Serbian Government refer to them as “the *only* acceptable framework” (Mr. Jeremić, 16 February 2011) describing them as “*constructive*” and “*inclusive*” (Mr. Jeremić, 12 May 2011), assigning to them a “*critical* role” (Mr. Jeremić, 16 February 2011) that “will be *embraced* at long last” (Mr. Jeremić, 12 May 2011). However, simultaneously, Serbia engages with UNMIK in order to diminish Kosovo’s status. Kosovo is governed by an UN mission under UNSC Resolution 1244 and is therefore not an independent entity.

More constructively, Serbia frequently acknowledges the importance of cooperation and expresses support for the Normalization Dialogue. According to Serbia, “we should drive to build *trust* and *understanding*” (Mr. Jeremić, 16 February 2011). Furthermore, Serbia wants to “strengthen the *spirit of compromise*” as the “*key to success*” (Mr. Jeremić, 12 May 2011). In each of the meetings, representatives frequently verbalize their commitment to the dialogue, as for example by Mr. Jeremić on 12 May 2011: “I want to emphasize that Serbia

remains strongly committed to these talks, which finally got underway during this reporting period". It even states that it is willing "to undertake all the necessary measures to pave the way for establishing a comprehensive peace between Serbs and Albanians", framing it as "*priority*" (Mr. Jeremić, 29 November 2011). While taking part in this dialogue, Serbia is willing to overcome differences. Mr. Dačić (21 August 2012) even makes an analogy with the end of World War II as an instance where "the most fervent of *enemies* began to lay the foundations for a *new, stable and prosperous Europe*", meaning that consolidation between ethnic Albanians and Serbs is possible by overcoming their differences. It, therefore, constructively frames itself as a country that always aims to solve conflictual situations through peaceful means to "find the way out of the *vicious circle of violence*" (Mr. Jeremić, 29 November 2011). These elements are often repeated in the initial phases and can be considered as constructive for the normalization of relations since Serbia's creation of the Self does not inherently rely on an antagonistic Kosovo.

However, throughout the phase, the extent of antagonistic discourse towards Kosovo increases. One antagonistic element relates to how Serbia refers to the Kosovo government: "the *separatists*" (Mr. Jeremić, 16 February 2011), "the *guilty*" (Mr. Jeremić, 12 May 2011), "the *extremists*" (Mr. Jeremić, 14 May 2012) and "the *ultra-nationalist*" (Mr. Dačić, 21 August 2012). Moreover, Serbia does not refer to Kosovo as a state but as "*our province*" (Mr. Jeremić, 16 February 2011) or the "*ethnic-Albanian authorities*" (Mr. Jeremić, 29 November 2011). In Serbia's view, Kosovo is not a sovereign, independent state but an integral part of Serbia. Therefore, Serbia expresses in every meeting that it will never recognize Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence: "We do *not*, and we *shall not*, recognize Pristina's *self-declared* independence, *explicitly or implicitly*" (Mr. Jeremić, 14 May 2012). This implies that Serbia will never, under no circumstances, accept and recognize Kosovo's independence and therefore will always consider it as an illegitimate, unilateral and unlawful action. Therefore, Serbia, for example, refers to Prizren as the "ancient *Serbian* capital" and refers to Taçi mockingly as the "*so-called*" Prime Minister (Mr. Jeremić, 30 August 2011).

Moreover, according to Serbia, Kosovo lags behind in many areas. In Kosovo "the roots of democracy have not taken hold" (Mr. Jeremić, 16 February 2011) since the "democratic processes in Kosovo do not fulfill the *standards*" (Mr. Jeremić, 12 May 2011). Moreover, the results of the elections that were held are "*controversial*" (Mr. Jeremić, 12 May 2011). Serbia also stresses that, economically, Kosovo is performing poorly: "Kosovo ranked overall *last* in Europe, *slipping below* its *already dismal* results for 2010" in terms of economy (Mr. Jeremić, 30 August 2011).

Antagonism is used by Serbia to frame the ethnic-Albanian authorities as an antagonistic Other that unilaterally and purposefully causes insecurity and instability in the Balkans and thus framing Albanian unilateralism as a threat. Therefore, not Serbians but Albanians are to blame: “25 July was not the first time that Pristina has purposely created instability. We have seen this scenario before — a provocation followed by violence and, finally, an attempt to blame the victim” (Mr. Jeremić, 30 August 2011). This also involves associating Kosovo government with the KLA and framing them as criminals responsible for consistent “*war crimes*” (Mr. Jeremić, 14 May 2012) which “have remained *unpunished*” (Mr. Jeremić, 12 May 2011). This narrative is full with antagonistic references to the past, as for example stated by Mr. Jeremić on 12 May 2011: “KLA leadership is responsible for kidnapping hundreds of Serb civilians before, during and after the 1999 conflict, and that those abductees were sent from Kosovo to secret detention camps in the Republic of Albania”. This discourse links the KLA to the current Kosovo government, implying that also the current Kosovo government is equally criminal: “The report explicitly identifies Hashim Thaci, Kosovo’s sitting prime minister, as the group’s leader (...) as having “played vital roles as co-conspirators in various categories of criminal activity” (Mr. Jeremić, 12 May 2011). In this way Serbia frames Kosovo as a threat since it is governed by figures that have “*awkward*” connections with organized crime (Mr. Jeremić, 30 August 2011). As a result, Serbia frames Kosovo as “a major European *organized crime hub*”, holding the “*Albanian-speaking groups*” accountable (Mr. Jeremić, 30 August 2011).

Moreover, another frequent antagonistic discourse is that the Albanian authorities form a threat to Serbian national and religious identity. According to Serbia, this was, for example, done through Kosovo’s unilateral declaration of independence framing it as a “*brutal attack on the foundation of our national and religious identity*” (Mr. Jeremić, 12 May 2011). Serbia frames the destruction of historical and cultural sites in Kosovo as “*hate crimes*” (Mr. Dačić, 21 August 2012):

According to the Mission, the thirteenth-century Church of St. John the Baptist in the village of Samodreza has been “frequently used as a toilet and a waste disposal site by the pupils from the nearby [Kosovo Albanian] elementary school for more than a decade (Mr. Jeremić, 30 August 2011).

This is predominantly done in North Kosovo; the region where Serbia is “*deeply concerned*” about since “ethnic-Albanian authorities” impose the “Pristina-based institutions (...) *against the will* of the local population” (Mr. Jeremić, 12 May 2011). Serbia refers to these activities

as “a *sinister* plan to *forcibly* impose an *illegitimate* and *unquestionably unwanted regime* on the residents of that part of the province” (Mr. Jeremić, 30 August 2011). Given Serbia's stance on Kosovo as an integral part of its territory, Serbia calls the “parallel structures” a “*misleading* term”. Rather, these structures are legitimized because there is no such thing as a Kosovo state and “the overwhelming majority of the [local] population supports them” (Mr. Jeremić, 30 August 2011).

Over this phase, Serbia clearly intensifies its antagonistic discourse towards Albanians in relation to the Kosovo Serbs, changing it to a narrative of “ethnic cleansing” (Mr. Dačić, 21 August 2012). This ethnic cleansing narrative usually contains references to the past and victimization in which Albanians kill and injure “innocent Serbian civilians”: “*Dozens were killed and hundreds were injured. Thousands of homes and businesses were burned to the ground. More than 8,000 Kosovo Serbs were ethnically cleansed from their homes*” (Mr. Jeremić, 29 November 2011). It usually contains escalating and dramatizing language like “*burned to the ground*” (Mr. Jeremić, 29 November 2011), and “*orchestrated campaign*” (Mr. Dačić, 21 August 2012).

Finally, Serbia often instrumentally addresses the international community. Serbia frequently frames the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo as a “*dangerous and destabilizing* precedent for the world community” (Mr. Jeremić, 16 February 2011). Furthermore, Serbia mobilizes the international community to support its position against Kosovo:

On behalf of my nation, I would like to reiterate our deep gratitude for their support and solidarity in the face of numerous pressures. We urge them to maintain their principled position, thus ensuring that unilateral attempts to impose outcomes to ethnic and territorial disputes are not legitimized, (...) (Mr. Jeremić, 12 May 2011).

Serbia also addresses the international community to express a certain injustice narrative in which Kosovo and Serbia are treated with double standards. Serbia frames itself as “*victims*” (Mr. Jeremić, 14 May 2012) of actions by KLA leaders that need to be punished. However, instead, “international actors chose to turn a *blind eye* to the war crimes of the KLA”; they remain unpunished (Mr. Jeremić, 12 May 2011). Moreover, “not a single perpetrator was arrested for committing *hate crimes* against places that represent the core of Serbian national identity” (Mr. Jeremić, 29 November 2011).

4.1.3 Phase I: The Kosovo-Serbia discursive encounters

Overall, the discursive encounters between Kosovo and Serbia in the initial phase of the dialogue can be characterized by an increasing degree of antagonism between the parties. Although both parties use constructive discourse and language by expressing a commitment to the dialogue to reach stability, safety, and European democratic standards, they both often follow by asserting that the other party fails to or is unwilling to reciprocate.

Kosovo initially uses constructive discourse to present itself as a “normal”, democratic, liberal, European, inter-ethnic state in the international community that seeks reconciliation between ethnic-Albanian and ethnic-Serb communities to normalize relations and bolster its statehood. However, it also blames Serbia to an increasing extent for blocking and undermining Kosovo’s statehood formation, stability and Euro-Atlantic integration by cultivating inter-ethnic divides and facilitating the “parallel structures”. While Kosovo initially begins the first meetings in the phase with a more positive outlook characterized by progressive statehood formation, its discourse increasingly focuses more on antagonism by assigning responsibility to Serbia for obstructing stability and integration, which undermines the normalization dialogue.

Conversely, Serbia has already been largely antagonistic in the beginning of the stage. In the first meetings, Serbia portrays Kosovo as a threat to its national and religious identity. As the phase progresses, this antagonism intensifies into accusations of ethnic cleansing of Serbs by ethnic-Albanian authorities, especially in the North. This indicates a sharp increase in serious antagonistic discourse and language that primarily relies on an antagonistic Other.

The overall trend of the discursive encounters between Kosovo and Serbia within the initiation phase of the dialogue is mainly characterized by heightened mutual antagonism that increases as the phase develops.

4.2 The Brussels Agreement

In this phase from October 2012 to April 2013, two meetings took place. Given the significance of the Brussels Agreement and negotiations, and accordingly Bashota & Hoti (2021), I take it as a separate phase. Kosovo was represented by Mr. Hoxhaj and Mr. Thaçi; Serbia was represented by Mr. Mrkić and Mr. Dačić.

In this phase, the dialogue was brought to a fundamentally higher level, leading to the reach of the “First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations” on 19 April 2013. This indicates the progress made in the dialogue (Mr. Zarif, 27 November 2012; Mr. Zarif, 22 March 2013). The agreement outlines commitments towards normalization of relations, including Serbia ceasing support for the “parallel structures” in Serb-majority municipalities. Kosovo proposes self-government of these municipalities in exchange for integration into Kosovo. Moreover, it enables Kosovo and Serbia to pursue EU accession without interference from each other (Gashi, Musliu & Orbie, 2017; Kodrazi & Heler, 2015). However, the agreement was not signed by any of the parties (Gashi, Musliu & Orbie, 2017). Moreover, tensions in the Serb-municipalities remained and increased in some instances, leading to injuries and destruction of historical sites especially in North Kosovo, resulting in a still fragile security environment with challenges related to economy, rule of law, judicial performance, and domestic politics (Mr. Zarif, 27 November 2012; Mr. Zarif, 22 March 2013).

The context of the international community was characterized by further escalations in the Syrian civil war with further divides in the community, especially between the collective West and Russia (Yacoubian, 2021; France24, 2012b). Moreover, countries like Iran and North Korea further intensified their nuclear programs, leading to an increasingly vulnerable international security community (Grant, 2012; Bolton, 2012).

4.2.1 Phase II: Kosovo's identity discourse

Throughout the phase, Kosovo produced constructive discourse for the normalization of relations with Serbia. Kosovo stresses the importance of the dialogue for good neighborly relations and “*peace, stability and security within Kosovo and in the region*” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 27 November 2012). Therefore, Kosovo is “dedicated to building a future in *peace and harmony with our neighbor*” and therefore “the normalization of relations with Serbia is our *destiny*” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 27 November 2012). In line with this, Kosovo wants to “close the *dark chapter* of history” and is “responsible for our future” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 27 November 2012). Kosovo

frequently expresses willingness to put the past behind and move on towards normalization, through “neither threats nor violence” but through dialogue as “democratic value” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 27 November 2012). Therefore, Kosovo opposes the use of force.

Besides, Kosovo frames itself throughout the phase as “one of the *most successful* examples of state-building in the history of the United Nations” and thus “an *independent* and *sovereign* state” (Mr. Thaçi, 22 March 2013). It states that the Republic of Kosovo is a “*reality* that has already been accepted” (Mr. Thaçi, 22 March 2013). Hence, Kosovo tries to portray itself as a “normal” state in the international community by, for example, referring to the processes of international recognition that it describes as an “*irreversible*” (Mr. Thaçi, 22 March 2013) and “*unstoppable* development” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 27 November 2012). Moreover, Kosovo stresses that it makes “international agreements, both bilateral and multilateral” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 27 November 2012), such as “the establishment of contractual relations with the European Union” (Mr. Thaçi, 22 March 2013), and that it has become a member of several regional and international organizations which enables Kosovo to walk its “*irreversible* path towards integration into the European Union” (Mr. Thaçi, 22 March 2013). Ultimately, Kosovo seeks to position itself as “an *equal* player in the *democratic* world, a prosperous, developed, fair, safe *State* of which future generations can be proud, regardless of their race, ethnicity or religion” (Mr. Thaçi, 22 March 2013). As a country that “embraces European values” (Mr. Thaçi, 22 March 2013), Kosovo expresses its EU membership inspirations that has “more than 90 percent of public support” (Mr. Thaçi, 22 March 2013). Hence, Kosovo often highlights its progress towards EU accession. Kosovo, moreover, expresses its multi-ethnic character “by protecting, promoting and upholding the principles of multiethnicity and secularism” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 27 November 2012), and thus its efforts to integrate the Serb minorities in state institutions:

Our offer to every citizen, regardless of ethnicity, is simple and clear: our State is our common future, and we will build it for our common good and for the benefit of those of our citizens in the municipalities in the north of Kosovo (...) (Mr. Thaçi, 22 March 2013).

Aligned with the preceding points, Kosovo claims to book progress in institution-building that “has maintained its macro financial stability” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 27 November 2012) and economic stability. Kosovo even described the year 2012 as a “historic one for our country and our citizens” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 27 November 2012). Kosovo, therefore, predominantly produced constructive discourse.

However, the phase was mainly characterized by antagonism towards Serbia. Kosovo used many references to the past: a “difficult past marked by many *sacrifices*” (Mr. Thaçi, 22 March 2013) characterized by “*suffering*” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 27 November 2012) by the Kosovo people that had to “overcome the effects of years of *systematic repression* and *ethnic cleansing*” (Mr. Thaçi, 22 March 2013). Kosovo also refers frequently to Serbia’s “war crimes against Kosovo Albanians in the 1990s” (Mr. Thaçi, 22 March 2013), calling it “*apartheid*” (Mr. Thaçi, 22 March 2013).

Moreover, it portrays Serbia as a threat to Kosovo’s stability and progress as it upholds the “parallel structures” framing them as a “*structural*” and “*constant obstacle*” that “have *undermined* our good intentions and commitment to socioeconomic investment” in the North (Mr. Thaçi, 22 March 2013). Thus, Kosovo tries to integrate the Serbs but these are undermined by Serbia: “such arrangements in the region have become *structural obstacles* to peace and ethnic reconciliation, democracy, a multi-ethnic citizenry and effective governance” (Mr. Thaçi, 22 March 2013). Moreover, Kosovo suspects that “Serbian parallel structures are behind criminal acts, which aim to intimidate officials working at the office and to prevent the Serbs from the north from taking advantage of the services offered to them” (Mr. Thaçi, 22 March 2013). Therefore, Serbia is “further aggravating the political and security situation” in the North and “aims to *destabilize* the functioning of the State of Kosovo” (Mr. Thaçi, 22 March 2013). Aligned, Kosovo attributed the lack of progress in dialogue to Serbia’s lack of political will: “Serbia has not shown the same level of readiness, as evidenced by the many delays in and obstacles to the implementation of the agreements reached” (Mr. Thaçi, 22 March 2013).

4.2.2 Phase II: Serbia’s identity discourse

Serbia often showed commitment to the dialogue as important for “building peace, security and stability in the region” which requires “peaceful solutions through a *constructive* dialogue” (Mr. Dačić, 22 March 2013). Therefore, Serbia expressed that the “dialogue is the *only way* to find sustainable solutions” and thus they are “open to talk on *all* issues” (Mr. Mrkić, 27 November 2012). In line with this, Mr. Dačić states the following on 22 March 2013:

My country will continue to cooperate in good faith, at both the technical and the political levels. With a lasting solution for sustainable peace based on mutually acceptable compromises as its ultimate goal, Serbia is committed to moving towards its European future and to the process designed to bring

about lasting peace between Serbs and Albanians.

Moreover, Serbia expresses willingness to overcome differences; to “offer solutions that meet the needs of *all* population groups” (Mr. Dačić, 22 March 2013) by respecting “the legitimate interests of *both* Albanians and Serbs living in Kosovo” (Mr. Mrkić, 27 November 2012). Thus, Serbia is willing to seek compromise. Furthermore, Serbia expresses a desire to move beyond the past and instead focus on the future: “After many years of conflict and tensions in the Balkans, the region has entered a new era of cooperation, confidence-building and dialogue” (Mr. Mrkić, 27 November 2012).

However, this phase is mainly marked by Serbian antagonistic narratives towards Kosovo. Throughout the phase, Serbia avoids framing Kosovo as an independent, sovereign state. More explicitly: Serbia “shall not recognize the so-called Republic of Kosovo” (Mr. Mrkić, 27 November 2012). Despite its commitment to the dialogue, Serbia clearly voices that it “does not mean that it will change its *principled* position on the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo” (Mr. Dačić, 22 March 2013). Regarding this, Serbia addresses the international community by “thanking” states that have not recognized Kosovo’s independence for their “principled” position (Mr. Dačić, 22 March 2013), suggesting that there is another “unprincipled” perspective which is the recognition of Kosovo as an independent, sovereign state. Serbia also claims that the majority of Member States “respects Serbia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity”, meaning that, given the majority, Serbia validates its position (Mr. Mrkić, 27 November 2012).

Secondly, Serbia dedicates most of the time to framing Kosovo and Albanians as a threat. Serbia refers to them as “Albanian *separatists*” that commit “*violence* against the Serbian population and their cultural and religious sites” (Mr. Mrkić, 27 November 2012). Given that the “lives and property of Serbs and other non-Albanians continue to be threatened” (Mr. Mrkić, 27 November 2012), Kosovo forms a threat to Serbia’s national, religious, historical and cultural identity: “Serbia is constantly faced with attacks on its cultural and historical heritage” (Mr. Mrkić, 27 November 2012). Serbia further intensifies its ethnic cleansing narrative: there is “*systematic destruction and demolition* of houses deserted by Serbs and other non-Albanians” which is “*forcing* the exit of the Serbian population” (Mr. Mrkić, 27 November 2012). Serbia provides detailed accounts of how many Serbs were “*intimidated*” and “*expelled*” and towns and villages were “*ethnically cleansed*” (Mr. Dačić, 22 March 2013). Therefore, according to Serbia, Kosovo commits “*gross violations* of the basic human rights guaranteed to each and every individual by the Charter of the United

Nations” (Mr. Dačić, 22 March 2013).

Finally, Serbia frequently produced an injustice narrative, citing an “increase in the number of registered ethnically motivated low-intensity crimes”, yet “no one was held accountable or punished for those incidents” (Mr. Dačić, 22 March 2013). Instead, there is a “continued increase in the number of detentions and arrests of members of the Serbian community - *without any explanation* of the legal basis on which such warrants were issued”, referring to this as “*unlawful detention*” (Mr. Dačić, 22 March 2013). These elements together form strong antagonism towards the ethnic-Albanian authorities in Kosovo, framing them as a threat to the territorial integrity of the Serbian state and ethnic-Serbs.

4.2.3 Phase II: The Kosovo-Serbia discursive encounters

Overall, Kosovo and Serbia both produced constructive interactions between one another by expressing the importance of and commitment to the dialogue and normalization of relations. However, the overall trend of the discursive encounters of this phase can be characterized by an increase in and domination of the degree of antagonism in shaping the discourses about the Self in relation to the Other. Therefore, the construction of the Self relied predominantly and increasingly on an antagonistic Other.

Although the states entered a new phase of high-level, intensive negotiations with the conclusion of the Brussels Agreement, discourses of Kosovo and Serbia were mainly characterized by historical grievances, narratives of victimization, ethnic cleansing and injustice with the aim to construct the Other as a threat. Moreover, it should be acknowledged that, while Kosovo’s use of constructive language towards the dialogue in expressing its efforts and successes in the consolidation of its statehood can be seen as positive since the discourse does not rely on an antagonistic Serbia, Serbia may interpret it differently. Serbia may receive it as antagonistic given its framing of Kosovo’s independent statehood as a threat to their territorial integrity and sovereignty. This could contribute to the high and increasing degree of antagonism in the discursive encounters of this phase. Thus, compared to the previous phase, there is a clear intensification of antagonism on both Kosovo and Serbia’s side.

4.3 The implementation phase

After the conclusion of the Brussels Agreement on 19 April 2013, the implementation phase started, ranging from May 2013 to December 2019. In this phase, 26 meetings took place. Kosovo was represented by Mr. Hoxhaj, Mr. Thaçi, Ms. Jahjaga but mostly Mrs. Çitaku. Serbia was represented mostly by Mr. Dačić but also by President Nikolić, Mr./President Vučić, and Ms. Kuburović.

This phase focused on the implementation of the Brussels Agreement and prior agreements. Both sides agreed on an implementation plan regarding the agreements and discussed implementation of issues like energy, telecommunications and trust-building (Mr. Zarif, 14 June 2013; Mr. Tanin, 14 November 2018). Although some progress was made on agreements initially, progress slowed down, especially related to police integration and the Association/Community of Serb-majority Municipalities (Mr. Zarif, 29 August 2013; Mr. Tanin, 14 November 2017). Therefore, the dialogue did not produce substantive technical results (Mr. Tanin, 7 February 2018).

More positively, contact between Kosovo's and Serbia's political leaders intensified, resulting in an agreement on telecommunications in 2016 (Mr. Tanin, 26 May 2015; Mr. Tanin, 16 November 2016). Moreover, ethnic Serbs got better integrated in the municipalities, the Parliament and police structures in Kosovo (Mr. Tanin, 21 August 2015). The EU also decided to start negotiations with Serbia for accession and with Kosovo for a Stabilization and Association Agreement, which was signed in October 2015 (Mr. Zarif, 29 August 2013; Mr. Tanin, 19 November 2015).

Major concerns in the dialogue were the safeguarding of religious and cultural sites in Kosovo, missing persons, IDPs and its return and reintegration in Kosovo (Mr. Zarif, 29 August 2013; Mr. Zarif, 29 August 2014). Moreover, explicit focus was on economic problems in Kosovo, like high unemployment and corruption, leading to frustration in society and a drastic increase in migration outflows (Mr. Zarif, 29 August 2013; Mr. Tanin, 6 February 2015; Mr. Tanin, 29 February 2016). Economic, judicial, legal and political reforms were therefore major concerns in Kosovo's domestic context (Mr. Tanin, 26 May 2015).

The context was also characterized by several general, presidential and local elections in both Kosovo and Serbia, hence by several domestic political changes. In 2013, municipal elections were held in Kosovo, including Northern Kosovo. Parliamentary elections took place in Serbia in March 2014 with the appointment of Aleksandar Vucic as new Prime Minister (Mr. Zarif, 27 May 2014). In contrast, the Assembly of Kosovo dissolved itself (Mr.

Zarif, 27 May 2014). Therefore, in June 2014, general elections took place throughout Kosovo with participation of all Serb-majority municipalities (Mr. Zarif, 29 August 2014). In 2016, new Serbian general elections led to a new Serbian Government led by Vucic (Mr. Tanin, 16 May 2016), and in 2017, Kosovar general elections led to a new Government led by Ramush Haradinaj (Mr. Tanin, 16 August 2017). Finally, the Kosovar general elections of 2019 led to a significant change in Kosovo's domestic politics with the win of the opposition party Self-Determination!, making Albin Kurti the new Prime Minister (Mr. Tanin, 31 October 2019).

A positive trend throughout the Kosovo elections was the significant increase in Kosovo Serb participation in all Serb-majority municipalities (Mr. Tanin, 14 November 2017). However, domestic political crises and political turbulence in Kosovo put the Normalization Dialogue on halt regularly (Mr. Tanin, 19 November 2015). The rise in polarization prevented the Government from implementing its reform agenda, leading to public dissatisfaction and protests in Pristina in 2014, causing injuries (Mr. Tanin, 6 February 2015; Mr. Tanin, 29 February 2016). This went hand in hand with an already fragile security environment in Kosovo, especially in the North, with several security incidents and criminal attacks taking place (Mr. Zarif, 19 November 2013; Mr. Zarif, 10 February 2014). The fluctuating security environment with heightened inter-ethnic tensions have complicated the normalization process (Mr. Tanin, 10 June 2019).

In the international context, in February/March 2014, the Russian annexation of Crimea and the start of the war in the Donbas happened, with serious implications for the stability of the liberal international order. Together with the continuation of the Syrian Civil War, it shaped up the patterns of international politics and significantly worsened relations between the US, the EU and Russia, resulting in a new wave of geopolitical rivalry. Moreover, as indicated by the Charlie Hebdo shootings of 7 January 2015 and the November 15 Paris attacks, the international community was shocked by a significant rise of global terrorism due to Islamic extremism. The establishment and emergence of Islamic State dramatically undermined the stability of the international community and directly posed a significant threat to global peace and security (Pecht, 2016). In general, the international community could be described as insecure and tense with conflicts driven by geopolitical rivalries and a rise of new significant threats to global stability and security.

4.3.1 Phase III: Kosovo's identity discourse

Especially in the first years of this phase, Kosovo produced constructive discourses regarding

the dialogue. Several times Kosovo directly addressed Serbia by “*thanking*” them “for their *courage and commitment*” (Mr. Thaçi, 4 December 2014) and for their “serious efforts” (Mr. Thaçi, 14 June 2013). Kosovo also stressed its desire to be “at peace with its *neighbors*, including Serbia” (Ms. Çitaku, 10 June 2019), hence prioritizing “good neighbourly” relations (Mr. Thaçi, 14 June 2013). Accordingly, Kosovo stated that the dialogue is the only legitimate means to reach this, as “an important achievement that will serve to stabilize the entire region” (Mr. Thaçi, 14 June 2013) and that, therefore, “dialogue is the *only path forward* for our two countries” (Ms. Çitaku, 14 November 2018) as the only means “to build confidence and resolve all outstanding issues” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 29 August 2014). Hence, frequently, Kosovo expressed its commitment towards the Normalization Dialogue: “We remain *strongly committed* to *fully* implementing the normalization agreement with Serbia, and we take seriously all the obligations necessary for ensuring the northern municipalities’ peaceful integration into Kosovo institutions” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 29 August 2013). This also means a “*deep* commitment of Kosovo society to moving forward on the path towards the full normalization of relations between the two States” (Mr. Thaçi, 19 November 2013). However, Kosovo’s claimed commitment to the dialogue declines drastically over the phase. Still, Kosovo occasionally expressed to be “committed to fulfilling *all* the arrangements previously agreed to in Brussels with Serbia” (Ms. Çitaku, 14 November 2018). Related to this, Kosovo “*welcomed*” the Brussels Agreement as a “*historic* first inter-state agreement” since it “will *open the way* for the integration and normalization of northern Kosovo and for the improvement of relations with Serbia by opening a *new chapter* of cooperation, dialogue and mutual understanding” (Mr. Thaçi, 14 June 2013).

Another prominent narrative related to Kosovo’s statehood consolidation as a Western, European, democratic, multi-ethnic country desiring to become a member of the EU and NATO, as a “normal” state in the international community equal to others Kosovo frames itself as “one of the *greatest success stories* in the history of the United Nations” (Mr. Thaçi, 19 November 2013) since the number of states that recognize Kosovo is increasing: “In recent months, the *stream* of international recognition of Kosovo’s independence and statehood has continued” (Mr. Thaçi, 14 June 2013), which is now “*more than half* of the States Members of the United Nations” (Mr. Thaçi, 19 November 2013). Because Kosovo is recognized “by the *overwhelming majority* of the *free* nations of the world” (Ms. Çitaku, 7 February 2018), it is “gradually claiming its *rightful* place in the family of *free, democratic* and *peace-loving* nations” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 29 August 2014). Another way is through pointing out the intensification of diplomatic relations with an increasing number of states and

international organizations: “Over the past three months, Kosovo has strengthened its international position and increased its interaction with multilateral organizations” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 29 August 2013) and is “expanding and strengthening our ties with the *free world*” (Ms. Çitaku, 25 August 2016). Moreover, Kosovo claims to expand its memberships in regional and international organizations like “the International Monetary Fund” and “the World Bank” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 29 August 2013); “Kosovo is a member of more than 50 regional and international organizations” (Ms. Çitaku, 27 February 2017) which “proves that the independence of Kosovo is *immutable* and *final*” (Mr. Thaçi, 26 May 2015).

Accordingly, Kosovo underscores its “Westernness” by framing EU and NATO membership as “our *primary goal*” (Mr. Thaçi, 10 February 2014) and “*national priority*” (Mr. Thaçi, 14 June 2013). On 17 December 2018, Mr. Thaçi even called Kosovo “the most pro-NATO and pro-European Union country *in the world*”. Furthermore, Kosovo claims to be a democratic country that is holding “free and fair elections with record-high participation from all communities” (Ms. Çitaku, 31 October 2019). Additionally, this highlights Kosovo's so-called multi-ethnic nature, as a country with “*no hierarchy* of religions” as “a *value we cherish*” (Ms. Çitaku, 31 October 2019). Therefore, accordingly, Kosovo claims to be successful in the integration of the Serb minorities into its institutions: “Kosovo supports the rights of persons belonging to minorities and protects their vital interests and cultural rights, including those of the Serbian Orthodox Church, thereby becoming a model for other countries of the region.” (Mr. Thaçi, 19 November 2013).

Related to the above, Kosovo frequently points out that it is developing in many areas. A narrative encompassing all elements is demonstrated by Ms. Jahjaga on 27 May 2014 on:

Kosovo has shown political maturity, courage and leadership, and we have reaped tangible results, inching us closer to our overall goal of creating a multi-ethnic and multicultural State of equal citizens living in peace and prosperity regardless of their ethnicity, gender, religious affiliation or race.

Kosovo's development in several areas is used to indicate its status as a “normal” state in the international community. Therefore, Kosovo claims in later meetings that UNMIK and subsequent UNSC meetings became unnecessary: “Let us therefore get real and bring UNMIK to an end. Times have changed since 1999. Kosovo today is free, independent and a sovereign State. There is *absolutely no need* for UNMIK to be present” (Ms. Çitaku, 16 August 2017), and related to the UNSC: “These meetings do not help peace. These meetings do not help dialogue” (Ms. Çitaku, 14 November 2018) and therefore “it is unbelievable that

the Council has convened more meetings to talk about Kosovo than it has for Syria, Yemen or Venezuela (Ms. Çitaku, 7 February 2019)’’.

After the Russian annexation of Crimea and during the rise of Islamic terrorism in Europe, Kosovo’s discourse in relation to Serbia became increasingly hostile. Most came from references to Kosovo’s past with Serbia. For example, Ms. Jahjaga states on 27 May 2014: “*thousands* of civilian deaths, many *victims* of torture and rape used as a tool of war, *physical destruction* and a legacy of hostilities and *ethnic cleansing* conducted by the Serbian forces”. Kosovo frequently refers to “the *oppression* by the Slobodan Milosevic regime”; “*no one* in the Balkans will forget the terror” (Mr. Thaçi, 26 May 2015). Kosovo calls itself “the *oppressed*” which had to face “a genocide committed by the State of Serbia against the people of Kosovo” (Mr. Thaçi, 21 August 2015), in which Albanians in Kosovo were “treated like *second-class citizens*” (Ms. Çitaku, 16 May 2016). Albanians were “the *victim*” (Ms. Çitaku, 27 February 2017) whose “most *basic* human rights were targeted in the most *brutal* way by the Serbian military and paramilitary forces” (Ms. Çitaku, 25 August 2016). Kosovo also goes into more detail to demonstrate the severity of Milosevic’s actions: “More than 10,000 innocent people were killed, approximately 20,000 women were raped and thousands are still missing” (Ms. Çitaku, 10 June 2019).

Throughout the phase, Kosovo’s language used to frame Serbia as a threatening Other became increasingly emotional and “dramatic”. Kosovo called its history under Milosevic “the *darkest days* of the citizens of Kosovo” in which Kosovo “*suffered*” (2018-4). As stated by Ms. Çitaku on 7 February 2019:

We did not have the right to read or write in our own language in schools, or to sing songs out on our streets. We experienced years of being silenced by the deafening noise of Serbian guns, years of tremendous suffering that came to an end only when Council members’ predecessors, sitting around this very table two decades ago.

In general, the references to the past together with the ethnic cleansing and genocide narrative served as a source for self-victimization, in which Kosovo aims to create a Self reliant on an antagonistic Serbia.

Another main element of Kosovo’s produced antagonism towards Serbia is Kosovo’s perceived lack of political will by Serbia to commit to the dialogue. According to Kosovo, Serbia is trying “to decorate from the original obligations deriving from the normalization agreement” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 29 August 2013) and “to *avoid* or *delay* the implementation of the

Brussels Agreement” (Mr. Thaçi, 6 February 2015). Serbia is creating “*obstacles*” and has taken “a series of intentional actions that violate the agreement between our two countries” (Ms. Çitaku, 14 May 2018). Therefore, “instead of seizing this opportunity for *redemption* and *peace*, Serbia chooses *obstruction*” (Ms. Çitaku, 7 February 2019). More explicitly, Kosovo stated that “there is no progress yet on the implementation of provisions, and that is due to a lack of political will in Belgrade” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 29 August 2013). Combining this with Kosovo’s expressed commitment to the dialogue, Kosovo claims that it is Serbia’s lack of political will that is hindering the normalization process, not Kosovo’s: “as the expression goes, *it takes two to tango*, and Serbia is not holding up its end of the bargain” (Ms. Çitaku, 14 November 2018), and “while Kosovo has undertaken all necessary legal changes to accommodate the technical and political agreements, the same is not the case with Serbia” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 29 August 2014).

Another antagonistic element towards Serbia is framing Serbia as an existential threat to Kosovo, mainly due to the so-called Serbian “parallel structures”: “there can be no normalization of the situation in the North while Serbia operates illegal parallel structures, which it refuses to dismantle” (Mr. Thaçi, 14 June 2013) with the aims “to *destabilize* that part of Kosovo” (Mr. Hoxhaj, 29 August 2013). Kosovo calls them “*paramilitary* and *criminal groups* who have kept hostage the progress of the Serbian community in Kosovo over the last 15 years” (Ms. Jahjaga, 27 May 2014) as part of an “*aggressive* and *brutal* campaign of the Serbian Government against Kosovo” (Ms. Çitaku, 7 February 2019). Therefore, the Kosovo Serbs’ vulnerable position is not due to Kosovo’s actions, but merely Serbia’s: “there is *only one* Government that is perpetrating the disfranchisement of Serbs in Kosovo, and that is the Government sitting in Belgrade” (Ms. Çitaku, 31 October 2019). Consistent with the increased emotional language usage, Kosovo states that “[Kosovo Serbs] houses are attacked with grenades and their families are *terrorized*” by Serbia (Ms. Çitaku, 31 October 2019).

Furthermore, as the phase progressed, Kosovo accuses Serbia of the spread of misinformation and propaganda related to Pristina’s actions: “It is true that some Serbs left Kosovo after the war (...) But to wave numbers here that are simply not true is *not correct*” (Ms. Çitaku, 16 August 2017) and “the claim that 200,000 Serbs were displaced from Kosovo after the war is *factually incorrect*” (Ms. Çitaku, 14 November 2017). Kosovo states that Serbia is spreading “*false narratives*” as “a serious attempt to *rewrite the past*” (Ms. Çitaku, 14 May 2018) as a “combination of a *medieval mindset* and modern propaganda” that is “a *menace to peace*” (Ms. Çitaku, 10 June 2019).

Finally, in the phase's final meetings, Kosovo employed real-life examples to construct emotive narratives about individuals from Kosovo to showcase their resilience in overcoming the tragic past:

Arineta Mula's first hike was a long, steep trail over the accursed mountains as her mother and her three siblings fled for their lives in the spring of 1999 during Serbia's brutal war (...) Arineta resolved that her trail of escape would become a trail of hope for a better life and a better tomorrow — a hope that every single Kosovar carries in their heart (Ms. Çitaku, 14 May 2018).

And: "We are inspired by Fahrije Hoti and the brave women of Velika Kruša, who used the restorative power of freedom to turn misfortune into hope and strength. After suffering so much loss, these women rebuilt an entire village from the ashes of war" (Ms. Çitaku, 31 October 2019). This emotive language use, emphasizing resilience by overcoming the tragic past with Serbia, can be received by Belgrade as hostile and therefore hinders the normalization process.

4.3.2 Phase III: Serbia's identity discourse

Constructively, several times throughout the phase, Serbia calls for a "*proactive engagement* and *compromise-seeking* approach" (Mr. Dačić, 21 August 2015). Serbia is "ready for compromises (...) to find *mutually acceptable solutions* for many complex issues" (President Nikolić, 27 February 2017). Accordingly, Serbia sees dialogue as "the *best way to overcome* the legacies of the past" and "to commit the *past to the past*" (Mr. Dačić, 14 June 2013). Serbia highlighted the importance of the dialogue as "our *supreme value* and *most important goal*" (Mr. Vucić, 4 December 2014). Hence, as expressed by Serbia after the conclusion of the Brussels Agreement, the dialogue was "more now important *than ever* that both parties be truly committed to dialogue" (President Nikolić, 27 May 2014) as a way to "lasting and sustainable peace" which is a "*national priority* of Serbia" (Mr. Dačić, 6 February 2015). Therefore, Serbia's primary goal is "transforming the Western Balkans into a zone of lasting *peace, stability and prosperity*" (Mr. Dačić, 26 May 2015). The dialogue is the ultimate way, aiming to "achieve a sustainable solution that will help everybody in Kosovo and Metohija" (Mr. Dačić, 14 June 2013).

Accordingly, Serbia frames itself as being strongly committed to the Normalization Dialogue throughout the entire phase: "the Republic of Serbia continues to be committed to continuing the Brussels process in the *best interests of all*, in *good faith* and with a *good will*"

(Mr. Dačić, 19 November 2013). Thus, openness and flexibility to the dialogue is a major element of Serbia's discourse. Furthermore, Serbia frames the dialogue as the "*precondition* for the normalization of life in Kosovo" and therefore "shall continue the dialogue with *undiminished intensity* and *maximum constructiveness*" (Mr. Dačić, 10 February 2014). Therefore, the Serbian government is "determined from the very beginning to to fulfill what we put our signature to" (Mr. Dačić, 19 November 2013) and even points out to be "very happy to see the same efforts made in Pristina, too" (Mr. Dačić, 19 November 2013), resulting in "*historic progress*" (Mr. Dačić, 14 June 2013) and "*major breakthroughs*" (Mr. Dačić, 10 February 2014). Also later in the phase Serbia keeps including constructive discourse occasionally: "I would like to recall once again that Serbia is firmly committed to solving all issues through dialogue" (Mr. Dačić, 14 May 2018), because "Serbia is *genuinely* committed to the preservation of peace" and thus "it will continue the policy of seeking peaceful solutions of this question on the basis of a *responsible* approach and the full implementation of the agreement reached within the Brussels dialogue" (Mr. Dačić, 16 November 2016).

However, the majority of the discourses produced by Serbia during this phase can be considered antagonistic. The discourses are primarily aimed at creating a strong Self based on an antagonistic Other being Kosovo. This is, for example, related to Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence. Serbia relates to Kosovo as "*Serbia's* southern province" (Mr. Dačić, 14 June 2013; Mr. Dačić, 25 August 2016) and thus undermines Kosovo's independent statehood. It refers to Albanian authorities in Kosovo as "*Albanian extremists*" (Mr. Dačić, 14 June 2013) and "*separatists*" (President Nikolić, 27 May 2014). Accordingly, Serbia's discourses are filled with many references to the past by often referring to the "*ethnic cleansing* and pogroms against Serbians and the *destruction* of their *holy places* and of *cultural heritage*" and to the "NATO bombing campaign that took place without the Security Council's authorization" in which "2,300 missiles were dropped" (President Nikolić, 27 May 2014). Other examples are: "14 years ago (...) Serbian children were *gunned down* on the Birstica river" (Mr. Dačić, 16 August 2017) and "we have *suffered* a lot in the past and we cannot allow any more of *our children to be killed* in different types of wars, hostilities and clashes" (President Vučić, 17 December 2018).

Related to this, Serbia claimed frequently that it will not accept Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence: "Serbia will *never* recognize the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo" (Mr. Dačić, 16 November 2016), "whatever we might be offered in return and whatever pressures we may be subjected to" (President Nikolić, 27 February

2017). Instead, Serbia wanted to “preserve the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Serbia” (Mr. Mrkić, 29 August 2013) because it will not “*willingly and passively* submit to *our own destruction*” (President Nikolić, 27 May 2014). It, moreover, framed Kosovo’s unilateral declaration as illegal since it is “carried out by force and *contrary* to international law” (Mr. Vucić, 4 December 2014) and thus “*cannot* be considered a State subject to international law” (Mr. Dačić, 21 August 2015). Serbia also aimed to mobilize the international community not to recognize Kosovo since it will “*open a Pandora’s box* of many other *separatist* and *secessionist* movements around the world” (Mr. Dačić, 14 November 2017) and is therefore “a very *dangerous* and *unacceptable* precedent” (Mr. Dačić, 7 February 2018). This discourse and language use is antagonistic towards Kosovo since it is primarily aimed at framing Kosovo as a threat to Serbia’s territorial integrity and sovereignty. This hinders the normalization process.

Serbia dedicated considerable time to framing Kosovo and its “unilateralism” as a threat to Kosovo Serbs. In all meetings, Serbia claimed that Kosovo is committing attacks and “*war crimes*” (Mr. Mrkić, 29 August 2013) against the Kosovo Serb population, especially in the North: “On average, 10 to 15 ethnically motivated attacks are recorded every month, followed by an ever-present *intimidation campaign* against Serbs” (Ms. Kuburović, 16 May 2017) resulting in “an increase in the number of security incidents directed against non-Albanian communities during the past several years” (Mr. Dačić, 19 November 2013). Thus, Albanians also commit “*intimidation* of minority communities” (Mr. Mrkić, 29 August 2013) and “*racial, ethnic and religious hatred and intolerance, ongoing institutional discrimination* against Serbs, and ethnically motivated *restriction measures*, including arbitrary arrests” (Mr. Dačić, 14 November 2017). Because of this, “Serbs live in *constant fear*” (Mr. Dačić, 29 August 2014), “*whose voices are not heard*” and “*whose rights are not respected*” (Mr. Dačić, 31 October 2019). Hence, Serbia frequently asserts that Kosovo violates Serbs’ basic human rights without providing them with basic protection. In Kosovo, “the rule of law has not yet been established” (Mr. Dačić, 19 November 2013), and therefore, Kosovo “has been unable to provide proper protection against *repeated* human rights violations (...) of minorities” (Mr. Dačić, 14 June 2013). Serbia claims that “the right of Serbs to life, freedom and property has been *targeted*” by Kosovo (Mr. Dačić, 31 October 2019) with the goal “to *provoke and intimidate* the Serbian people in Kosovo” (Mr. Dačić, 14 November 2018). Together with the “exercise of the right to participate in elections and vote” that is “*threatened*”, Kosovo “consistently applied measures *discouraging* and *dissuading* Kosovo Serbs to *participate in the public life* of Kosovo” (President Nikolić, 27 May 2014).

Therefore, the Serbs “live in today's *ghettos*, to the *shame* of Europe and the world” (Mr. Vucić, 4 December 2014). Serbia’s claims of Albanian attacks and human rights violations against Kosovo Serbs are a way to frame Albanian and Pristina’s unilateralism as a threat to Serbs and other minorities.

Another major concern for Serbia throughout this phase are the IDPs and its returns and reintegration into Kosovo. Serbia argues that Kosovo is forming “administrative, institutional and legal *obstacles* to returns” of Serb IDPs into Kosovo territory (Mr. Dačić, 25 August 2016): “More than 200,000 continue to reside outside Kosovo and Metohija in central Serbia (...). Only 1.9 per cent of them have achieved sustainable returns” (Mr. Dačić, 7 February 2018). Therefore, Kosovo is violating “the right to return home” of many Serbs (Mr. Dačić, 7 February 2019). As expressed by Mr. Dačić on 7 February 2018, the returnees “are exposed to intimidation, arbitrary arrests and ethnically motivated violence”.

Besides, Serbia frames Kosovo as a threat to Serbia’s national, religious, historical and cultural identity. The mentioned so-called Albanian attacks on Serbian Orthodox historical and religious sites are perceived as “attacks on the *identity* of Serbs” (Mr. Dačić, 6 February 2015): “Since June 1999, 236 churches, monasteries and other sites owned by the Serbian Orthodox Church, (...) have been targets of attacks which are of exceptional importance for Serbia” (Mr. Dačić, 21 August 2015). These sites are “designated for *destruction* (...) just as *every other Serbian thing* destroyed or expelled from Pristina and many other places in Kosovo” (Mr. Dačić, 16 November 2016). According to Serbia, this shows “Pristina’s *arrogance* with respect to the Serbian cultural and religious heritage in Kosovo and Metohija and the flagrant *desecration* of monuments and attempts to pirate cultural identity” (Mr. Dačić, 31 October 2019).

Alongside the rise of Islamic terrorism in Europe, Serbia associates Kosovo with Islamic radicalization, indicating an escalation in antagonistic rhetoric towards Kosovo: “the scribbling of graffiti on the walls of the Saint Nicholas Church in Pristina *glorifying* the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant” (Mr. Dačić, 16 May 2016). Moreover, Serbia frequently points out the Kosovar Albanian individuals are “the world's largest percentage of foreign terrorist fighters in ISIL” (Mr. Dačić, 16 May 2016). According to Serbia, this “*radicalization* of the political climate and the strengthening of the political, ethnic and religious *intolerance* amplify the instability of the security situation in Kosovo” (President Nikolić, 27 February 2017).

Considering the aforementioned elements, Serbia frequently produces an ethnic cleansing narrative to frame Kosovo as a threat. Serbia, for example often highlights the

number of Serbs forcibly displaced from Kosovo: “In 1981, there were 18,285 Serbs in Urosevac (...) there are now only 32, which is 600 times fewer Serbs” (Mr. Dačić, 16 August 2017), and: “In the past 20 years, 311 settlements previously inhabited by Serbs have now been ethnically cleansed — that is, they are exclusively Albanian. What is that, if not ethnic cleansing?” (Mr. Dačić, 10 June 2019). Albanians have “*expelled*” them from their homes and “*prevented*” them from returning (Mr. Vucić, 4 December 2014). Therefore, Serbia claims that Kosovo is trying “to *erase all traces* of the existence of the *Serbian people* and their *culture*” (President Nikolić, 27 February 2017). This narrative intensified as the phase progressed, indicating a clear antagonistic trend towards Kosovo and Albanians.

Another element emerging after 2016 is Serbia’s accusations of the spread of misinformation and propaganda by Kosovo related to the above matters. Most information brought by Kosovo is portrayed by Serbia as “*propaganda*” (Mr. Dačić, 25 August 2016) and “the unscrupulous *lies* and *montage* of information” in a way to “*misuse* and viciously *manipulate* the data with the aim of incriminating Serbs alone for all the atrocities committed in Kosovo and Metohija, as if only their victims — their expellees, killed, missing and tortured — mattered” (Mr. Dačić, 7 February 2019).

Another major element is Serbia’s perceived lack of political will by Kosovo to commit to the Normalization Dialogue and its agreements. Serbia “calls into question their *readiness* to reach an agreement” (Mr. Dačić, 14 June 2013) and their “*political will* to address” issues in the dialogue (Mr. Mrkić, 29 August 2013). According to Serbia, “Pristina has shown itself to be *inconsistent* and *unwilling* to honour agreements” (Mr. Dačić, 10 February 2014) since “it has not yet taken all the necessary steps to fully implement the agreements reached in Brussels” (Mr. Dačić, 29 August 2014). Instead, “Pristina continues to *undo* everything in which the European Union and other international actors invested considerable efforts through dialogue” (Mr. Dačić, 7 February 2019). Serbia claims that rather “the Albanian side has worked to strengthen their independent State through so-called low-intensity terror against the Serb population” (President Nikolić, 27 May 2014). Although Serbia expresses commitment towards the dialogue constructively, it regularly states directly after that Pristina is not: “Unfortunately, we are lacking an interlocutor on *the other side* of the table” (Mr. Vucić, 4 December 2014) and “the efforts made by Serbia to find realistic, status-neutral and mutually acceptable solutions through compromise have *not been reciprocated* by the other side” (Mr. Dačić, 14 November 2017). Here, Serbia presents itself as open for compromise, dialogue and reconciliation while portraying Kosovo as an antagonistic Other as lacking the political will to commit to the dialogue and its agreements.

Finally, another common element in Serbia's discourse is the consistent expression of trust in and support for UNMIK's operations in Kosovo: UNMIK "should continue to carry out its mandate (...) within a status-neutral framework as provided for by resolution 1244 (1999)" (Mr. Dačić, 14 June 2013). Serbia expresses its "*full confidence* in the United Nations and greatly appreciates the contribution it has made" (Mr. Dačić, 10 February 2014). It even advocates for "an increase in staff and financing" (Ms. Kuburović, 16 May 2017) since "a *great job* has been done, but it *has not been completed*" (Mr. Dačić, 14 May 2018). However, Kosovo receives this as a threat since it attempts to undermine Kosovo's independence; as long as UNMIK operates in Kosovo under UNSC Resolution 1244, Serbia continues to frame Kosovo as a non-independent entity, which hinders the normalization process.

4.3.3 Phase III: The Kosovo-Serbia discursive encounters

Throughout the implementation phase there is a significant shift traceable in the discursive encounters between Kosovo and Serbia. Until 2014, before the annexation of Crimea, the discourses and language usage by both Kosovo and Serbia could be described as predominantly constructive. Kosovo mainly emphasized its commitment towards the dialogue and its progress. Although Serbia showed antagonism towards Kosovo related to its perceived lack of political will on Pristina's side to engage in the dialogue, it also consistently stressed its commitment to the dialogue. At the phase's outset, another source of antagonism was a different understanding of the dialogue, resulting in Serbia accusing Kosovo of using the dialogue to strengthen its independent statehood rather than normalization of relations

The clear trend of increasing antagonism in the discourses of both parties was initially focused on accusing the other side of a lack of political will to participate in the dialogue and its agreements. Additionally, Kosovo implemented more references to the past atrocities, such as ethnic cleansing by the Milosevic regime, and intensified its accusations against Serbia for maintaining "parallel structures" in the North. Serbia primarily emphasized the attacks, crimes, human rights violations and the lack of security provisions committed by Kosovo against Kosovo Serbs. Accordingly, Serbia intensified its ethnic cleansing narrative. Furthermore, Kosovo's self-portrayal as a "normal" state in the international community that intensifies its relations with other states and international and regional organizations is received by Serbia as a threat to its sovereignty and territorial integrity. This all resulted in both sides increasingly portraying each other as existential threats to the Self, fostering a confrontational atmosphere.

This antagonistic trend continued until the end of the phase, persistently accusing the Other of obstructing normalization efforts. Whenever one expressed constructive commitment to the dialogue, it was followed by accusations of lack of political will by the Other. After 2016, the discursive encounters escalated further with “emotional” injections in the language of both parties. Especially on Kosovo’s side, Mrs. Citaku frequently injected emotional language mixed with storytelling and real-life examples of victims. Serbia drew parallels between Kosovo and ISIL, suggesting that Kosovo is a breeding ground for Islamic radicalization, thus a threat.

Regarding Kosovo Serb IDPs, returnees, reintegration, property rights and Serb Orthodox religious and historical sites in Kosovo, Serbia increasingly constructed Kosovo as a threat to Serb national identity because of Pristina’s unilateralism on these issues. Moreover, both Kosovo and Serbia accused one another of the spread of misinformation and propaganda, especially from 2016 onwards. In short, in the implementation phase, the discursive encounters between Kosovo and Serbia shifted from predominantly constructive to largely antagonistic and confrontational to one another.

4.4 Recent issues

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UNSC halted its briefings on Kosovo from October 2019 to October 2021. Hence, this phase lasts from October 2021 until February 2024. Six meetings took place in which Kosovo was represented by President Osmani-Sadriu and Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz. Serbia was represented by Mr. Selaković and Mr. Dačić.

In the current phase, the security environment was fragile due to an increase in ethnically motivated attacks against Kosovo Serbs and public protests in the North, resulting in escalations and clashes between protesters and police forces (Mr. Tanin, 15 October 2021; Ms. Ziadeh, 20 April 2022). This led to a sequence of events. On 23 April 2023, local elections were held in Northern Kosovo. However, Kosovo Serbs boycotted the elections as supported by the Serbian government. After the installment of Albanian mayors in the Serb-majority municipalities, violent escalations took place on 29 May in which civilians and KFOR personnel were injured (Ms. Ziadeh, 8 February 2024; Bytyci, 2023). Another significant escalation happened on 24 September, where attacks were committed by ethnic-Serb masked men in the North, resulting in the killing of a Kosovo police officer and four additional deaths. Moreover, heavy military equipment, weapons and vehicles were found (Ms. Ziadeh, 8 February 2024; Aljazeera, 2023). These developments fueled political tensions and largely affected the security and well-being of the population in the North (Ms. Ziadeh, 8 February 2024).

In the international community, from 2020 onwards, the COVID-19 pandemic shocked the world. Next to health implications, the pandemic resulted in socioeconomic consequences and cultivated political tensions, also in Kosovo and the Western Balkans (Ms. Ziadeh, 20 April 2022). Additionally, on 24 February 2022 the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine happened which indicated a further contestation of the liberal international order and significantly impacted the European security dynamics. It, moreover, shocked the global economy, which was still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic (Ms. Ziadeh, 18 October 2022). The Hamas attacks on 7 October 2023 resulting in the Israel-Hamas war also further exacerbated the insecurity and tensions in the Middle East and beyond.

4.4.1 Phase IV: Kosovo's identity discourse

In this phase, Kosovo showed some constructive language regarding Kosovo's consolidation of statehood. Kosovo frames itself as a "free, sovereign, independent and increasingly prosperous country" (Ms. Osmani-Sadriu, 15 October 2021) and "it will be so for *as long as*

the Earth circles the sun” (Mr. Osmani-Sadriu, 23 October 2023). It therefore stands “for freedom, human rights, the rule of law and democracy” and is a “*peaceful neighbor*” for Serbia (Ms. Osmani-Sadriu, 15 October 2021). It names itself “the *most democratic* country in the Balkans” (Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz, 27 April 2023). Economically, Kosovo states that it “registered economic growth of more than 10 per cent, a *record increase* in foreign direct investments and a *record increase* in tax revenue” (Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz, 18 October 2022). Moreover, Kosovo calls itself “*pro-Europeans*” (Ms. Osmani-Sadriu, 15 October 2021), that “there is *no other country* that is more pro-EU or more pro-NATO than Kosovo” (Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz, 18 October 2022) and therefore that “the future of Kosovo lies in Europe and the West because Kosovo is part of the West” (Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz, 27 April 2023). Considering this, Kosovo aims to present itself as a “normal” state in the international community. Additionally, Kosovo does so related to international recognitions of independence: “*everyone already knows* that Kosovo’s independence is a *done deal*” (Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz, 18 October 2022); and its intensifications of diplomatic relations with other states: “we are glad that we could foster and extend our relationships with other countries — not only in Europe, but also in Africa, Asia and America” (Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz, 20 April 2022).

Kosovo regularly expressed its commitment to the dialogue as well: “Kosovo has, is and will continue to not only *sit at the table* but to also *actively* engage in the dialogue” (Ms. Osmani-Sadriu, 15 October 2021) and therefore “has extended the *hand of cooperation* to our neighbour Serbia” in which “we want to *peacefully* resolve all our remaining differences” (Mr. Osmani-Sadriu, 23 October 2023). However, here is also where antagonism towards Serbia comes into play since it states that Serbia “*consistently betrays* the agreements signed with the West” (Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz, 27 April 2023) and that Serbia “has not implemented two thirds (...) of the agreements signed” (Ms. Osmani-Sadriu, 15 October 2021).

Kosovo, thus, predominantly produces discourse that relies on an antagonistic Serbia. Its primary aim is to frame Serbia as a threat through, for example, emphasizing Serbia’s “parallel structures” in the North which “Belgrade has not yet dissolved” and thus “continue to incite *terror* and *intimidate* the Kosovo Serbs living in the North” (Ms. Osmani-Sadriu, 15 October 2021).

Kosovo also constructs an ethnic cleansing narrative in which “Serbia not only promotes genocide denialism but also violently enforces it” through “an *ethnic cleansing campaign* carried out administratively” (Mr. Kurti, 8 February 2024). This relates to Kosovo’s increasing implementation of references to the past to portray itself as a victim of

past Serbian atrocities. According to Kosovo, Serbia committed “war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide against the people of Kosovo” and thus a “sheer *destruction* and *devastation* that took place during the 1990s in the Western Balkans” (Ms. Osmani-Sadriu, 15 October 2021). During “Milošević *genocidal wars*” as Kosovo calls them, “approximately 140,000 innocent people lost their lives (...) In Kosovo, more than 13,000 people brutally murdered, 20,000 women were raped, and more than 1,600 people were forcibly disappeared and are still missing to this day” (Ms. Osmani-Sadriu, 15 October 2021). And thus, on the day of today, “*every child* knows that Vučić, Dačić and others in the leadership of Serbia are political accomplices and responsible for those and other terrible massacres” (Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz, 27 April 2023). However, Kosovo simultaneously stresses that despite this trauma, Kosovo has been able to create its own state: “Kosovo, once a symbol of *suffering* because of the genocidal war waged by Milošević, has emerged today as a *shining example of democracy* in the Western Balkans and beyond” and that “the victims of sexual violence during the war in Kosovo chose not just to survive but also to thrive” (Mr. Osmani-Sadriu, 23 October 2023). Therefore, Kosovo “was born out of the genocide committed by Serbia” and is now “an example for all *victims* of aggression and genocide that *justice* will always prevail in the end” (Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz, 20 April 2022).

In this phase, Kosovo also focuses on the current Serbian government to frame Serbia as a threat: “Milošević’s ministers are ruling the country today. Their strategy might have changed, but their goals *remain the same*” (Ms. Osmani-Sadriu, 15 October 2021). While doing so, Kosovo even addresses Mr. Vučić directly: “including Mr. Vučić, Milošević’s information propaganda minister — has mustered all its power and imagination to find new ways to *terrorize* Kosova” (Mr. Kurti, 8 February 2024). Furthermore, Kosovo refers to the current Serbian government as one among “*autocracies* and *genocidal regimes*” (Mr. Osmani-Sadriu, 23 October 2023).

Another element that especially comes up after the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine and further escalates Kosovo’s antagonistic discourse towards the other is Serbia’s so-framed alliance with Russia: “We have a *cancer* at the heart of Europe, fuelled by a *fascist* desire to create a Serbian world, aided by their *ally*, Russia” (Ms. Osmani-Sadriu, 15 October 2021). Kosovo refers to Serbia as “the *Kremlin’s Trojan horse* in South-Eastern Europe” that is “in a geopolitical war against a democratic world” (Mr. Kurti, 8 February 2024), and to Russia as Serbia’s “*Big Brother*” (Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz, 18 October 2022).

Aligned, Kosovo frames Serbia as an existential threat due to the so-perceived Serbian plans to invade Kosovo territory: “Serbia persists in its violent attempts to reclaim

Kosova” (Mr. Kurti, 8 February 2024). Kosovo often refers to “*Serb supremacy*” as a “threat to peace” with the “Serb World” as a “racist ideology” that “was the ideological basis for the wars and genocide that Milošević’s Serbia waged” (Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz, 18 October 2022). Therefore, Kosovo fears that “the *ghosts of the past* are returning” (Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz, 18 October 2022). Kosovo, moreover, equalized the “Serb World” with the “Russian World” concept and is therefore making another analogy between Serbia and Russia as aggressors (Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz, 18 October 2022). Kosovo, moreover, asserts that “Vučić and Dačić want a European order led by Moscow” (Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz, 27 April 2023) and that Serbia therefore has the plan to “*destabilize* the entire Western Balkans” as an “attack on democracy and freedom as well as the peace and stability” (Mr. Osmani-Sadriu, 23 October 2023).

4.4.2 Phase IV: Serbia’s identity discourse

In this phase, Serbia did not produce much constructive discourse and language related to Kosovo and the Normalization Dialogue. It sporadically expressed its commitment towards the dialogue that “the Republic of Serbia remains committed to finding a *compromise* political solution” and therefore that “dialogue and the implementation of the agreements reached are the *only right way* to resolve all open issues” (Mr. Selaković, 15 October 2021). A constructive slogan is used by the Serbian Government: “It is better to negotiate for 100 years than to fight for a day”, which implies that a “policy of peace, reconciliation and regional cooperation” (Mr. Selaković, 18 October 2022) is perceived as more beneficial than the use of force. Therefore, Serbia prioritizes “peaceful coexistence and the normalization of the situation” (Mr. Dačić, 27 April 2023) which is constructive for the normalization process.

Nevertheless, the vast majority of the discourses produced by Serbia is considered predominantly antagonistic towards Kosovo by framing Kosovo as a threat to Kosovo Serbs and Serbia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. Therefore, Serbia stressed regularly that Kosovo “is where Serbia was *born*” and thus “will *never* recognize Kosovo’s unilaterally declared independence” (Mr. Dačić, 27 April 2023). This is because of “Pristina’s unilateralism” which is of “discriminatory character” as “the principle on which they act” (Mr. Selaković, 20 April 2022). In Serbia’s viewpoint, Kosovo is “*playing with fire*” (Mr. Selaković, 15 October 2021) since “the unilateral moves of Pristina continue to consciously and systematically deepen ethnic differences, causing discrimination against the non-Albanian population” (Mr. Selaković, 18 October 2022). Therefore, the violent events that happened are a “logical consequence of the reign of *fear* and *terror* that Pristina decided

to enforce” (Ms. Brnabić, 23 October 2023). It creates “unbearable living conditions” and is “depriving the Serbs of the possibility of survival” which is framed as “the only objective of the regime in Pristina” (President Vučić, 8 February 2024).

Moreover, Serbia claims that Kosovo is violating Kosovo Serb human rights: Serbs are “facing each new day with great apprehension, because they are uncertain if their fundamental human rights will be violated or denied” (Mr. Selaković, 20 April 2022). Examples are that Kosovo Serbs “were prevented from participating in the elections of the Republic of Serbia, which was a violation” (Mr. Selaković, 20 April 2022), “violations of the right to a fair trial, threats to the right to the freedom of movement and religious rights” (Mr. Selaković, 18 October 2022), “obstructing the freedom of movement” (President Vučić, 8 February 2024) and “the right to the peaceful enjoyment of private property” (Mr. Selaković, 18 October 2022) which are “turning their lives into a *constant nightmare* of insecurity” (Ms. Brnabić, 23 October 2023). Serbs get “arrested, taken into custody, beaten up, tortured, humiliated and kept in prison for unknown periods of time” and they are “shot at freely simply because they are Serbs” (Ms. Brnabić, 23 October 2023). Therefore, accordingly, Serbia stated that Kosovo is intensifying its attacks against Kosovo Serbs together with “institutional discrimination against Serbs” and other “dangerous provocations by Pristina” such as “tear gas, shock bombs and unbridled violence” that are “taking place every day” (Mr. Selaković, 15 October 2021). In short, Serbia refers to it as “terror” that results in a “high degree of threat” for the Kosovo Serbs (Mr. Selaković, 20 April 2022).

Serbia intensifies its antagonism towards Kosovo by the use of emotive language and real-life examples of an “*11-year-old boy* Stefan Stojanović and his *21-one-year old cousin* Miloš Stojanović, whose *sin* was celebrating Orthodox Christmas and going to the forest to collect the holy Christmas tree” (Mr. Dačić, 27 April 2023) that got injured, and “a *three-month-old baby*” that got shot (Mr. Selaković, 15 October 2021). In short, Serbia claims that the “ultimate goal” of Pristina is to “create *unbearable* living conditions and expel Serbs from the territory” (President Vučić, 8 February 2024). Moreover, Serbia claims that Kosovo is attacking Serbian and religious historical heritage: “The frequent attacks on the sites of the Serbian Orthodox Church are also *unacceptable*, especially the *shaming attitude* towards Serbian cultural and spiritual heritage” (Mr. Selaković, 18 October 2022). Related to IDPs and reintegration of returnees, Serbia points out that “the percentage of returnees is below 2 per cent” (Mr. Selaković, 18 October 2022), which is “the lowest percentage of returnees in post-conflict areas in the world” (Mr. Dačić, 27 April 2023). This shows that Pristina’s message to the displaced Serbs is: “*Do not return. You are not welcome*” because when they

return “men get arrested, and women (...) are threatened and terrorized (Ms. Brnabić, 23 October 2023).

Taken all together, Serbia creates an ethnic cleansing narrative in which Pristina’s goal is to “have even more Serbs (...) leave Kosovo (...) and to *terminate* any form of cultural and national diversity” (Mr. Selaković, 20 April 2022). As a consequence, “almost all towns and villages in Kosovo and Metohija are *ethnically cleansed*” (Mr. Selaković, 18 October 2022) which is turning Kosovo “from a multi-ethnic environment into an almost *ethnically pure territory*” (Mr. Dačić, 27 April 2023). Therefore, Serbia draws the conclusion that Pristina’s goal is “to *erase the traces of everything Serbian* in Kosovo” (Mr. Dačić, 27 April 2023).

The other main element of Serbia’s antagonism towards Kosovo is Kosovo’s lack of political will to commit to the dialogue and agreements. Serbia asserts that Pristina is not committing to the dialogue since “nothing” has happened in ten years because “Pristina is deliberately *avoiding* [its] obligations” (Mr. Dačić, 27 April 2023). Instead, Pristina is “*violating* or *obstructing* agreements reached in the dialogue in the areas of energy, justice, the freedom of movement and the visits of officials” (Mr. Selaković, 15 October 2021) and related to “the association of Serbian municipalities” (Mr. Dačić, 27 April 2023). Serbia claims that this is “because peace and the success of the dialogue are *not* his goal” (Mr. Dačić, 27 April 2023). Rather, Pristina is “continuously insisting on mutual recognition as a central part of the dialogue” and is showing “*unwillingness* (...) to find any compromise solution” (Mr. Selaković, 18 October 2022).

Considering that the normalization process is not progressing because of Pristina’s unilateralism and lack of political will, Serbia keeps expressing the trust in and need for UNMIK operations in Kosovo “as one of the key factors for maintaining peace and security in Kosovo and Metohija” (Mr. Selaković, 20 April 2022) and even advocates “its continued operation in an unchanged and undiminished scope and capacity” (Mr. Selaković, 18 October 2022). Advocating for UNMIK operations in Kosovo is received by Kosovo as an undermining of Kosovo’s independent statehood and is therefore antagonistic.

4.4.3 Phase IV: The Kosovo-Serbia discursive encounters

Although constructive language was shown sporadically, this often went hand in hand with antagonistic discourse towards one another. When one party expressed commitment to the dialogue, this was followed up by accusations of lacking the political will to commit to the dialogue of the Other, and thus of using the dialogue to bolster its own interests and goals

rather than normalization of relations.

Besides, Kosovo expresses progress in the consolidation of its statehood constructively but this is received by Serbia as a threat to its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Therefore, Serbia dedicates most time to framing Kosovo as an existential threat to Serbia and Kosovo Serbs because of Pristina's unilateralism against Kosovo Serbs, such as hate crimes, violent attacks, intimidation, the violation of basic human rights, and ethnic cleansing.

Kosovo further escalates its antagonistic discourse towards Serbia after the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the 24 September attacks in Northern Kosovo. Kosovo frames Serbia as an existential threat to its sovereignty and territorial integrity because of Serbia's increasing authoritarianism, its alliance and its imperial ambitions to take Kosovo back.

Thus, the discursive encounters between Kosovo and Serbia in the current phase became increasingly antagonistic towards one another, with increasingly framing the Other as an existential threat to its sovereignty and territorial integrity. This hinders the normalization process.

4.5 Synthesis of arguments

There has been a significant, increasing trend towards antagonism in the identity discourses and language usage over the time frame. In the initiation phase (Phase I), constructive discourse was shown to a large extent considering commitment towards the dialogue. Furthermore, Kosovo mainly focused on the consolidation of its independent statehood. However, this was received by Serbia as a threat to its sovereignty and territorial integrity. In general, Kosovo's antagonism towards Serbia was mainly produced by accusing Serbia of efforts aimed to undermine Kosovo's statehood by cultivating inter-ethnic divides and facilitating the "parallel structures". Serbia's antagonistic discourse towards Kosovo is mainly framed as a threat to its national Serb identity and later accusations of ethnic cleansing of Serbs by "ethnic-Albanian authorities".

During the Brussels Agreements (Phase II), this antagonistic trend was further continued with an increase in the implementation of historical grievances, narratives of victimization, ethnic cleansing and injustice with the aim to construct the Other as a threat. Moreover, Kosovo's continued efforts to consolidate independent statehood was increasingly viewed as a threat to Serbia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and Serbian national identity.

In the implementation phase (Phase III), the antagonistic discourse of both parties to one another further exacerbates. Kosovo intensified its references to the past Serbian atrocities and the current Serbian "parallel structures" in Serb-majority municipalities further. Besides, Kosovo increasingly framed itself as a "normal" state in the international community, which is increasingly viewed by Serbia as an existential threat to their sovereignty and territorial integrity. Serbia intensified its accusations of hate crimes, attacks and human rights violations committed against Kosovo Serbs, also on the fields of Kosovo Serb IDPs, returnees, reintegration, property rights and Serb Orthodox religious and historical sites in Kosovo. Moreover, when commitments to the dialogue were made, these were often followed up by accusations to the Other of lacking the political will to do likewise.

The discourses negatively escalated in the more recent period (Phase IV), where antagonism was clearly the most present in each party's discourses, focused on accusing the Other of lack of political will and to use the dialogue to bolster its own interests and goals rather than normalization of relations. Moreover, framing of the Other as a threat also further intensified along with the events in the international environment. Kosovo equalized the current Serbian government with Russia as an aggressor and authoritarian state, and thus a

threat to Kosovo's independent existence. Serbia further intensified its discourses related to Kosovo being an existential threat to Kosovo Serbs, to Serbian national identity and its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Furthermore, both parties implemented emotive elements into their discourses intensively to frame the Other as a threat.

Overall, constructive discourse and language in favor of the dialogue and normalization of relations was shown, especially in the beginning of the time frame. However, this has been volatile and decreasing over the years. Instead, antagonism towards the Other increased significantly over the phases and touched upon an increasing number of elements and topics, depending on the context Kosovo and Serbia were embedded in. Accusations have escalated, in scope, size and severity. Thus, the discursive encounters between Kosovo and Serbia throughout the time frame developed from seeing the Other mainly as a constructive partner to normalize relations, with the dialogue as the most important method, to framing the Other increasingly as an existential threat to the Self. Therefore, the Normalization Dialogue has clearly not managed to normalize the identity discourses and language usage of both Kosovo and Serbia, which explains the practical failure of the Normalization Dialogue and the implementation of agreements. The normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia is therefore still a long way off. These relations are unthinkable to normalize given the increasing trends of antagonistic discourses. Any prospects for normalization must start with the normalization of language, which as the study will conclude, has not yet been achieved through the EU Normalization Dialogue.

Conclusions

The objective of this thesis was to study how Kosovo's and Serbia's identity discourses in the international arena have developed over the Normalization Dialogue, and whether, despite its observed practical failure, the Normalization Dialogue managed to, first and foremost, "normalize" the discourses and language that Kosovo and Serbia construct about oneself in relation to the Other regarding the conflict and prospects of peace. This study was built under the constructivist notion that identity framing primarily determines state behavior and thus state relations, and that this identity is constructed and performed through discourse. Therefore, the normalization of language must be normalized as a prerequisite for the normalization of relations. Based on the situation on the ground, I expected that the Normalization Dialogue failed to normalize the discourses and language use by Kosovo and Serbia since these became increasingly antagonistic towards one another over the stages of the dialogue. In order to give an answer to the research question, I conducted discourse analysis on UNSC Meeting records. I analyzed the elements that the discourses consisted of and made arguments on how these elements shaped the discursive encounters between Kosovo and Serbia throughout the different phases of the Normalization Dialogue.

I found that the discourses and language used by both Kosovo and Serbia demonstrated indeed an increasing tendency towards antagonistic discourse in relation to the Other over the course of the Normalization Dialogue. The discursive encounters between Kosovo and Serbia became increasingly antagonistic because of the intensification of references to past atrocities of the Other in order to construct victimization narratives. Moreover, Kosovo and Serbia increasingly framed each other as an existential threat to their own sovereignty, territorial integrity and national identity throughout the dialogue by an intensification of the ethnic cleansing narratives and escalating accusations of unilateralism. Together with the increasing employment of emotive elements in the language usage, this resulted in a significant shift in the dialogue from constructive partnership to mutual threat perception. Instead of framing each other as a constructive partner in the normalization of relation, which occasionally happened in the initial stages of the dialogue, the discourses and language use in the discursive encounters between Kosovo and Serbia developed towards framing the Other as a threat, indicating a failure of the Normalization Dialogue to normalize the identity discourses and language of Kosovo and Serbia.

These findings contribute to existing academic literature since overwhelming academic literature mainly focused on the EU's mediation efforts and thus the EU's role

within the dialogue. This thesis, in contrast, is the first study which investigated in-depth the discursive encounters between Kosovo and Serbia in the international arena. Therefore, this study highlighted Kosovo's and Serbia's agency in shaping the dynamics in the conflict through their identity discourses. Instead of a primary focus on the content and implementation of normalization agreements as done by the vast majority of existing scholarship, this study contributed to academia rather taking a step back to study whether the Normalization Dialogue primarily managed to normalize the discourses and language the parties use about oneself in relation to the Other. Hence, this study found that Kosovo's and Serbia's discourses did not normalize but rather antagonized over the different stages of the Normalization Dialogue. Contrasting this to existing scholarship, not only the EU and its mediation strategies in its peacebuilding framework are relevant for the normalization of relations. Rather, the findings of this study indicate that indeed the normalization of discourses and language by both Kosovo and Serbia is a prerequisite for the normalization of relations and that this should therefore not be overlooked.

Much has to be done in the normalization of discourses as a prerequisite of normalization of relations. Given the increasing trends of antagonistic discourses that are found, this normalization of relations remains unthinkable for now. Therefore, any prospects for normalization must start with the normalization of language, which as the study concludes, has not yet been achieved through the EU Normalization Dialogue. This is a policy implication for the EU as mediator in the Normalization Dialogue. The findings indicate that the EU should, instead of primarily focusing on the conclusion and implementation of agreements based on principles of EU conditionality and constructive ambiguity, rather focus on policies aimed at the normalization of discourses and language use of Kosovo and Serbia as a first step. Therefore, the EU should shift its focus from implementation of agreements to language normalization by Kosovo and Serbia officials. For example, the EU could incentivize discourse that is constructive for the dialogue and the normalization of relations by employing the EU's conditionality. The EU could link the normalization of language to the funding of certain national and bilateral projects in and between Kosovar and Serbian societies in order to promote positive language in the dialogue. By establishing clear guidelines that are aimed to control and eliminate inflammatory discourses and encourage constructive discourses instead, the EU could more easily safeguard a harmonious environment between Kosovo and Serbia. In order to enforce these guidelines, the EU could develop a monitoring body within the dialogue framework that

serves to observe and report on the language usage by both Kosovo and Serbia regarding each other.

While drawing these conclusions, several limitations of the study should be taken into account. One limitation is that the discourse analysis employed in this study only included written documents. Therefore, I was only able to study *what* was said but unable to grasp *how* this was said, with what intonation and the nonverbal communication that could have come with it. This could have led to a different interpretation. Another limitation is that, in most of the meetings analyzed, the representatives of Serbia spoke in Serbian and representatives of Kosovo in Albanian. Since I do not master these languages myself, I had to analyze the meeting records translated into English. With translation, meaning may get lost or interpreted differently. Therefore, analyzing translated meeting records may have resulted in a different interpretation by being unable to grasp the meaning and connotation of words and sayings of original languages. Based on this, the recommendations for future research are focused on getting a deeper and more thorough understanding of not only what discourse is produced (also for the stages to come) but also on *how* this discourse is produced, including intonation and nonverbal elements in the analysis, for example, by doing a visual analysis. In this way, the researcher is able to grasp the power of intonation and nonverbal communication in order to get a more holistic interpretation of what has been said.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Documents

Link to the database: [click here](#)

Meeting	Meeting date	Speaker Kosovo	Speaker Serbia	Link
1	16 February 2011	Mrs. Çitaku	Mr. Jeremić	source
2	12 May 2011	Mr. Hoxhaj	Mr. Jeremić	source
3	30 August 2011	Mr. Hoxhaj	Mr. Jeremić	source
4	29 November 2011	Mr. Hoxhaj	Mr. Jeremić	source
5	8 February 2012	Mr. Hoxhaj	Mr. Jeremić	source
6	14 May 2012	Mr. Hoxhaj	Mr. Jeremić	source
7	21 August 2012	Mr. Thaçi	Mr. Dačić	source
8	27 November 2012	Mr. Hoxhaj	Mr. Mrkić	source
9	22 March 2013	Mr. Thaçi	Mr. Dačić	source
10	14 June 2013	Mr. Thaçi	Mr. Dačić	source
11	29 August 2013	Mr. Hoxhaj	Mr. Mrkić	source
12	19 November 2013	Mr. Thaçi	Mr. Dačić	source
13	10 February 2014	Mr. Thaçi	Mr. Dačić	source
14	27 May 2014	Ms. Jahjaga	President Nikolić	source
15	29 August 2014	Mr. Hoxhaj	Mr. Dačić	source
16	4 December 2014	Mr. Thaçi	Mr. Vučić	source
17	6 February 2015	Mr. Thaçi	Mr. Dačić	source
18	26 May 2015	Mr. Thaçi	Mr. Dačić	source
19	21 August 2015	Mr. Thaçi	Mr. Dačić	source
20	19 November 2015	Mrs. Çitaku	Mr. Dačić	source
21	29 February 2016	Mrs. Çitaku	Mr. Dačić	source
22	16 May 2016	Mrs. Çitaku	Mr. Dačić	source
23	25 August 2016	Mrs. Çitaku	Mr. Dačić	source

24	16 November 2016	Mrs. Çitaku	Mr. Dačić	source
25	27 February 2017	Mrs. Çitaku	President Nikolić	source
26	16 May 2017	Mrs. Çitaku	Ms. Kuburović	source
27	16 August 2017	Mrs. Çitaku	Mr. Dačić	source
28	14 November 2017	Mrs. Çitaku	Mr. Dačić	source
29	7 February 2018	Mrs. Çitaku	Mr. Dačić	source
30	14 May 2018	Mrs. Çitaku	Mr. Dačić	source
31	14 November 2018	Mrs. Çitaku	Mr. Dačić	source
32	17 December 2018	Mr. Thaçi	President Vučić	source
33	7 February 2019	Mrs. Çitaku	Mr. Dačić	source
34	10 June 2019	Mrs. Çitaku	Mr. Dačić	source
35	31 October 2019	Mrs. Çitaku	Mr. Dačić	source
36	15 October 2021	Ms. Osmani-Sadriu	Mr. Selaković	source
37	20 April 2022	Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz	Mr. Selaković	source
38	18 October 2022	Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz	Mr. Selaković	source
39	27 April 2023	Ms. Gërvalla-Schwarz	Mr. Dačić	source
40	23 October 2023	Ms. Osmani-Sadriu	Ms. Brnabić	source
41	8 February 2024	Mr. Kurti	President Vučić	source

Table III: UNSC Meetings from 2011 to 2024

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