

CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Political Studies

Department of International Relations

**The Limits of the EU's Political Conditionality Approach
in the Western Balkans**

Master's thesis



Author: Michaela Křiklánová

Study programme: International Relations

Supervisors: Doc. PhDr. Jan Karlas, M.A., Ph.D. & Junprof. Dr. Christina Isabel Zuber

Year of defence: 2019

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on December 30th, 2018

Michaela Křiklánová

Reference

KŘIKLÁNOVÁ, Michaela. *The Limits of the EU's Political Conditionality Approach in the Western Balkans*. Praha, 2019. 59 pages. Master's thesis (Mgr.). Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Political Science. Department of International Relations. Supervisors Doc. PhDr. Jan Karlas, M.A., Ph.D. & Junprof. Dr. Christina Isabel Zuber.

Total: 134 150 Characters

Abstract

The thesis aims to unravel the relationship between the EU's enlargement strategies and democratization in the Western Balkan countries by looking on the impact of the strategies on changing democracy levels in two empirical cases: the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia. Over more than a decade, the effect of the conditionality tool on democratization has been curbed by an insufficient emphasis placed on pro-democratic reforms and by the role of security concerns which were often prioritized over aims directly linked to democracy promotion. Grounded in the conflicting objectives theory, the thesis demonstrates that the recently employed strategy appropriately sequencing goals while prioritizing democratic transition over security concerns is more effective in inflicting domestic democratic change. Subsequently, the following necessary and sufficient conditions for a successful sequencing strategy were defined: strong emphasis on democracy-related goals combined with clearly outlined temporal perspective, and corresponding action of international actors.

Abstrakt

Cílem práce je odkrýt vztah mezi strategiemi rozšiřování Evropské unie a procesem demokratizace v zemích západního Balkánu za pomoci zkoumání vlivu strategií EU na změny úrovně demokracie ve dvou konkrétních případech: Bývalá jugoslávská republika Makedonie a Srbsko. Efekt nástroje politické kondicionality byl po dobu více než jedné dekády omezen nedostatečným důrazem na demokratické reformy a vyzdvihováním bezpečnostních zájmů, které byly často upřednostněny před cíli, které přímo souvisí s reformami posilujícími úroveň demokracie v daných zemích. Na základě teorie konfliktních cílů práce demonstruje, že nedávno uplatněná strategie EU, jež řadí jednotlivé cíle do vhodné posloupnosti, přičemž cíle související s demokratickým přechodem jsou upřednostněny před bezpečnostními zájmy, je efektivnější v navozování demokratických změn. Následně byly definovány nutné a postačující podmínky pro úspěšnou strategii posloupnosti: silný důraz na demokratické cíle s jasně vytyčenou časovou perspektivou a odpovídající kroky mezinárodních aktérů.

Keywords

Enlargement of the European Union, Western Balkans, Democracy Promotion, Conflicting Objectives Theory, Qualitative Content Analysis, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia

Klíčová slova

rozšíření Evropské unie, západní Balkán, podpora demokracie, teorie konfliktních cílů, kvalitativní obsahová analýza, Bývalá jugoslávská republika Makedonie, Srbsko

Název práce

Limity politické kondicionality EU v zemích západního Balkánu

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisors Doc. PhDr. Jan Karlas, M.A., Ph.D. and Junprof. Dr. Christina Isabel Zuber for their patience, guidance and constructive criticism. I would also like to thank my parents and my friends for their unfailing support throughout my years of study, but especially during the last year when this work came about.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Literature review.....	5
3. Theory.....	10
4. Research design	15
4.1 Methodology.....	15
4.2 Operationalization	18
5. Analysis of the EU's strategies and their impact on democratization	29
5.1 Conflict of democracy vs. socio-economic development.....	29
5.2 Conflict of democracy vs. security.....	31
6. Impact of the EU's 2015 and 2016 enlargement strategies on democracy in Macedonia.....	38
6.1 Domestic political development and the EU's involvement in Macedonia	38
6.2 Economic development.....	44
6.3 Security situation.....	45
6.4 Regional politics	49
6.5 Evaluation of the EU's enlargement strategy in 2015 and 2016.....	50
6.6 Conditions for a successful sequencing strategy	52
7. Conclusion	55
List of Appendices	69
Appendix no 1. Coding scheme.....	70
Diploma thesis project	74

1. Introduction

Fifteen years have passed since the EU-Western Balkans summit in Thessaloniki took place and set out an agenda reconfirming the European future for the Western Balkan countries. In exchange for the accession perspective which brings the countries of the region a promise of the notable benefits the member states can take advantage of, the candidates commit to pursue far-reaching domestic reforms in order to approach and finally meet the EU's standards in a number of different areas, notably democratic governance, rule of law, and economy. Nevertheless, the principle of the EU's conditionality has often been denounced as ineffective, since its impact varies significantly across recipient countries. The countries of the Western Balkan region are currently at different stages of the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) and although Croatia has, as the frontrunner, become a member of the EU in 2013, ten years after the summit, Bosnia and Herzegovina has only submitted its membership application thirteen years later, in 2016. Pace of the accession process considerably differs throughout the region and progress in democratization has in most countries been very little, in some cases democracy levels have even dropped.

The joint declaration from the Thessaloniki summit states: "We all share the values of democracy, the rule of law, respect for human and minority rights, solidarity and a market economy, fully aware that they constitute the very foundations of the European Union. Respect of international law, inviolability of international borders, peaceful resolution of conflicts and regional co-operation are principles of the highest importance, to which we are all committed." (European Commission 2003) This quote already indicates that the EU's normative appeal to democracy is often trumped by the substantive concerns to establish and maintain stability in the region. Claiming that the basic shared values comprise democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights, while prioritizing security-related goals using the conditionality tool has been marked the core problem of the EU's stance by a number of authors. The specific post-conflict conception can be traced back to the 1990's, when the EU developed a policy framework towards the Western Balkan region, called the "regional approach." At the core of the regional approach lies the Stabilisation and Association Process, which aims to prepare the countries of the region for eventual future accession to the EU.

But in the course of the process, normative transformation has been pushed aside and the focus has been turned mainly to measures supportive of security and stability in the Western Balkans, which are often perceived as a prerequisite of democracy. But by continuously neglecting democratic reforms while moving the countries forward in the accession process, the EU has bestowed external legitimacy on the increasingly authoritarian systems in the region and by extension undermined its own efforts, since domestic opposition can hardly compete with a perceptibly legitimate government. (Bieber 2018a; Pavlović 2016)

As an external actor pursuing democracy promotion, the EU possesses a unique instrument of the conditionality tool, which can serve to provide very strong incentives for the countries to comply with its requirements. This tool has been thoroughly analysed by the EU scholars for its singularity, but for a better understanding of the processes in play, a broader perspective which has been adopted in this thesis has proven to be beneficial, because theories addressing the role of external actors in democracy promotion provide useful insight which can be easily overlooked within the limited framework of the research focused solely on EU enlargement.

Contrary to initial expectations, the accession perspective alone is often not sufficient motivation for the countries to adapt to the EU. Guided by the conflicting objectives theory, I argue that a suitable strategy tackling the conflict arising from the simultaneous promotion of democracy and security should to be employed for the EU's efforts to be effective. In order to detect a suitable strategy leading to effective democracy promotion in the accession countries, I have analysed the EU's annual strategy documents and examined their impact on democratization in two Western Balkan countries: the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (henceforth: "Macedonia") and Serbia. Among other things, my assessment revealed that appropriate sequencing of reforms prioritizing democratic transition is associated with successful democracy promotion, which hints at potential policy implications for external democratization actors.

The main contribution of this thesis lies in the novel approach to a broadly acknowledged phenomenon, and in the provision of systematic empirical evidence for an assumption which forms the foundation of many arguments in the scholarly debate

on the effects of the EU's conditionality. First, bridging the scholarly debate on democracy promotion by external actors and the research focused on the EU's conditionality tool provides us with a distinct outlook on the tool's efficacy and enables a broader application of the results beyond the borders of the European Union and its accession candidates. Second, the systematic analysis of the EU's strategy documents generates a comprehensive overview of the EU's approach towards the conflicting objectives in the two selected cases over the eight-year period and thus contributes to the theory by enabling to establish a connection of the strategies with progress in democratization for every country-year unit. Third, since none of the authors in the special issue of Democratization (2012) on the conflicting objectives theory was able to find clear evidence of the sequencing strategy, my analysis of the two selected years when the EU employed this strategy is the first attempt to draw conclusions based on empirical findings and elaborate on the strategy in detail. Overall, fully understanding the complex processes behind democratization in both selected countries is surely beyond the scope of this research. But by elucidating one essential component of the mechanism, the EU's enlargement strategy, this work aims to contribute to the existing research with a solid base to be further elaborated on and to be connected with other components, such as the response on the domestic level and the interaction of domestic and external actors.

The thesis is divided into five main parts. Following the introduction, existing literature focused on the EU conditionality and democracy promotion by external actors is presented, providing a brief overview of research conducted so far and shedding light on the choice of my research question and hypothesis. Chapter three introduces the theory of conflicting objectives, followed by a part dedicated to methodology and operationalization, and the fifth chapter addresses the research question by analysing the EU's strategies and their impact on democratization. Finally, the last chapter is devoted to a within-case analysis, consisting of an in-depth qualitative inquiry into development during the selected two years when the EU employed the strategy of sequencing prioritizing democratization.

2. Literature review

In order to understand properly the development and mechanisms of the EU conditionality approach in the Western Balkans, I have decided to bridge two distinct, yet equally relevant bodies of research. First, the academic literature on democracy promotion and second, the specific research on the EU conditionality tool.

Democratization theories have long been centred around the recipient side of democracy promotion policies and the impact these policies have on the domestic dimension. Notwithstanding the fact that this is indeed a crucial part of the process and that democratic transition and consolidation play an essential role, it is important to acknowledge the external actors as key determinants and architects of democratization policies and pay more attention to the international dimension, since that is where most of the decision-making takes place.

Among scholars focused on external actors and their approach towards democracy promotion, there have rarely been explicit attempts to formulate a particular theory which would serve to shed light on the causal mechanisms behind concrete actions. There are, however, some exceptions to that. Building on world-systems theory, global political economy and neo-Gramscian perspectives, Robinson (1996) examined the U.S. democracy promotion in his book *Promoting Polyarchy* and presented one of the first attempts to theorize democracy promotion by external actors. His main argument states that the U.S. policy shift towards a strategy of democracy promotion was in fact a neo-liberalist attempt to establish the conditions enabling transnational capital mobility and globalized circuits of production and distribution, which in turn created escalating conflicts, large-scale social displacement and political instability in the recipient countries. Peceny (1999) tried to conceptualize the U.S. democracy promotion by force and for this purpose distinguished between “proliberalization,” which entails steps aimed at liberalizing the recipient country and “nonliberalization,” leading to consolidation of authoritarian governments. Both Robinson and Peceny have made significant contributions to the development of external democracy promotion theories, however, the main focus of both of their studies is on the U.S. as the main actor, which is why their theoretical framework needs to be complemented with more universal research. Wolff and Wurm (2011) tried to fill the gap by presenting four distinct theoretical approaches to external democracy

promotion and linking them to the existing international relations theories, namely two rationalist perspectives (modified realism and commercial liberalism) and two reflective ones (actor-centred constructivism and sociological institutionalism). Miller (2010) on the other hand approaches the issue from a different angle and treats democracy promotion as a typical feature of a distinct IR approach: offensive liberalism, which is typically characterized by the grand strategy of imposed democratization. Building on theories of development studies and peace and security studies, Grimm and Leininger (2012) develop a theory on conflicting objectives in democracy promotion, which is a first comprehensive attempt to conceptualize conflicting objectives and which will be employed in this thesis. Grounded in several detailed case studies, the authors have formulated a theory, which should help scholars of democratization conceptualize and further evolve a framework for policy goals in external democracy promotion, focused on promoting certain combinations of two or more conflicting goals which despite being all desirable seem to interfere with each other in practice. Wolff and Spanger (2017) argue that the mechanisms behind conflicting goals are in fact very complex and it would be imprecise to insist that interest-driven goals of the donor automatically override norm-driven democracy promotion, as claimed for instance by Thomas Carothers (2003). This suggests that it is important to consider the impact of interaction of norms and interests in democracy promotion as opposed to treating them as two mutually exclusive phenomena. Furthermore, they insist that scholars of democratization have predominantly focused on extrinsic conflicts of objectives as a separate phenomenon, albeit in fact the extrinsic conflicts are commonly accompanied by intrinsic conflicts as well.

When looking at the impact of the EU on domestic levels of democracy in candidate countries, the enlargement strategy using the unique tool of membership conditionality is nothing but a special case of external democracy promotion. Nonetheless, the EU scholars have developed an extensive body of literature which examines this tool and its effects in great detail, usually without a connection to a broader democracy promotion theory. Notable exceptions are the works by Casier (2011), Richter (2012), or Grimm and Mathis (2018). Richter (2012) for instance, has examined the case of the EU's democracy promotion in Macedonia through the lens of the conflicting objectives theory, and argued that the EU's approach prioritizes

security over democracy, which turns out to be problematic given that the EU uses the same tool to promote of both of these conflicting goals. Hence, the author confirms the widespread consensus that whenever those two objectives clash, security has always managed to outbid softer policy goals, such as democratization. (Bieber 2011; Börzel 2011; Grimm and Mathis 2018; Huszka 2018) That being said, Richter's methodology remains unclear and systematic research on the EU's strategies is still missing, which is a substantial research gap, especially given the scope of the academic consensus about this assumption. Accordingly, this thesis will make an attempt to address the gap by looking more closely into the causal relationship between the EU's strategy and its impact on democratization in the Western Balkans.

Mostly, the existing research focused on the effectiveness of the EU conditionality tool has inspected the issue through the rationalist perspective, specifically the external incentives model. The argument ensuing from this model maintains that the main obstacle to effectivity of the EU conditionality is lack of credibility and consistency in its approach. (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005) Börzel and Schimmelfennig (2017) demonstrate that the EU accession conditionality bolsters good governance, especially as compared to incentives based on mere partnership such as the benefits stemming from the European Neighbourhood Policy, which tend to be ineffective. Additionally, the more credible the accession conditionality is, the stronger the transformative effect. It is essential for the benefits of a credible accession perspective to be higher than the costs of compliance with the EU's conditions. (Ethier 2003; Vachudova 2005) Furthermore, Huszka and Kortvelyesi (2017) argue that for the "membership carrot" to be effective, the EU must be consistent in its application of the political conditionality. This means that consistency needs to be maintained over time, with regard to different (potential) candidate countries (the so-called internal consistency), but also as compared to states which already are members, otherwise the normative appeal of the EU can be called into question. Although consistency is arguably crucial for effectiveness, realistic prioritization of goals is also essential in order to avoid empty box-ticking, in other words "Potemkin harmonization," (Jacoby 1999) which can only lead to easily revertible changes.

However, not solely the EU has an effect on the impact the conditionality will

have on the respective country, since there are many processes under way on both international and domestic level which can affect or even block the EU's democratization efforts and the interaction of both actors on the domestic and international level is also undeniably a significant component of the whole mechanism. From the recipient country's perspective, if the EU's demands lack strong normative justification, compliance will be negatively affected. (Noutcheva 2009) But compliance can also be blocked by national identity. (Peskin 2009; Subotic 2011) Based on its concordance with conditions set by the EU, the recipient country will either follow the logic of consequentialism or appropriateness (March and Olsen 1998), with the former possibly resulting in full compliance or no compliance, whereas the latter leading to either no compliance or inconsistent compliance. (Freyburg and Richter 2010) A crucial case study on Serbia's (non-)cooperation with the ICTY has, however, disproved the national identity argument by demonstrating that changes in Serbia's approach towards ICTY were not preceded by national identity change. (Pawelec and Grimm 2014)

Prioritization of security concerns has to a certain degree been part of almost every explanation of the ineffectiveness of the EU's democracy promotion in the Western Balkans. The external incentives model mentions security as the main factor causing the EU to act inconsistently and in turn decreasing the credibility of its incentives (Huszka 2018), security concerns can also be the reason for the EU to employ the consequentialist logic of action instead of the logic of appropriateness (Noutcheva 2009), and lastly, in the explanation based on national identity, states will comply if the costs of political adaptation (which are increased by discordant national identity) do not exceed the credible benefits. These adaptation costs, besides other things, also depend on the EU's conditions' potential impact on security and integrity of the state. (Freyburg and Richter 2010) As a logical conclusion of the scholarly debate, security concerns are of cardinal importance in the EU's approach towards the Western Balkans, and their prioritization over the goals connected to democracy promotion seems to be in place, although this assumption has yet to be tested empirically.

Additionally, I have considered that there could be a third big goal potentially clashing with the promotion of both democracy and security: socio-economic development.

Modernization theory scholars have long argued that socio-economic development can be supportive of democratization. (Apter 1965; Lipset 1960) That would imply that socio-economic advancement without focus on areas essential for democracy, such as fundamental human rights and civil liberties, would still presumably lead to improvements in these areas. But this clear-cut argument has been later turned inside out by other development studies researchers, which have pointed out that it can in fact be democratic governance, which supports economic development. (Carothers et al. 2010; Przeworski et al. 2000) Building on that, the capability approach scholars see people's freedom and empowerment as a means to achieve other goals, enabling them to improve their well-being. (Nussbaum 2003; Sen 1999) Up to the present day, it is not clear whether democracy supports economic development, if the causal relationship goes the other way around, or whether it would simply be advisable to abandon this question and focus on the more complex causal mechanisms surrounding this relationship. Nevertheless, from the perspective of the conflicting objectives theory, goals directly related to democracy and those linked to socio-economic development can, instead of mutual reinforcement, also clash, as demonstrated by Wolff (2012) on the case of Bolivia.

3. Theory

Throughout the research on the effects of the EU political conditionality, the literature has often focused solely on the one specific actor using this particular tool. But in order to generalize the results and broaden the horizons of the EU scholarship, it is desirable to connect the EU literature to the more comprehensive theory of the impact of external actors on democratization, because apart from the very specificity of the conditionality tool, the EU is still an international actor pursuing various goals as a part of its foreign policy. For this reason I have decided to, rather than using the narrowly circumscribed theories of the EU enlargement, employ the theory of conflicting objectives in democracy promotion developed by Grimm and Leininger (2012), which is the first attempt to conceptualize the phenomenon of conflicting objectives in the process of democracy promotion by external actors. The basic premise of the theory is that “not all good things go together” – simply suggesting that democracy promotion has way too often been considered naturally beneficial to the efforts to attain other goals, such as peace, stability, and economic development. However, in practice, it might be hard to effectively promote those objectives at the same time, since the steps which are necessary for instance in order to achieve peace and stability can simultaneously work against democratization. As demonstrated by Jung (2012), short-term peace-making can hinder democracy promotion in the long term, as exemplified on the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Owing to externally mediated peace and imposed institutional arrangements which have locked in the fragmentation of the Bosnian society along ethnic lines by creating a strict system of power-sharing, subsequent peace-building and democratization have proven to be more than difficult. Furthermore, there is rarely a simple trade-off between two different goals which are being simultaneously promoted that could be framed as a clear dichotomy of two conflicting objectives. In fact, we can commonly observe several conflicting objectives to appear at the same time, due to the complex processes inherent in democracy promotion, and it is first of all crucial to acknowledge their existence in order to be able to address them properly.

Drawing on Spanger and Wolff (2007), the authors distinguish two main types of conflicting objectives: intrinsic and extrinsic trade-offs between various factors in democracy promotion. *Intrinsic* conflicting objectives are those that “emerge when

different elements of democracy promotion clash” and the *extrinsic* ones are these that appear “when the goal of democracy promotion – that is, democratization – interferes with other objectives of foreign policies and development cooperation.” (Grimm and Leininger 2012) For instance, the authors give free and fair elections vs. negotiated power-sharing as an example of intrinsic conflicting objectives and democratization vs. peace-building as an example of extrinsic trade-offs in democracy promotion. This work will mainly be focused on an extrinsic conflict of objectives, specifically on the case of promotion of democracy interfering with promotion of security and socio-economic development.

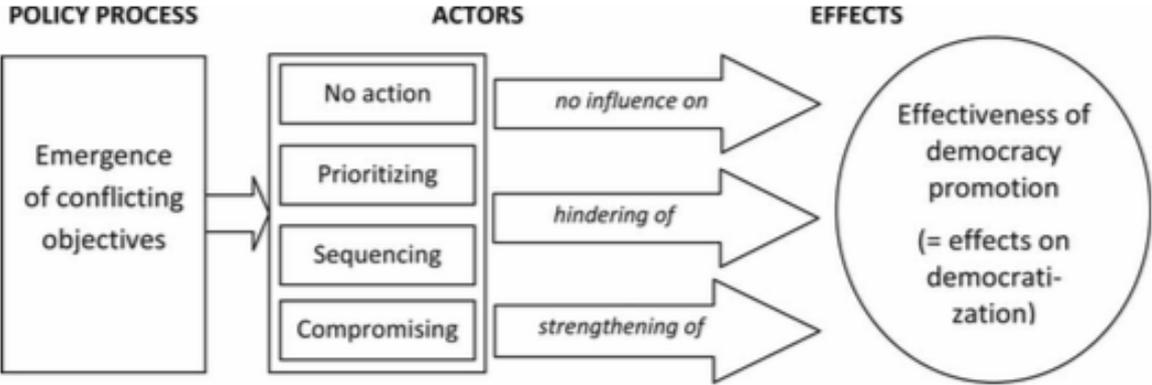
Grimm and Leininger’s (2012) theory is process-oriented, therefore the authors differentiate between three distinct phases of emergence of conflicting objectives: normative, strategic and operative. During the normative phase, intrinsic conflicts of objectives are likely to emerge, due to different actors’ efforts to promote different democracy concepts resulting in potential clash over norm preference, which in turn affects the strategic and operative phase. Extrinsic conflicts may also come into play in this phase. The strategic phase can bring about both intrinsic and extrinsic conflicts of objectives too, in this case the intrinsic dimension reflects the conflict over endogenous (self-administration and local ownership) vs. exogenous (external interference) strategy of democratization, the extrinsic dimension denotes the conflict over different strategies to achieve these conflicting goals. The operative phase accounts for a conflict of priorities, which can again on both intrinsic and extrinsic level compromise democracy promotion.

There are three different types of factors which according to the theory influence the emergence of conflicting objectives: (1) The socio-economic and political conditions in the recipient country, specifically the level of conflict, the level of development and the type of political regime, can affect to what extent democracy is compatible with other goals. (2) The interaction between international and local actors, because divergent preferences can emerge depending on the degree of inclusion of recipients of democracy promotion policy. Highly inclusive approach should lead to convergence of interests, in which case the chances of conflicting objectives occurring are lower. (3) And lastly, the capacity of international and local actors also plays an important role, since the lack of human and institutional resources and management

skills can limit their ability to determine which objectives are essential and thus hinder the process aiming to meet both the needs of the population of the recipient country as well as the requirements of the donor.

According to Grimm and Leininger (2012), conflicting objectives are likely to hinder the process of democratization if they are not addressed properly by both international and local actors. As depicted in Figure 1, there are four different possible strategies of how to deal with the conflict once recognized as potentially detrimental for democracy promotion. First, the actors ignore the conflict and take *no action* (1). There is a possibility that the conflict will simply disappear if the actors wait long enough, which nevertheless seems to be quite unlikely and overall, it is reasonable to believe that this strategy is not the preferable one, since ignoring the conflict might only lead to further escalation. Second, they can employ the strategy of *prioritization* (2), by giving preference to one objective over another, potentially even leave out one of the goals completely. Third, the actors can opt for *sequencing* (3), which entails prioritizing goals and dealing with them one by one in a given order, each of the preceding objectives serving as a prerequisite for the subsequent one. And fourth, they can resort to a *compromise* (4) by balancing and combining the conflicting goals. Each of these strategies can have either no influence on, hinder or strengthen the effectiveness of democracy promotion, but it is yet to be established which strategy leads to which outcome, or whether any of these strategies can actually lead to the resolution of the conflict of objectives. This thesis will thus attempt to contribute to the empirical research testing the theory by broadening the number of cases and prolonging the time period under scrutiny, but also by specifically pinning down which strategy enhanced democracy promotion and which turned out to be unsuccessful. Despite the fact that the bodies of literature on both democracy promotion and European enlargement have widely acknowledged the existence of conflicting objectives and they have been broadly used as one potential explanation of the ineffectiveness of the EU conditionality, empirical evidence and subsequent analysis of such is still considerably limited.

Figure 1. *Impact of conflicting objectives on the effectiveness of democracy promotion.* (Grimm and Leininger 2012)



The merit of the conflicting objectives theory lies in its novel approach to a widespread phenomenon which has been hitherto neglected by the academia and which undoubtedly deserves further elaboration. Grimm and Leininger (2012) consider many different aspects of conflicting objectives in democracy promotion, starting with the concept itself and how it has been looked at within different disciplines, breaking down the temporal perspective of the emergence of conflicting objectives as well as different conditions which are likely to increase the chances of their occurrence, and finally examining the possible strategies of dealing with conflicting objectives and their potential impact on democracy promotion. Each of those parts presumably deserves deeper elaboration on the conceptual level, however, the theory as it is already hints at some of the most important elements to consider when dealing with conflicting objectives.

In particular, the theoretical framework could further connect the temporal perspective with the different kinds of action that can be taken, since it could lead to possible empirical policy indications. So far, it is not clear whether any of these strategies positively or negatively influences the effectiveness of democracy promotion at all, but on a theoretical level it should be distinguished which steps could potentially be taken at which stage, since their feasibility and effectiveness could differ across different stages of the policy process.

My work will specifically focus on the extrinsic dimension of conflicting objectives in the strategic phase and will try to uncover the strategies employed by the EU over

the given time period for each of the two countries. Previous research suggests that the EU is using the strategy of prioritization in its approach towards the Western Balkans. However, based on empirical findings which I will demonstrate on the following pages, the EU has lately also attempted to employ the sequencing strategy and strategy of no action resulting in various degrees of success. In the special issue of Democratization on conflicting objectives, none of the authors has found clear evidence of a sequencing strategy. (Grimm and Leininger 2012) For that reason, it will be highly interesting to look closer on both selected countries and compare the diverse outcomes at different points in time with a specific focus on the sequencing strategy. As stated by Grimm and Leininger (2012) “sequencing’ goes one step further than ‘prioritization’ because it combines several elements and implies strategic thinking. There is no sequencing without prioritization, but priorities without sequencing are possible.” It has long been clear that in the complex process of enlargement, some goals are more important than others for the EU. But only recently has the EU acknowledged the benefits of a better elaborated and possibly more effective strategy, which takes into account the temporal perspective on promoting different policy goals bearing different levels of importance at a specific point in time, and which turned out to bear tangible results. Hence, this work aims to contribute to the theory’s empirical grounding by comparing the effectiveness of different strategies employed by the EU by and examining the application of the sequencing strategy in detail.

4. Research design

4.1 Methodology

The research question I will attempt to answer with this thesis runs as follows: *“Do the changes in the EU’s enlargement strategy have an effect on the levels of democracy in the Western Balkans?”* In order to answer this question I have decided to employ the method of a comparative case study. I will examine a number of country-year units and compare the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable among them, then I will proceed with a within-case analysis as described by Rohlfing (2012), by looking into patterns and irregularities in the cause and effect dyads for each year and analysing the underlying factors in a selected case of particular interest. That will enable me to establish whether using one or more of the employed strategies was a necessary condition for successful democracy promotion.

Given the small overall universe of cases determined by the low number of countries which are recipients of the EU conditionality, comparative case study will allow me to examine the processes in play in greater detail but still attain some generalizable assumptions about the causal mechanisms arguably affecting all countries of the region. In order to account for alternative explanations like the impact of level of economic development, security situation or domestic political situation on democratization, I have picked two very similar countries, that is, Serbia and Macedonia, which are located in the same region, have a similar level of development and overall share a lot of similar traits due to common history, so that they are deemed comparable. Contrasting two analogous cases over a longer period of time provides good conditions for causal inference, owing to similar circumstances and thus easily traceable roots of varying levels on the dependent variable.

The cases were purposely not selected based on varying levels of the explanatory variable, but instead based on variation in the dependent variable, which should enable me to determine whether employing one or more of the above-described strategies was a necessary condition for successful democracy promotion. That would not be possible if the dependent variable remained constant. I have chosen the most diverse cases (Gerring 2007), which represent the fullest possible range of democracy levels from the overall universe of cases. As compared to other Western Balkan (potential) candidate countries, where the democracy levels remain almost constant

throughout the period under scrutiny, in the case of both Serbia and Macedonia, we can observe changes which are quite eminent, as depicted in Figure 2 and Figure 3 below.

Figure 2. *Liberal Democracy Index measurement by V-Dem: Serbia and Macedonia between 2009 and 2017*

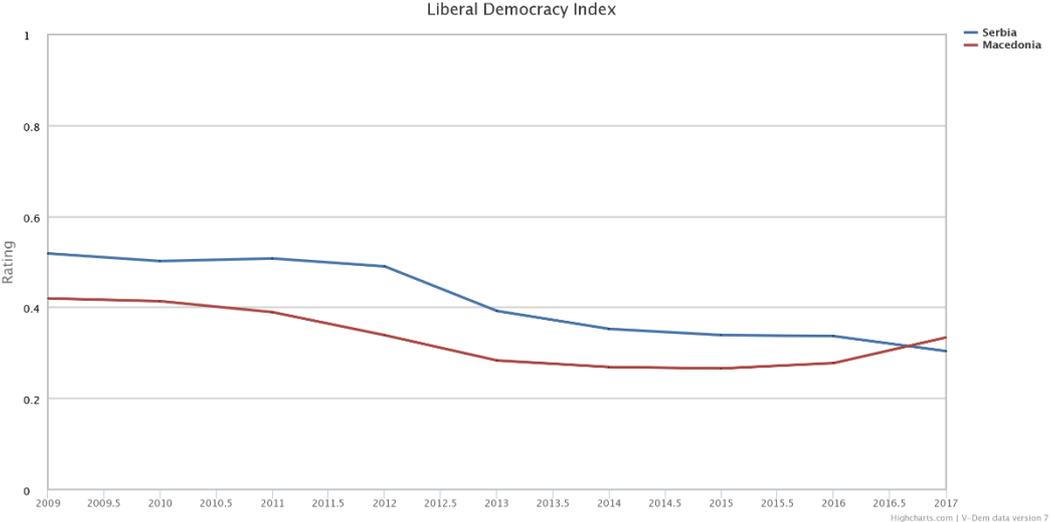
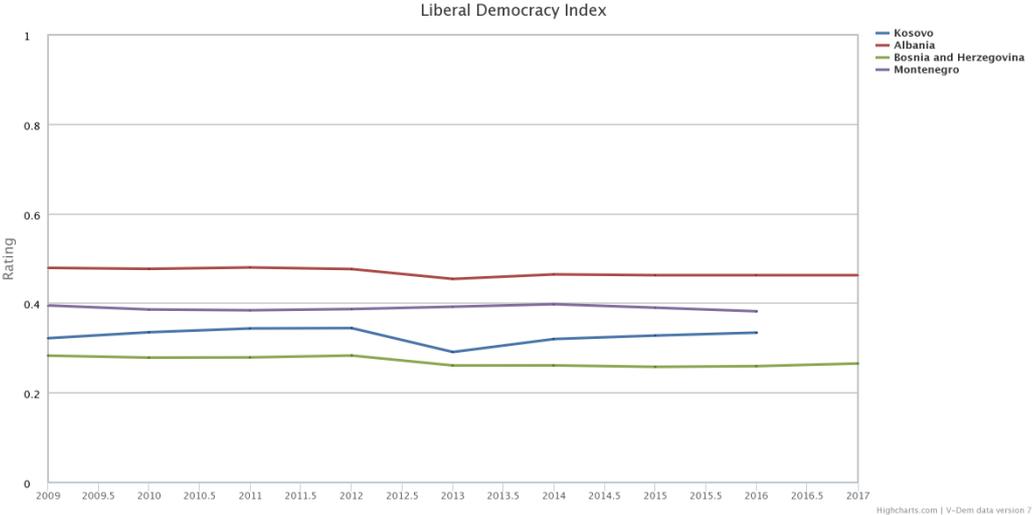


Figure 3. *Liberal Democracy Index measurement by V-Dem: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Montenegro between 2009 and 2017*



In order to determine the levels of the independent variable, I will analyse the EU’s strategy documents over a longer period of time, in particular the years 2009-2016. The year 2009 is a remarkable turning point in the EU’s history, since it marks the year when the Lisbon treaty has entered into force. Modification of the

constitutional basis of the EU and abolition of the pillar system entails great changes and therefore seems to be a good starting point for my analysis. The year 2016 is the latest year for which it will be possible to observe an effect of the EU's strategy on democracy levels, since the subsequent strategy paper has not been issued until April 2018. The thesis is using qualitative content analysis technique as a method of data processing, which I will elaborate on further below. The type of strategy the EU used will then be defined. That will enable me to observe whether different strategies bear different outcomes.

By doing so, I will test the following hypothesis: *“Shifts within the EU’s enlargement strategy influence the effectiveness of the EU’s democracy promotion in the Western Balkans.”*

The independent variable will be retrieved from the strategy documents and transformed into a nominal variable. Every strategy will be marked by a number between 1 and 4: 1) Prioritization, 2) Sequencing, 3) Compromising, 4) No action.

The dependent variable will be turned from a ratio variable (going from 0 to 1) into a nominal one using the following method: since my interest lies in the assessment of a successful strategy of democracy promotion, every year, when the level of democracy has increased will be marked 1, standing for a successful strategy of democracy promotion, and every year, in which the level of democracy has remained the same or decreased will be marked 0, denoting an unsuccessful strategy.

For every country-year unit there will consequently emerge a combination of one strategy and its effect, that is, successful or unsuccessful democracy promotion. This will allow me to compare the effectiveness of different strategies and potentially determine whether any of them was a necessary condition for the EU's success.

By looking into patterns in the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable, I will then proceed with a within-case analysis of one or more country-year unit(s) where one strategy of particular interest was employed, which will enable me to provide deeper contextual information to the causal process and explore potential alternative explanations to my research question.

4.2 Operationalization

4.2.1 Data for independent variable

The EU's enlargement strategy papers will be scrutinized in order to assess the strategies the EU used in its democracy promotion efforts in the Western Balkans. When choosing the right type of document for my analysis, it was necessary to take into consideration other types of documents like the EU progress reports with their meticulous evaluation of the current progress of each (potential) accession country and recommendations for their future steps, annual Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) reports, Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) reports and some ad hoc types of documents like for instance the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy from 2015. Nevertheless, for the purpose of a comparison of the EU's democratization approach using the conditionality tool towards both Serbia and Macedonia, it was important to choose a kind of document which (1) is mainly concerned with the EU's democracy promotion efforts using the conditionality tool (2) clearly articulates the EU's future strategic aims (3) does so for each country separately, and (4) does so in a regular and systematic manner. The only two types of documents which fulfil all of the conditions stated above are the EU enlargement strategy papers and the annual progress reports, however, the progress reports deal with an amount of details too excessive to be able to clearly pinpoint the EU's main strategic goals for the following year. Consequently, the EU enlargement strategy papers emerge as the most suitable source of data for my analysis.

The strategy papers are issued annually as a part of the Enlargement package, maybe slightly counterintuitively not for each calendar year from January until December, but they come out every year during autumn in October or November.¹ This means that there is enough time for the changes to take effect until January of the following year and the measurement of the dependent variable is thus delayed by a year, so that we could observe the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable. For instance, a strategy document from the year 2013, which was issued on October 16 is expected to influence democracy levels in 2014. This scheme

¹ The timing has been changed in 2016 as part of the recalibrated reporting methodology. According to the new rules, the subsequent Enlargement package was issued in spring 2018, which enabled the Commission to harmonise its reporting period with the calendar year. (European Commission 2016b)

is not perfect, because we could of course observe some changes already by the end of 2013, however, given data availability limitations, there was no other way of arranging the temporal perspective.

The documents are structured differently throughout the period under scrutiny, but all of them correspond in the following aspects: a general part focuses its attention on the enlargement strategy of the EU towards all countries, sometimes with given examples on particular states, followed by a chapter on the “Progress in the enlargement countries and agenda for [*the following year*]” (this part was included in the documents up to 2012) and conclusions and recommendations with a section dedicated to specific aims for every enlargement country. Given this type of structure, it was necessary to select only certain parts of each document which concern either Serbia or Macedonia explicitly, since the strategic goals set in the general parts are not distinguishable for each respective country. Once those parts were selected, I could start coding each of the documents.

4.2.2 Coding system

The levels of independent variable were determined using qualitative content analysis for which I have developed my own unique coding scheme. The main kind of information I was trying to retrieve from the EU enlargement strategy documents was the type of strategy the EU used for each country-year unit. From the four potential strategies defined by the conflicting objectives theory (prioritization, sequencing, compromise and no action), I have found evidence of three: prioritization, sequencing, and no action.

First, each document was divided into statements about which goal should be achieved, with each statement falling into one of the three main categories: democracy, socio-economic development and security. The coding unit was one strategic claim, usually a sentence, but sometimes one sentence included more strategic claims and sometimes one claim was defined within a few sentences. Strategic claim denotes a statement about what should be done in the future. It was important to draw a conceptual distinction between *what* should be done and *how* it should be done, because my aim was to focus on the former, not the latter. For instance, claims like the following one were not coded as a strategic aim, since the strategic goal is not clearly

stated, only the way it should be achieved: “Serbia needs to foster proactively the inclusiveness and transparency of the accession process.” (European Commission 2014) Both positive and negative claims were included, because even a negative statement can aim to promote certain strategic goal, for instance the claim “[The Commission] also recalls that actions and statements that could negatively impact on good neighbourly relations should be avoided.” (European Commission 2011) strives to enhance good neighbourly relations. My focus was mainly placed on future strategic aims, however, in case a past claim which specifically stated that the EU rewarded the respective country based on progress in certain area occurred, this claim was also coded, since it shows that the EU considers this goal important enough to have based the progress in negotiations on it. For instance: “In light of sustained cooperation with the ICTY and the renewed commitment of Serbia to the European integration process, the Commission considers that the Interim Agreement should now be implemented by the EU.” (European Commission 2009) General statements describing the status quo or country's progress, statements informing that progress in certain area is not satisfactory, or statements about certain reforms being inadequate were not coded as strategic claims.

Different levels of emphasis the EU placed on different goals were defined by weight scores. First, standard claims stating what *needs* or *should be done*, and what is *recommended* were marked with a weight score 1. Second, priority goals which were presented as *key reform areas*, *core reforms*, *priority areas*, to which *special* or *particular attention* should be paid, or the progress in negotiations is *conditional upon* fulfilment of these goals were marked with a weight score 2.

Once the document was divided into claims aiming to attain certain strategic goals, I have looked for evidence of the four different strategies dealing with those conflicting objectives in relation to each other. Importantly, the strategies were often mixed within one document, since the EU did not deliberately choose one specific strategy for every country-year unit and was often inconsistent in its approach, so for each document I have determined the strategy by choosing the prevailing one. In certain cases the results were balanced in favour of two different strategies, which implied a mixed strategy.

There is no sequencing without prioritization, prioritization is therefore necessary, but not a sufficient condition for sequencing. Prioritization of a certain goal over another is needed in order to sequence these goals in an intelligible manner. Sequencing thus adds the temporal dimension as contrasted to mere differentiation of importance without explicit setting of which goal comes before another. Prioritization strategy partially overlaps with the claims marked by a weight score 2, because claims denoting prioritization were those presenting certain goals as key reform areas, core reforms, priority areas, or goals to which special or particular attention should be paid.

In order to distinguish prioritization from sequencing, I have looked for statements specifically denoting the temporal dimension, which would indicate that certain goal should be achieved first before another goal can be achieved or before the negotiations can progress further. In other words, there must have been a direct link between the necessity to fulfil certain goal and moving into the next stage of negotiations, or a temporal preference of one goal over another. But importantly, this did not concern claims regarding the prerequisites within the Stabilisation and Association Process, where conditions are given and moving to the subsequent stage of association rests upon fulfilment of commitments denoted by the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA). It was thus important to draw a distinction between sequencing of goals which are flexible in their ranking and goals ingrained in different formal phases of negotiations, which are more rigid, and which are therefore not part of the EU's annual strategy.

Finding evidence of a compromising strategy turned out to be slightly more challenging. According to Grimm and Leininger (2012), this strategy denotes "the result of decision-making processes within the organization of one actor or a consequence of negotiations between two or more actors." The actors "balance two or more objectives and combine them in their policy," which is, however, rarely explicitly stated in a strategy. In my analysis, I have found no claim where the strategy of a compromise would be applied. This could be so because on the empirical level, it is difficult to determine whether the resulting strategy is an outcome of a compromise between more actors or within an organization by analysing strategy documents. Using the selected methodology, I am simply looking at one side of the process, that is, the EU's strategy towards the countries in the Western Balkans on an annual basis. Therefore,

it is unfeasible to determine how the EU decided on these strategies (within-organization compromise) or how the process of negotiations between the EU and the accession country developed (compromise between actors) by analysing the EU strategy papers. It is still possible to look for claims stating that two conflicting goals should be balanced; however, no evidence of such character has been found in the examined documents.

No action means that the actors “prefer not to engage actively in addressing [conflicting objectives] in a sustainable fashion” (Grimm and Leininger 2012), so this option could have potentially been left out since the EU has arguably acknowledged the existence of conflicting objectives and the importance of addressing them by launching the region-specific Stabilisation and Association Process. (Richter 2012) However, on the level of individual claims, the EU often lists two conflicting goals side by side without explicitly dealing with the conflict by either of the three other strategies, which implies that the EU leaves the conflict unsolved and thus, employs the strategy of inaction. As emerged from the analysis, some of those claims indeed appeared.

In the final assessment of the annual strategies, the total number of claims in favour of each strategy was counted and the prevailing strategy was chosen as the defining one for each country-year unit. But in case both prioritization and sequencing claims occurred within one year, and both of them referred to the same strategic sub-goal, the claims simply added up in favour of the sequencing strategy, because it is superior to simple prioritization. For instance, in a strategy for Macedonia in 2013, the EU twice claimed that solving the name dispute is essential, which implies prioritization, and further on it has given solving the name dispute a temporal preference by claiming that it acknowledges “the need to solve the name issue at an early stage of accession negotiations.” (European Commission 2013) When finally assessing the annual strategy of this year’s document, it was evident that this specific goal was given preference both in terms of significance and time, which implies the strategy of sequencing. All the other strategies were, however, mutually exclusive.

4.2.3 Coding scheme

The coding scheme was developed using a combination of inductive and deductive approach to data analysis as employed by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane

(2006). First, using the deductive concept-driven method, I have defined three main categories of goals that the EU is trying to promote in its conditionality policy towards the Western Balkans, which were expected to be found in the documents based on previous research. (Freyburg and Richter 2010; Grimm and Leininger 2012; Grimm and Mathis 2015; Huszka 2018; Richter 2012) These goals are: democracy, socio-economic development and security. Guided by the chapters of the *acquis*, I have then nested under each of these categories a significant amount of a priori subcategories, which could have potentially been found in each of the documents. I have decided to employ an overarching category for democracy representing all kinds of political criteria supportive of democratic transition as one of the main goals. Although the strategy documents often list democracy alongside the rule of law and human rights, which could imply that the EU does not perceive them as representative of one identical goal, these specific aims can also be understood as subcategories of democracy, because they are intended to support democratic transition. Furthermore, I have decided to simplify the coding scheme and leave out a number of subcategories, since the amount of goals the EU mentions in its strategy papers is in fact lower than expected. Hence, the coding scheme has been modified using a data-driven inductive approach. Second, the coding for different strategies was created using the concept-driven method. Drawing on the initial presumption that the EU could have used all the strategies implied by the conflicting objectives theory, the coding scheme was developed deductively to serve this purpose. Although not all strategies were found in the EU's documents, I have kept the codes for all of them to see the results more clearly in the final assessment.

The coding scheme is divided into two main categories: Goals (1) and Strategies (2). The Goals (1) category contains five different subcategories: Democracy (1.1), Socio-economic Development (1.2), Security (1.3), Other (1.4) and No Strategic Goal (1.5). The main three goals democracy, socio-economic development and security denote the extrinsic dimension of conflicting objectives in democracy promotion, whereas the subcategories of democracy represent the intrinsic dimension, since all of the sub-goals of democracy are meant to be supportive of democratic transition itself. The subcategories were created mainly for the purpose of a clearer coding process to define which claim belongs to each of the main goals, because my main

focus will be on the extrinsic dimension, however, they should also prove to be helpful in the subsequent analysis.

The Democracy (1.1) category has four different subcategories: Democracy Core (1.1.1), Rule of Law (1.1.2), Individual Rights (1.1.3) and Public Administration (1.1.4). All of the categories within Democracy (1.1) are related to the goal to promote a sustainable liberal democratic system. Since the EU lacks a codified definition of democracy, I have decided to use the category Democracy Core (1.1.1) to pin down the core aspects of representative democracy as a procedural concept inspired by Dahl (1971), in particular claims in favour of free and fair elections, freedom of expression and other general claims supportive of democracy, such as dialogue among political actors, independent institutions, and discussion between government and opposition. Rule of Law (1.1.2) according to the European Commission “guarantees fundamental rights and values, allows the application of EU law, and supports an investment-friendly business environment. It is one of the fundamental values upon which the EU is based on.” (European Commission 2018d) Hence, this category includes claims supportive of justice, independence of the judiciary and claims encouraging fight against organised crime and corruption. Claims that fall into the Individual Rights (1.1.3) category are claims supportive of human rights, fundamental freedoms and civil liberties. Public Administration (1.1.4) category refers to reforms of public administration, improvements in coordination and implementation of policies.

Socio-economic Development (1.2) has two subcategories: Economic Criteria (1.2.1), which contains all claims in favour or restructuring the economy and claims underlining the necessity to fulfil the economic criteria of the *acquis*, and Agriculture (1.2.2), under which all claims supportive of agriculture and rural development are nested.

Security (1.3) has three subcategories especially significant in the regional context: ICTY Cooperation (1.3.1), including claims aiming to encourage cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in extradition of war criminals, Inter-ethnic Relations and Reconciliation (1.3.2), marking strategic claims supporting efforts to improve inter-ethnic relations and encourage reconciliation, protection of minorities and anti-discrimination, and Good Neighbourly Relations

(1.3.3), which contains claims supportive of regional cooperation, especially in favour of resolving Macedonia's name dispute with Greece and Serbia's conflict with Kosovo.

The Other (1.4) category was originally included to mark any residual goals which could not have been captured by the categories above, however, no claims of this sort were found in the process of coding.

And finally, No Strategic Goal (1.5) is a category designed to mark all residual information included in each of the documents, in particular statements which do not contain any strategic claim or the claim is unclear to that extent that it is impossible to pin down a concrete strategic aim, for instance: "the reform momentum needs to be sustained in all areas in particular to ensure implementation." (European Commission 2012)

The Strategies (2) category contains six codes: Prioritization (2.1), Sequencing (2.2), Compromise (2.3), No Action (2.4), Unclear (2.5), and No Strategy (2.6).

Prioritization (2.1) marks claims which mention certain goals as key reform areas, core reforms, priority areas, or goals to which particular attention should be paid. The Sequencing (2.2) code has been applied to every strategic claim which contains a certain strategic goal combined with the temporal dimension: in other words, a statement that sets certain goal as a precondition for another one or as a precondition for the accession negotiations to progress further. Compromise (2.3) was designed to mark all claims stating that two aims need to be balanced and combined in the EU's policy, since they are both equally important, or that one goal needs to be achieved together with another one. No Action (2.4) denotes two or more goals being mentioned within one claim, but there is no action how to deal with them implied, or they are approached as supportive of each other, which means that the conflict of objectives is not being solved and the goals are perceived as complementary. The Unclear (2.5) category was originally designed to mark a strategy which does not fall within either of the strategies above, or to be used in case it would be impossible to clearly distinguish one strategy from another, however, no claim falling into this category was found. And finally, No Strategy (2.6) is a code marking all other statements which do not concern the conflict of objectives in any way. For more detailed description of each code with given examples, see the Appendix.

4.2.4 Data for dependent variable

Choice of the right indicator of changing democracy levels is substantial for a correct understanding of the whole democratization process. In this work, the dependent variable will be measured by the liberal democracy index, an indicator of the Varieties of Democracy Project (V-Dem), which provides data for 201 countries on an annual basis, for both of the selected countries always quoted for the time span from 1st January until 31st December of each year. The liberal democracy index is one of five V-Dem High-Level Democracy Indices, all of which illustrate the state of democracy on the most abstract level. Contrary to the original intention to use the electoral democracy index as stated in my thesis project, I have decided to employ the liberal democracy index, which to a greater extent reflects the type of democracy the EU is trying to promote in the enlargement countries. The electoral democracy index is based on Dahl's (1971) concept of polyarchy and measures the following five components: "Elected officials", "Free and fair elections", "Freedom of expression", "Associational autonomy" and "Inclusive citizenship" (Teorell et al. 2016), however, V-Dem treats electoral democracy as an essential element of any other kind of representative democracy, and therefore the electoral democracy index is integrated into all of the other high-level democracy indices, including the liberal democracy index. The question the measurement is trying to answer goes as follows: "To what extent is the ideal of liberal democracy achieved?" The resulting variable can take values from 0 to 1, depending on the level of attainment of the following goals: constitutionally protected civil liberties, strong rule of law, an independent judiciary, and effective checks and balances. Together, the synergy of these elements should be able to limit the exercise of executive power and secure individual and minority rights. (Coppedge et al. 2018) The consolidated version of the Treaty on European union states that "The Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law." (European Union 2012) However, a clear-cut definition of what democracy means in the EU's conception is still missing. (Wetzel et al. 2015) Based

on my analysis of the EU's strategy documents, it is now clear that rule of law stands at the core of the EU's values and it is one of the most pronounced goals in the enlargement context, but the three of the remaining goals which are deemed essential for liberal democracy are also significant. As compared to the three other high-level democracy indices (participatory democracy index, deliberative democracy index, egalitarian democracy index), the liberal democracy index emerges as the most fitting one.

The dependent variable was then turned into a binary nominal variable in the following way: by taking the year-on-year difference, every year when the levels of democracy increased as compared to the previous year was marked 1, denoting a successful strategy of democracy promotion, and every year when the levels of democracy stagnated or decreased was marked 0, standing for an unsuccessful strategy.

The levels of the dependent variable could also be determined by two other broadly used indicators of democracy: Polity IV and Freedom House. Polity operationalizes the democracy index as a combination of four variables based on the procedural conception of democracy: Competitiveness of Executive Recruitment, Openness of Executive Recruitment, Constraint on Chief Executive and Competitiveness of Political Participation. (Marshall et al. 2016) These are, however, only few aspects of the liberal democratic system the EU is trying to promote in the accession countries. Moreover, when looking at the measurement by Polity, there is no change at all for the given time period for neither of the two selected countries on each of the composite indicators on institutionalized democracy, institutionalized autocracy, and subsequently the polity index (which is a result of a subtraction of the former two). Most likely because Polity's measurement is not fine-grained enough, both of the countries have reached score 9 on democracy levels throughout the whole period under scrutiny (with 10 being the highest score), and Serbia constantly scored 1 and Macedonia 0 on the variable measuring autocracy levels (here 10 is the highest score as well), it would be impossible to detect an effect of any kind, which is why I have decided to dismiss this indicator.

Freedom House on the other hand annually conducts a survey called *Nations in Transit*, which is specialized on the study of reform in the former Communist states

of Europe and Eurasia. Compared to the more general *Freedom in the World* project, *Nations in Transit* provides much more detailed inquiry embedded in the regional context and could be thus considered more suitable for the purpose of this research. There is again very little variance on both of the indicators used by the *Freedom in the World* project: no change on the civil liberties index and only one point decrease on the political rights rating for Macedonia in 2014 from 3 to 4 and Serbia in 2016 from 2 to 3.² By way of contrast, *Nations in Transit* uses a democracy score composed of seven variables: National Democratic Governance, Electoral Process, Civil Society, Independent Media, Local Democratic Governance, Judicial Framework and Independence, and Corruption. (Freedom House 2018) This rating could potentially be as suitable as the V-Dem indicator of democracy, because on the conceptual level it approximates to the concept of democracy promoted by the EU as reflected in the strategy documents, and there is certain variance in the scores which would allow us to determine changing levels of democracy in the selected countries, but the variance in indicators measured by V-Dem is much more eminent, which suggests that their indicators are more sensitive to changes which are taking place in the countries of the region. There is also the argument that Freedom House measures have been repeatedly marked as biased, since they presumably tend to favour U.S. allies. (Goldstein 1986; Mainwaring et al. 2007; Scoble and Wiseberg 1981) This bias has, however, been most apparently in the period from 1972 to 1988, and additionally, the differences in ratings have mostly been connected to inconsistencies in the coding process during this span. (Steiner 2016)

² The scale on both indicators goes from 1 to 7 with 1 denoting the most free and 7 the least free form of political regime.

5. Analysis of the EU's strategies and their impact on democratization

The EU's strategies tackling conflicting objectives were defined using two main coding categories: goals and strategies. First, the number of claims concerning every strategic aim was retrieved, to see how much emphasis the EU places on each of them. Second, I have looked for information about how the EU deals with those conflicting objectives in relation to each other by either prioritization, sequencing, compromise or inaction. As demonstrated in Tables 1 and 2, claims promoting democracy and security-related goals were the most common ones in prevailing number of cases, which indicates that the reasoning of previous research placing the conflict of democracy vs. security to the foreground was legitimate.

Table 1. *Macedonia: share of strategic claims concerning each strategic goal per year*

Macedonia	Democracy	Development	Security
2009	25%	12,5%	62,5%
2010	63%	11%	26%
2011	59%	0%	41%
2012	37,5%	0%	62,5%
2013	43%	4,5%	52,5%
2014	61,5%	0%	38,5%
2015	87,5%	4%	8,5%
2016	92%	4%	4%

Table 2. *Serbia: share of strategic claims concerning each strategic goal per year*

Serbia	Democracy	Development	Security
2009	31%	23%	46%
2010	31%	0%	69%
2011	29%	25%	46%
2012	44,5%	0%	55,5%
2013	50%	12,5%	37,5%
2014	57%	5%	38%
2015	43%	14%	43%
2016	33,5%	17,5%	50%

5.1 Conflict of democracy vs. socio-economic development

Most of the previous literature on the EU's conditionality in the Western Balkans mentions prioritization of goals related to security over those concerning democracy.

By way of contrast, I have decided to include another objective in my analysis, potentially clashing with the promotion of democracy: socio-economic development.

In order to define which strategy has been used to deal with those two conflicting objectives, it was first necessary to find claims which concern either of those two strategic goals. In my analysis of strategic claims, the share of attempts to promote socio-economic development among all the three main strategic goals never crossed 25% in any of the documents, as apparent from Tables 1 and 2. Overall, it has never prevailed over democratic transition-related goals, and very often development-related goals were not even mentioned at all. Due to lack of strategic claims, it was not feasible to systematically map the shifts of the EU's strategies dealing with those two conflicting objectives over the eight-year period. But whenever socio-economic development was mentioned, it was only listed next to other goals without any form of prioritization, sequencing or compromise of either of them, which entails a strategy of inaction. It is, however, impossible to connect the independent variable to the dependent variable systematically, and since this goal is apparently not relevant enough for the EU's strategies, it will not be further elaborated on in my analysis.

The lack of strategic claims concerning socio-economic development is most likely determined by the fact that the accession criteria give an a priori fixed set of economic goals which need to be accomplished, therefore, there could not be much of a political debate over them. It can be argued that socio-economic goals are still being prioritized in the long term, which is a kind of information that could not be retrieved from the annual strategy papers, because these strategies among other things serve the purpose of motivating the governments of the accession countries to act upon certain political incentives. A different methodology could potentially unravel whether this is the case, for instance a quantitative study on funds which are allocated by the EU for promotion of each of these specific goals, such as the one conducted by Grimm and Mathis (2015). My main aim, nevertheless, is to cast light on the disputed security versus democracy dilemma, both of which are arguably needed to be mentioned in the strategy documents to the same extent, if the goal of the EU is to promote them in the enlargement countries. But using my method, I have found evidence that socio-economic development does not play an essential role in the EU's annual enlargement strategies.

5.2 Conflict of democracy vs. security

Promotion of both democracy and security-related goals is much more pronounced in the annual strategy documents. Nonetheless, as emerged from my analysis, the EU did not employ any of the strategies intentionally, since there were apparent inconsistencies in most of the documents in the EU's approach towards resolution of the conflict of objectives. For each year, I have thus chosen the most common approach to define the prevailing strategy. These were then evaluated in relation to changing levels of democracy in each of the selected countries.

5.2.1 Impact of the EU's strategies on democracy score

When looking at the levels of the independent variable and the dependent variable (see Table 3 below) only in three cases could have the EU's strategy potentially contributed to increased democracy levels: in the year 2011 in Serbia, and in 2016 and 2017 in Macedonia. To reiterate that although there are other (possibly even more) important factors than the EU's conditionality tool causing variation in democracy levels in those countries, following the conflicting objectives theory, it is worth having a closer look on what exactly has changed in those years' strategies and how it could have led to increased efficiency of the EU's democracy promotion efforts in the Western Balkans, while bearing in mind plausible alternative explanations.

The first thing that becomes apparent from Table 3 is that the EU's strategy of democracy promotion has in the majority of cases been ineffective, at least to the extent to be able to prevent the recent democratic backlash in both Macedonia and Serbia from occurring. Save for minor exceptions, democracy has either been on a decline or stagnated in both Macedonia and Serbia throughout the whole period under scrutiny. As far as effectivity is concerned, it could be argued that the EU's conditionality has prevented the decline in democracy to be even steeper, but a test of this hypothesis for these specific cases would not be possible, due to our inability to observe the counterfactual, that is, what would happen if the EU's conditionality tool was not in place in these countries in the given period. In an observational study without control over the treatment variable, the main merit lays in an in-depth insight into the causal explanation of the mechanisms in play and their context, as contrasted

to causal description, which is typical for the experimental method and large-N studies. (Cook et al. 2002)

Table 3. *EU strategies tackling conflicting objectives and the countries' democracy score*

Year	Country:	Macedonia	Serbia
2009	Strategy:	1B	1A
2010	↑ Democracy score:	0	0
2010	Strategy:	1B	1B
2011	↑ Democracy score:	0	1
2011	Strategy:	1B	2B & 4
2012	↑ Democracy score:	0	0
2012	Strategy:	2B	2B
2013	↑ Democracy score:	0	0
2013	Strategy:	2B	1B & 4
2014	↑ Democracy score:	0	0
2014	Strategy:	1B	2B
2015	↑ Democracy score:	0	0
2015	Strategy:	2A	4
2016	↑ Democracy score:	1	0
2016	Strategy:	2A	4
2017	↑ Democracy score:	1	0

Strategies: 1A = prioritization of democracy, 1B = prioritization of security, 2A = sequencing prioritizing democracy, 2B = sequencing prioritizing security, 3 = compromising, 4 = no action; Democracy score: 1 = increase, 0 = stagnation or decrease

There are, however, three instances, in which we can observe increased democracy scores. Two of them come after the EU has employed a sequencing strategy prioritizing democracy (Macedonia 2015 and 2016) and one after a simple prioritization of security (Serbia 2010). The year-on-year increase in Serbia's V-Dem's liberal democracy score between 2010 and 2011 is, however, so minuscule (from 0,502 to 0,508), that it does not seem like a worthwhile case for deeper analysis, because if there was any effect, it seems to have been negligible. According to Freedom House's Nations in transit rating, the democracy score even remained the same. The increase in Macedonia's democracy score in 2016 and 2017 is on the other hand more pronounced, especially in 2017 (the score raised from 0,266 to 0,278 in 2016 and from 0,278 to 0,334 in 2017), and the fact that the trend has continued over two years in a row points to some potentially interesting insights.

Between 2009 and 2016 the EU has employed three kinds of strategies in its approach to democracy promotion in the Western Balkans: prioritization, sequencing and no action. Mostly, when a strategy of prioritization or sequencing occurred, it was connected with prioritization of security-related goals and unsurprisingly, none of these cases led to democratization in either of the examined countries.

In two cases I have found evidence of a mixed strategy, where the claims in favour of two different strategies were balanced. First, it was a combination of sequencing and no action in the 2011 strategy for Serbia, and second, a combination of prioritization and no action in 2013 in Serbia. None of these cases was followed by an increase in democracy levels. The evidence of mixed strategies shows that on the level of individual claims, the EU is often inconsistent in its approach towards conflicting goals in democracy promotion. In order to tackle those often contradictory aims, it is necessary to acknowledge the existence of the conflict and abandon the idea that simultaneous efforts to achieve these goals will necessarily produce good results in both areas.

5.2.2 Prioritization

Simple prioritization of democracy-related goals over security occurred only once, that was in the year 2009 in Serbia. However, despite defining democracy promotion as the priority area, the prevailing share of claims in this year's EU strategy for Serbia was focused on security (46% among the three main categories of strategic goals: democracy, socio-economic development and security). This contradiction indicates that the EU's strategies do not follow a straightforward rationale of hierarchically organized set of goals, although the EU has lately made an attempt to change this within the new approach. Therefore, although the EU insists that the rule of law and related goals are the main priority, the strategy in fact mainly attempts to use the conditionality tool to motivate Serbia to ameliorate its relations with Kosovo.

Explicit prioritization of security is, nevertheless, much more common in the EU's approach. This strategy was used in five cases, none of which was followed by an increase in democracy score. In all the four cases when the EU employed this strategy towards Macedonia, these goals concerned solving the name dispute with Greece. At first glance, this seems to have been a rational step, because the conflict

with Greece has for a long time been the main impediment for Macedonia to progress further in the accession process. But from the democratization perspective, primarily emphasizing democracy-related goals could have forced the government to solve its internal issues first if the EU would have put those problems under the spotlight. Inducing domestic change as a first step could have even led to higher chances of solving the name dispute within a shorter time horizon, because the ruling party VRMO-DPMNE oftentimes exploited the name dispute in its nationalist and over the years increasingly illiberal discourse.

5.2.3 Sequencing

Based on experience gained during negotiations with Croatia, in 2011 the Commission proposed a new approach towards issues related to the judiciary and fundamental rights and to justice and home affairs, which has been approved by the European Council in December 2011. (European Commission 2012) This new approach elicits opening the chapters 23 (judiciary and fundamental rights) and 24 (justice, freedom and security) early in the negotiations, setting interim benchmarks at the moment of opening the accession negotiations and closing the chapters at the end of the process, in order to provide the accession countries enough time to consolidate reforms in these areas. This implies a shift towards the strategy of sequencing and greater emphasis on requirements linked to democratic transition. Specifically, promotion of the rule of law can be anticipated for each of the accession candidates: “Countries aspiring to join the Union must demonstrate their ability to strengthen the practical realisation of the values on which the Union is based at all stages of the accession process. They have to establish and promote from an early stage the proper functioning of the core institutions necessary for democratic governance and the rule of law, from the national Parliament through Government and the judicial system, including the courts and public prosecutor, and law enforcement agencies.” (European Commission 2012) The main innovation of the new approach lays in the instigation of deeper societal changes early in the process, and indicates that the EU is interested in sustained democratization in the enlargement countries, in order to prevent easily revertible changes from occurring and subsequent internal challenges within the European Union.

The new approach is, however, only inconsistently reflected in the annual enlargement strategies for each individual country. In some cases we can observe clear evidence of sequencing of different goals, but contrary to prior expectations, sequencing strategy prioritizing democracy has only prevailed twice among all the examined cases: in the strategy for Macedonia in 2015 and 2016. Moreover, the sequencing strategy has been detected already before the EU adopted the new approach in 2011, but in the previous instances, sequencing put security-related goals on the first place and placed conditionality of further progress in the accession process on them. This was evident from the parts dedicated to each individual country, as contrasted to the general parts of the enlargement strategies, which clearly mention “putting the rule of law at the centre [alternatively heart] of enlargement policy.” (European Commission 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015c) The prioritized security goals were in particular:

- 1) Improvement in relations between Serbia and Kosovo in the 2011, 2012 and 2014 strategy papers, as exemplified on the 2012 strategy: “Serbia’s new leadership has underlined its commitment to implement all agreements already reached in the dialogue with Pristina as well as to begin tackling the broader political issues. Fulfilment of this commitment is key to moving to the next phase of Serbia’s EU integration.” (European Commission 2012)
- 2) Resolving Macedonia’s name dispute with Greece in the 2012 and 2013 strategies, as exemplified on the 2012 paper: “In this respect, the Commission is ready to present without delay a proposal for a negotiating framework, which also takes into account the need to solve the name issue at an early stage of accession negotiations.” (European Commission 2012)

The strategy of sequencing placing security-related issues in time before goals promoting democratic transition was never followed by an increase in democracy levels in either of the accession candidate states under scrutiny. This could potentially support the claim that the ineffectiveness of the EU conditionality in those years can be ascribed to a flawed strategy prioritizing security concerns over democracy. In most of those cases, the share of claims in favour of security-related goals is also higher than those promoting democracy (except for Serbia in 2014). But since most of the other strategies have been equally ineffective, prioritization of security cannot fully

determine the strategy's ineffectiveness. Besides, my aim is to find whether one of the strategies was a necessary condition for successful democracy promotion, not to unravel the causes of the strategies' ineffectiveness, which are presumably plentiful.

Following the new approach, sequencing of goals which conditioned progress in the enlargement process on advancement in democratic transition-related areas included in the chapters 23 and 24 (in my coding scheme these were all the codes included under democracy, namely democracy core, rule of law, individual rights and public administration) was in place only in Macedonia from 2015 on. During 2015, the European Commission issued a list of Urgent Reform Priorities and opening of the accession negotiations was first conditioned upon their implementation. The years 2015 and 2016 were also the only years when the EU's strategy was followed by an increase in democracy levels.

Besides, regardless of the strategies, the pure share of strategic claims (weight included) aiming to promote democracy-related goals in Macedonia has been 87,5% in 2015 and 92% in 2016, much higher than any other year in both Macedonia and Serbia. This demonstrates a distinct correlation of strong emphasis on democracy-related goals with increased democracy levels. There is no such case for either Macedonia or Serbia when either prioritization or sequencing would be in place in combination with such strong emphasis on democracy.

This suggests that sequencing prioritizing democracy was preferable as a strategy of the EU in terms of efficiency of democracy promotion, but this hypothesis needs to be further tested by an in-depth study while taking into account potential alternative explanations. Given that in my set of cases, an increase in democracy levels also occurred without sequencing, it is impossible to pin down sequencing prioritizing democracy as a necessary condition for democracy promotion. In light of this observation, I will attempt to demonstrate which conditions need to be met for the sequencing strategy to have an effect on domestic democracy levels and which ones suffice for this strategy to impact democratization. In other words, I will try to find the necessary and sufficient conditions for the sequencing strategy to succeed in stimulating democratization. That will be the primary focus of the within-case analysis described in chapter 6.

5.2.4 No action

During the last two analysed years in Serbia the EU surprisingly employed a pure no-action strategy. In both cases the strategy maintained that the overall pace of negotiations will be determined by progress in the rule of law area and normalisation of Serbia's relations with Kosovo. By putting rule of law on a par with good neighbourly relations, the EU contradicts its proclaimed primary focus on democratization as designed by the new approach, and again exhibits lack of consistency in its own strategies. Nevertheless, it is necessary to point out that since the EU opened the accession negotiations with Serbia in 2014, the quality of the strategy documents has changed substantially. The documents in the following years contain much lower number of claims in favour of any strategic goal and the strategies are overall less elaborated. That is probably caused by the fact that strategic decisions have been shifted to the more dynamic setting of intergovernmental conferences and decision-making on an annual basis would be too ossified in this phase. But despite a lower number of strategic claims, the annual strategies still testify to the EU's intentions and should be telling enough to demonstrate what kind of strategy the EU planned to employ.

6. Impact of the EU's 2015 and 2016 enlargement strategies on democracy in Macedonia

When looking at the extrinsic conflict between democracy promotion and security, the case of the EU's strategy towards Macedonia in 2015 and 2016 is of particular interest. Considering the changing levels of the dependent variable as depicted in Figure 2, there has been apparent stagnation in democracy levels since 2013 and first in 2016 we can observe a slight increase. The connection to the independent variable, which is the EU enlargement strategy, suggests that the strategy of sequencing prioritizing democracy-related goals could have contributed to democratization, as apparent from Table 3. Moreover, the qualitative content analysis revealed that the emphasis that is placed on democratic transition in the EU's strategy documents in comparison to security-related goals during these two years is striking, in contrast to any other year in both Serbia and Macedonia (see Tables 1 and 2). That is why these two cases emerged as good examples to be examined deeper, because their analysis might potentially point to certain changes in the EU's strategy which have in fact induced an increase in the domestic levels of democracy in Macedonia, and which could in turn help us determine the necessary and sufficient conditions for the EU's democracy promotion efforts to be successful. For a better understanding of the causal mechanisms in play, it is first essential to provide a brief context of Macedonia's development throughout these years and explore possible alternative explanations. Variables that were considered to have potentially confounded the relationship between the EU's strategies and the democratic transition in the country were the following: domestic political development and the EU's involvement, economic development, security situation, and regional politics.

6.1 Domestic political development and the EU's involvement in Macedonia

Domestic politics in Macedonia have long been determined by an interplay of two main political parties: the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization - Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) and the opposition, the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM). VMRO-DPMNE became the dominant Macedonian party in 2006 as a pro-European, reformist moderate actor. But

after Greece vetoed the country's membership in NATO in 2008 and blocked opening of the accession talks with the EU in 2009, VMRO-DPMNE adopted an increasingly nationalist and authoritative agenda, in spite of continuous pro-EU rhetoric. Identity politics have replaced democratic consolidation aims and the government showed reluctance in settling the name dispute with Greece, as it enjoyed the strong authoritarian rule over the country with external legitimacy provided by actors like the EU or the U.S. (Bieber 2018a; Ceka 2018)

In the course of five months during the first half of 2015, SDSM, which was the main Macedonian opposition party until late 2016, released a huge amount of recordings, claiming that the incumbent Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and his government wiretapped 20 000 people. (Johnson 2015) Those recordings allegedly revealed involvement of the highest officials in corruption and other criminal activities, which resulted in wide-scale political turmoil, accompanied by both anti-government and pro-government protests in May 2015. (BBC News 2015) During June and July the EU mediated negotiations between the main political parties in Macedonia - the ruling party, VMRO-DPMNE, and the opposition, SDSM. These negotiations were concluded by the Pržino agreement, which ended the political crisis of the previous months. The agreement was signed by the four main political parties and envisaged the following aims: return of SDSM to the parliament; resignation of the prime minister Nikola Gruevski (VMRO-DPMNE); and formation of an interim government including members of SDSM, which would govern until the early parliamentary elections originally planned for April 2016, (European Commission 2015a) but which ultimately took place in December 2016. (Sekularac and Casule 2016)

The agreement was followed by a period of complicated negotiations of the main parties and further hindrances. The process of implementation reached a stalemate in October 2015 and was suspended for a few weeks, due to disagreements over appointment of the interim government ministers and further disputes over legal implications of the wiretapping scandal. (Damjanovski 2016) In June 2015, the EU issued a list of Urgent Reform Priorities for Macedonia as an instant reaction to the political crisis. These priorities concerning rule of law and judiciary, de-politicisation of public administration, freedom of expression and electoral reform were set as immediate goals "designed to address the systemic weaknesses inherent in the

making and the *content* of the wiretap revelations, as well as more cross-cutting weaknesses which contributed to the situation which led to the current political crisis.” (European Commission 2015d) But throughout the second half of 2015, there was very little apparent improvement in those priority areas: some progress on legislation, little progress on electoral reform, and even backsliding in rule of law and freedom of expression. (European Commission 2015b)

Following the turbulent development of 2015, the subsequent year was still marked by protests and restrictions of freedom of speech instigated by the ruling party VMRO-DPMNE, the Commission even described the current political situation as state capture for the first time.³ (European Commission 2016a) In April 2016 president Gjorge Ivanov granted pardon to 56 VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM politicians in connection to allegations connected to the wiretapping scandal, which was later revoked due to pressures from the civil society and international community, specifically the US and the EU. (Casule 2016) The elections were postponed twice and when they were finally held, they were conducted in an orderly manner “albeit with some procedural irregularities observed, particularly during the count,” according to the International Election Observation Mission. (OSCE/ODIHR 2016) The indicators of the electoral process, however, do not concur. In V-Dem’s measurement, we can observe a slight year-on-year improvement in the Clean elections index, which is part of the composite Polyarchy index. But according to in the Freedom House’s Electoral process index included in the annual Nations in Transit survey, there was, in fact, some deterioration in the electoral process. This could be given by the character of V-Dem’s measurement, which is more fine-grained and the Clean elections index mainly reflects changes during election years, whereas the Electoral process index focuses on broader context by examining “national executive and legislative elections, electoral processes, the development of multiparty systems, and popular participation in the political process.” (Freedom House 2018) Moreover, the Electoral process index score for 2016 was the worst since 2009. As Freedom House reports, the unsuccessful efforts to improve the electoral process were at the expense of improvement in other

³ Transparency International (2018) defines state capture as “a situation where powerful individuals, institutions, companies or groups within or outside a country use corruption to influence a nation’s policies, legal environment and economy to benefit their own private interests.”

areas concerning the EU's requirements: "the actions of the ruling party and overall political climate prevented implementation of the Urgent Democratic Priorities commissioned by the European Union (EU). Instead, negotiations between the government and the opposition focused on immediate reforms needed to ensure credible elections." (Bliznakovski 2017) Nevertheless, electoral reform is one of four main fields which are to be dealt with according to the Urgent Reform Priorities.

Before the elections the former prime minister Nikola Gruevski still played a crucial role in Macedonia's politics despite his resignation and following the VMRO-DPMNE's victory in the December polls, it seemed like he had a strong position to form a government, (Sekularac and Casule 2016) but foreshadowing the party's decline, the coalition talks with the Albanian party, the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) failed in January 2017. That enabled Zoran Zaev, the leader of the former opposition SDSM to finally form a government in May 2017, and SDSM could become the first party to replace the increasingly illiberal VMRO-DPMNE in the leading position since 2006. But the power transition was troublesome. On the night of April 27th, around 200 demonstrators, let in by the members of VMRO-DPMNE, stormed the parliament, which resulted in more than 100 injured, including MPs, journalists and even Zoran Zaev. (The Guardian 2017) This event has later been dubbed "Bloody Thursday" and SDSM accused VMRO-DPMNE of making this last desperate attempt to seize power just after the election of Talat Xaferi from SDSM's coalition party DUI the first ethnic Albanian speaker of the parliament. (Marusic 2018) The power transfer was later facilitated by Brian Hoyt Yee, the U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs. (Bieber 2018b)

Despite these dramatic events, there was substantive progress in many of the EU's priority areas in the following months. The new government introduced the "3-6-9" action plan, sequencing domestic reforms into three-month periods, a plan that was designed to help the country get back on the path towards EU accession and in the end should lead to the opening of accession negotiations. (European Policy Centre 2018) Under mediation of the UN, Macedonia also reopened talks with Greece over the name dispute, which has been a major impediment of the country's future membership in both NATO and the EU. (Marusic 2017a) Zaev's government finalized the negotiations over Treaty of Friendship, Good-neighbourliness and Cooperation

with Bulgaria, ending a period of tense bilateral relations and bolstering those two countries' cooperation based on shared European values. (Marusic and Cheresheva 2018)

One factor which played a substantial role in affecting democracy levels in Macedonia during the last two analysed years was thus the EU's action. Nevertheless, it is necessary to distinguish between the EU's strategies and EU action on a conceptual level, because the former is treated as the independent variable in my analysis, whereas the latter could have played a role of both a confounding and a mediating variable. In order to clarify to what extent did the EU's strategy documents influence democracy levels, it is essential to examine whether the EU actually committed to these strategies and acted on them (mediating variable), and whether there was any EU action independent of the strategies that influenced them (confounding variable).

Macedonia has been a candidate for future membership of the European Union since 2005, which makes it one of the oldest accession candidate states in the region of the Western Balkans right after Slovenia, which became a candidate in 2004. But the Macedonia-EU approximation has long remained in stalemate due to Greece's veto obstructing the opening of accession negotiations. Despite that, following the political turmoil in 2015, the EU enlargement Commissioner Johannes Hahn pressured the Macedonian party leaders to find a common solution while emphasizing that the EU is committed to the Euro-Atlantic perspective of the country, but it is first important to overcome the current crisis. After his meeting with the main party leaders in June 2015, Hahn stated: "We have agreed to apply the methodology usually used when we negotiate the chapters 23 and 24. Also, we have yet no negotiations, but it is about rule of law, independence of justice, freedom of media etc." (EWB Archives 2015) Together with the Urgent Reform Priorities, this entails that the EU has indeed decided to employ the sequencing strategy prioritizing domestic democratic development over other aims in its action, as outlined in the strategy papers.

Overall, the approach adopted by the EU during 2015 and 2016 demonstrates an increasing level of dedication to enhance democratic development within the country, which implies that the EU in point of fact committed to its strategies and thus the EU's action functioned as a mediator strengthening the effect of the independent

variable on the dependent variable. The strategies are well reflected in the efforts employed by the EU while mediating the Pržino agreement and facilitating dialogue between domestic actors. The Urgent Reform Priorities clearly define the list of EU's requirements, and in combination with the sequencing approach of the conditionality tool which set the timeframe, they bolstered Macedonia's motivation for compliance. The widespread success of this approach was, however, heavily dependent on domestic political development. VMRO-DPMNE was continuously reluctant to loosen the grip over the country and progress further in reforms concerning democratic development, and only the power shift which occurred during the coalition talks enabled SDSM to form a more reformist government. But VMRO-DPMNE also previously did not have such a strong motivation to adhere to EU's conditionality and attempt to pursue pro-democratic reforms. That was because the Commission kept insisting on opening accession negotiations despite increasing authoritarianism in the country, which gave Macedonian government an external confirmation and sent a message that the EU does not, in fact, pay much attention to Macedonian democratic transition. Despite the gradually worsening situation in Macedonia, every year since 2009 to 2014, the Commission reiterated that the Council should act on the Commission's recommendation to open accession negotiations. But for the first time in 2015, this recommendation was conditional on improvement of the domestic levels of democracy: "In the light of the progress made so far in the implementation of the June/July political agreement, the Commission is prepared to extend its recommendation to open accession negotiations with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. This shall, however, be conditional on the continued implementation of the June/July political agreement and substantial progress in the implementation of the urgent reform priorities." (European Commission 2015c)

This shift within EU's strategy can either be attributed to a certain threshold in the process of democratic backsliding, which Macedonia crossed and the EU has decided to act, or the change came as a reaction to the political turmoil that broke out in Macedonia in 2015, which required immediate attention, or a combination of both. The second explanation alone would imply that gradual decrease in democracy levels, media freedom and civil liberties, is not enough motivation for the EU to change its strategy. Rather, it takes a dramatic event which requires swift reaction for the EU to

press the local government for further reforms. But even the EU's larger involvement since 2015 could, nevertheless, have been intensified. Instead of the EU, it was the U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs who brokered the power transition in 2017, which shows that even during last year, the EU was not the only actor to attempt to boost democratization in Macedonia. EU's action thus functioned as a mediating variable of the sequencing strategy most of the time enhancing its effects. But in order to maximize the effectivity of EU's strategies, they should be combined with appropriate action, whether through negotiations or mediation between the domestic political parties.

6.2 Economic development

Starting off as the poorest one of all former Yugoslavian republics, boosting Macedonian economic growth has been a substantial challenge since the very formation of the independent state in 1991. Since 2012, Macedonia's annual GDP growth rate has been increasing, peaking at 3,8% in 2015, but in 2017 the growth rate dropped again to mere 0,02%. (World Bank 2018) The country continues to be one of the poorest ones in Europe. Unemployment has continuously been a substantial problem to the country's economy, although the unemployment rate decreased to 21,9% in the fourth quarter of 2017 following a period of steady decrease since 2005, yet still, it remains one of the highest ones in the whole continent. Besides, the decrease in unemployment rates can mainly be attributed to increase of employment in the public sector. (MakStat 2018) The posts in the public sector have been allocated based on party nepotism which demonstrates the deeply rooted problems with state capture, corruption and politicisation of public administration. (Keil 2018) Instead of addressing these and number of other burning issues, the government has invested into projects like *Skopje 2014*, which entailed construction of 40 originally planned, but as of 2017 a total of 137 structures including buildings, monuments, bridges and sculptures in the country's capital, the costs of which have reached monumental proportions – over € 684 million, with an annual amount comparable to the country's average healthcare budget. (BIRN 2018) Besides, the economic crisis caused decrease in revenues from advertising, which created favourable conditions for companies directly controlled by the ruling party to fill the space, and furthermore, the

main newspapers in the country are owned by individuals with ties to Nikola Gruevski, which enabled government control over media. (Bieber 2018a) Overall, the Macedonian economy has been suffering from a number of long-term structural deficiencies, such as tax avoidance or lack of long-term investments, but due to more pressing issues during the political crises of 2015 and 2016, those have been pushed aside as a secondary concern. (Bliznakovski 2017)

The economic situation of the country thus contributed to the illiberal regime that slowly took over the state, curbed media freedom and consolidated power of the ruling VMRO-DPMNE. Hence, it has influenced democracy levels negatively. But the EU's strategies barely mention this connection. Claims about economy are very rare (only one claim in each of those years: 2009, 2010, 2013, 2015, and 2016), and their nature has not changed in the past two years. They are generally highly de-politicised, and the EU rather resorts to restrained statements, such as the following one from the 2015 strategy: "The budget should be more geared towards growth and employment, while its overall design, transparency and implementation should be improved." (European Commission 2015c) It is obvious that the strategy papers serve more political and diplomatic purposes. But for this very reason, in a situation where the ruling party controls the biggest media outlets in the country, the EU could exert more pressure using the conditionality tool.

6.3 Security situation

As a next step, it is necessary to map major shifts in the security situation within the country and point out certain events that could have potentially influenced the course of democratization and confounded the relationship between the EU enlargement strategy and changing levels of democracy in Macedonia. The main areas of interest are two major confounders: European migrant crisis, where the Balkan states played an essential role, and inter-ethnic relations within Macedonia.

6.3.1 European refugee crisis

Since the beginning of 2015, Macedonia has experienced a huge influx of refugees and migrants predominantly from the Middle East. In 2015 the estimated number was 815 000, to which the country responded by shutting its border with

Greece in February 2016. (BIRN 2016) Closing the Balkan route, initiated by Austria and implemented jointly with Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia, was however perceived as a one-sided step by Greece, because it left approximately 40 000 migrants stranded on the Greek side of the Greek-Macedonian border. (Beale 2016) After Macedonia shut the border and the EU closed a deal with Turkey to limit the influx of migrants in March, the numbers fell sharply to 90 000 migrants in 2016. (MHC 2017) But in the light of the crisis, both the Macedonia-Greece and Macedonia-EU relations deteriorated, since Macedonia perceived it had to pay for the EU's mistakes and did not even get to benefit from the perks associated with membership in the Union or the Schengen area due to obstructions caused by Greece. As Macedonian president Gjorge Ivanov proclaimed in an interview for German newspaper Bild: "We as a non-EU country now have to protect Europe from an EU country - that is, Greece." (Kai Diekmann et al. 2018) Despite the dire domestic situation, Macedonian political elites still enjoyed support from certain European leaders as a result of the refugee crisis. Namely Sebastian Kurz, the foreign minister of Austria hailed Macedonian government for closing the country's borders, and later he attended VMRO-DPMNE's rally before the 2016 election. (Ceka 2018)

The EU has responded to the crisis by contributing over € 14,5 million to Macedonian government as a form of "extraordinary assistance to help the country cope with the refugee crisis" over 2016 (EWB Archives 2017) and € 4,7 million in humanitarian aid since the beginning of the refugee crisis in 2015. (European Commission 2018c) But overall, the EU's delay in finding a solution to the crisis enabled right-wing illiberal and ethnocentric movements supportive of VMRO-DPMNE to gain prominence, which escalated in September 2017 with VMRO-DPMNE's demand to hold municipal referendums against the alleged government plan to settle Middle Eastern refugees in Macedonia, which has however been denounced by the government as a made up claim. (Marusic 2017b)

The refugee crisis certainly had a substantial impact on both domestic political development and development of Macedonia-EU relations, mainly in a negative way. The crisis negatively influenced Macedonia's relations with Greece, which is now a crucial variable in moving the country further in the accession process. But the refugee crisis was never mentioned in the strategies in connection to a goal to be attained, in

2015 the EU only acknowledged that Macedonia “has been seriously affected by the refugee crisis, managing an influx of more than two hundred thousand third country nationals transiting its territory since the beginning of the year,” (European Commission 2015c) and in 2016 that “the country has been affected by migration crisis and has cooperated with neighbouring countries and Member States while managing mixed migration flows.” (European Commission 2016b) However, given the nature of the crisis, setting aims regarding this issue in the strategy papers would be redundant, since it requires much quicker action. The possible explanation of why we see less strategic aims regarding security in the two last strategies (only 8% in 2015 and 4% in 2016) despite rising security concerns could be that because first, the EU needed Macedonia to cooperate with the neighbouring EU member states and simply from the bargaining perspective, it would not be reasonable to use the conditionality tool to compel Macedonia to satisfy the EU’s requirements, and second, the aims have simply had to be dealt with at a different domain. Nevertheless, it does not necessarily mean that security concerns are of lower importance to the EU. It could be argued that the crisis will likely have long-term implications and thus related goals should be set in the long-term strategies, but since the EU itself dealt with the crisis with difficulties, it was certainly not in a position to use the conditionality tool to inflict domestic change in relation to this domain.

6.3.2 Inter-ethnic relations

Unlike the rest of the former Yugoslav republics, Macedonia remained intact by ethnic conflict throughout the 90’s. But division of the society along ethnic lines has been a key determinant of political situation within the country since the formation of independent Macedonia. Following systematic oppression of the Albanian minority, an armed insurgency led by the ethnic Albanian National Liberation Army (NLA) striving for equal rights broke out in 2001. The Ohrid Framework Agreement ended the armed conflict between NLA and the Macedonian government forces, and provided a basis for a relatively successful establishment of power-sharing structures in the state. (Bieber 2008) However, some argue that instead of creating one multi-ethnic society, the Ohrid Framework Agreement led to creating two parallel societies within the state: Macedonian and Albanian. (Alibegova 2017; Fontana 2016; Goga 2013) The last

Macedonian census of 2002 showed a population consisting of 64.2% ethnic Macedonians, 25.2% Albanians and other minorities, each with less than 5%, (European Commission 2018b) and although the inter-ethnic situation is still delicate, there was no major conflict ever since. The long-standing mostly peaceful situation has been interrupted in May 2015 by a violent incident when a paramilitary group including some former members of NLA attacked a border post and 8 members of Macedonian special forces and 14 militants died during a subsequent police raid. (Casule and Sekularac 2017) This event, however, did not lead to any further inter-ethnic clashes. In 2017, the SDSM, DUI and Alliance for Albanians (AA) coalition government finally put forward a bill of the Law on Languages envisioned by the Ohrid Framework Agreement, allowing a wider official use of the Albanian language. (Casule 2018) The Ohrid Framework Agreement Review on Social Cohesion from 2015 pointed out that all minorities remain underrepresented, including the ethnic Albanians, and its recommendations were repeatedly called to be implemented in the EU's progress reports. (European Commission 2015b; 2016a; 2018a)

The difficult inter-ethnic coexistence is thus expected to have negatively affected democracy levels in Macedonia. Despite being mentioned in the country progress reports, since 2014, no strategic claim has been made regarding inter-ethnic relations in the EU's enlargement strategy papers. Although the inter-ethnic situation apparently influences domestic political development to this day, the EU does not seem to consider it important enough to be dealt with in the recent strategies. The frequency in the previous years went as follows: 1 claim in 2014, 3 claims in 2013, 4 claims in 2012, 1 claim in 2011 and no claims in the first two analysed years. Needless to say, the inter-ethnic coexistence has recently been relatively peaceful, but the considerably higher number of claims in favour of democratic transition that are included in the strategy papers during the last two years again shows that the EU is much more concerned with that, than with security-related issues. Even after the incident of 2015, there was no claim striving to improve inter-ethnic relations in the subsequent strategy.

6.4 Regional politics

Macedonia's relations with its southern neighbour, Greece, have been marked by a long-standing name dispute, which re-emerged at the moment of creation of the independent Macedonian state. The controversy arises from the existence of a Greek region of Macedonia and the country's name Republic of Macedonia, while according to Greece, by calling itself Macedonian, the Slavic nation is usurping Greek history and identity. Bilateral relations have been partially settled by an Interim Agreement signed by both countries in 1995. (United Nations 1995) As long as Macedonia uses the provisional name "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia," although perceived as humiliating by the country, Greece pledged not to obstruct the country's membership in international organizations. (Joseph and Vangelov 2018) But in 2008, Greece vetoed Macedonian Membership in NATO, which according to the International Court of Justice violated the terms agreed upon in the Interim Agreement. (ICJ 2011) In 2009, Greece blocked opening the accession negotiations with the EU. Due to reluctance of both parties to find a mutually acceptable solution, the situation has remained at impasse up to 2018, when the domestic change in Macedonia enabled the countries to negotiate the Prespa Agreement in June 2018. Pursuant to this treaty, the name of the Republic of Macedonia would change to "Republic of North Macedonia," once the deal passes a national referendum in the Republic of Macedonia scheduled for autumn 2018. (Ker-Lindsay 2018)

Not only the conflict with Greece, but another identity clash played a role in the development of Macedonian-EU relations. That is, the ambiguous relationship with Bulgaria. Initially, Bulgaria was the first country to have acknowledged Macedonia's independence in 1992. At the same time, Bulgaria's refusal to recognize Macedonians as an independent nation, instead of a mere subgroup of the Bulgarian nation, and by a similar token Macedonian as a language, instead of considering it a dialect of Bulgarian, entailed a threat to Macedonian national identity. Nevertheless, since then, bilateral relations seemed to be improving. In 1999 the countries signed the Joint declaration, which solved the language issue in a peculiar way. Bulgaria recognized that the Macedonian language existed according to the Macedonian constitution, but according to the Bulgarian constitution, Macedonian still remained a dialect of Bulgarian. (Stojanovski et al. 2014) But not only the Greek vetoes have been a turning

point enhancing VMRO-DPNME's nationalist policies and fuelled Macedonia's increasingly sceptical stance towards the EU conditionality. After Bulgaria became a member of the EU in 2007, its leverage in the bilateral dispute with Macedonia has augmented significantly, which was demonstrated by Bulgaria's 2012 veto in the matter of opening accession talks with Macedonia. (Gotev 2012) This step made Bulgaria akin to Greece in its stance towards Macedonian EU membership and hostility regarding the nation's identity, and was in turn capitalized on by the Macedonian government to justify growing nationalist and authoritarian practices in the country. (Nancheva and Koneska 2015) Similarly to the development of Macedonia-Greece relations, it took a shift within the Macedonian domestic political situation for Bulgaria and Macedonia to start reapproaching. In August 2017, after five years of negotiations, the country leaders signed the Friendship agreement, envisaging Bulgaria's support in Macedonia's EU accession. (Marusic and Cheresheva 2018)

Disagreements with both Greece and Bulgaria thus significantly influenced the accession process and democratic development within Macedonia. By sparking identity-based conflict, disputes with both of these countries have bolstered nationalist rhetoric and obduracy of the (until recently) ruling party VMRO-DPNME, hence are expected to have negatively affected levels of democracy in Macedonia. However, as contrasted to all previous EU strategies for Macedonia since 2009, where an appeal for good neighbourly relations appears always at least three times, and despite little progress in the last two analysed years, each of the documents from 2015 and 2016 mentions good neighbourly relations only once: "It remains essential that decisive steps are taken towards resolving the 'name issue'." (European Commission 2015c) and "Building upon recent progress in implementing confidence-building measures with Greece, decisive steps are needed to solve the 'name issue'." (European Commission 2016b) This shows that the EU has shifted its priority towards democratic transition in the country and instead of first focusing on amelioration of security issues, the strategy attempted to bolster democratic development.

6.5 Evaluation of the EU's enlargement strategy in 2015 and 2016

In the enlargement strategy issued in November 2015 the EU presented a new medium-term strategy covering the period of the mandate of Juncker's Commission.

Changes were made to annual country progress reports to reflect the 2011's new approach of "focus on fundamentals" and "take into account the need for appropriate sequencing of reforms." (European Commission 2015c) According to the general part of the 2015 strategy, reforms in the fields covered by chapters 23 and 24 need to be addressed at an early stage of negotiations. Although accession negotiations with Macedonia were still not in place by then, the part dedicated to the country alone shows apparent signs of the sequencing approach, conditioning opening of negotiations upon implementation of the Pržino Agreement commitments and the Urgent Reform Priorities. From security-related goals, only the need to solve the name dispute with Greece was once mentioned with a weight of 2 (8,5% share), as contrasted to democratic transition-related goals with the total weight of 21 (87,5% share). The difference was even more striking in 2016, when goals promoting security gained weight of 1 (4% share), whereas promotion of democracy weighted 24 (92% share). The Commission reiterated that opening of accession negotiations will again be conditional upon implementation of the Pržino Agreement and the Urgent Reform Priorities.

However, a question remains to what extent could the EU have used the conditionality leverage to push through domestic change, if opening of the accession negotiations was still dependent on resolving the name dispute and there was no solution to this particular issue in sight. Mediation of the Pržino Agreement was certainly a step supportive of Macedonia's democratic development. But implementation of the Urgent Reform Priorities was clearly more than anything else dependent on the willingness of domestic actors. It seems unlikely that Macedonian government would attempt to pursue such far-reaching reforms, were it not for SDSM taking over the leading role and replacing VMRO-DPMNE in 2017. The sequencing approach to the EU's conditionality thus contributed to increased democracy levels, but its boosted effectivity was enabled by the domestic change.

While taking into account the above outlined domestic political development, economic development, security situation, and regional politics, the combination of the EU's strategies and action contributed to democratization in Macedonia in 2016 and 2017 in the following ways:

- 1) By employing the sequencing strategy with clearly defined goals in a form of the Urgent Reform Priorities, the EU enabled the country to focus on core aspects of democratization and by conditioning further progress in the accession process upon fulfilling these goals, the EU motivated the government to pursue substantial reforms. In the light of this shift within the EU's strategy, Zoran Zaev's government introduced the "3-6-9" reform plan addressing EU's requirements. Although its implementation was only partially successful by the end of 2017, (Bliznakovski 2018) it has marked considerable progress in substantial areas such as involvement of civil society in political development, rule of law and functioning of the judiciary. (European Commission 2018a)
- 2) The EU helped put an end to the 2015 political crisis by mediating negotiations between the main political parties in Macedonia which resulted in the Pržino Agreement. Implementation of this agreement was set as a condition to open accession negotiations and in spite of initial complications, fulfilment of the goals set by the agreement led to the subsequent dialogue of political parties and enabled credible elections to be held in 2016.
- 3) In spite of the political turmoil during 2015 and 2016, the Commission insisted on its recommendation to the Council to open accession negotiations with Macedonia. That contributed to stable levels of credibility of the accession perspective and subsequently supported the increased motivation of the Macedonian government to comply with the EU's requirements and to reinstate dialogue with Greece concerning the name dispute, resolution of which should open the door to the country's European future.

6.6 Conditions for a successful sequencing strategy

Based on the above analysis, clearly none of the strategies employed by the EU can be identified as a necessary condition for successful democracy promotion, because increase on the dependent variable occurred under influence of both prioritization and sequencing, but both of them were also ineffective at some point. In the light of this observation, I have decided to identify the necessary and sufficient conditions for the sequencing strategy to be successful. Since the sequencing approach prioritizing democracy led to increased democracy scores in 2016 and 2017

in Macedonia, and contrasted to the sequencing approach prioritizing security concerns, which was employed earlier in the strategy documents for both Macedonia and Serbia and never led to any tangible results, placing democracy to the foreground seems to be a plausible explanation of why these years' strategies have finally taken effect on democratization and can be thus marked a necessary condition for a successful sequencing strategy. But the emphasis which was placed on democratization during those years was alone not sufficient for the strategy to be effective.

The more complex sequencing approach provided a clearer timeframe and better guidelines for the country than the previous strategies, and by distinctly accentuating pro-democratic reforms, it motivated the Macedonian government to proceed at a quicker pace. Placing the conditionality of progress in the accession process upon pushing through these reforms provided a crucial incentive for the government to enhance its efforts. The Urgent Reform Priorities presented indispensable guidelines and motivation for the government to elaborate the "3-6-9" action plan, since the opening of accession negotiations was dependent on progress in these clearly delineated aims. In combination with the sequencing approach, these priorities additionally provided a credible threat that progress on Macedonia's path to accession could be further delayed, this time due to the country's own reluctance, as contrasted to previous years, when slow progress could have been blamed on Greece's or Bulgaria's vetoes.

Apart from the form the strategy itself took, contributing factors were necessary for the strategy to take effect and positively influence the process of democratization. An important question remains whether it was necessary for the EU to engage in subsequent action based on the annual strategy papers in order to succeed in its democratization efforts. I argue that complementary action was necessary for the strategies to take effect, since for instance without the mediated Pržino agreement, the political crisis could have further escalated and instead of taking steps towards democratization, the government-opposition talks might have remained at impasse, and the situation could have continuously deteriorated. But importantly, this action did not necessarily have to come from the EU. As exemplified on the case when the U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs negotiated

power transition after the parliament storming in 2017, mediation by an external actor has proven to be an important step in overcoming political crises in the country and, by extension, enabling progress in democratization. Hence, this support can also be provided by another external actor than the EU. Although in the name of its own credibility, the EU should consistently support its strategies by corresponding action.

It can be argued that domestic change was also necessary for this strategy to be successful, since the power shift was an important catalyst enabling a number of reforms to finally take place. But my observations do not confirm this claim. As we can see a slight increase in democracy levels already in 2016, when the rule still rested in VMRO-DPMNE's hands before SDSM took over the government, it seems that the increase occurred either due to pressure exerted in the EU's strategy, or an external actor's action (the EU, in this instance) and subsequent compliance of domestic actors. Therefore, domestic change has enabled the strategy to be much more effective during the subsequent year, but it was not a necessary condition for the strategy to spark pro-democratic reforms in the first place.

Hence, the necessary and sufficient conditions for a successful sequencing strategy were the following: strong emphasis on democracy-related goals combined with clearly outlined temporal perspective, and corresponding action of international actors. From the assessment of other confounding variables, no other plausible alternative explanation emerges that could have possibly given rise to growing levels of democracy during the two selected years, since they are all expected to have influenced democracy levels negatively. Besides, an in-depth analysis of these diverse factors provided a valuable insight into the complex processes in play. Finally, it is impossible to rule out some unobserved confounders, which could have potentially contributed to democratization in Macedonia during the last two years. Given the limited number of observations on which my conclusions were drawn, additional studies should pursue a comparison of more cases where this type of strategy was employed and further prolong the time period under scrutiny, in order to either dismiss or provide additional support to my conclusions.

7. Conclusion

The credibility of the accession perspective (or the lack thereof), as an explanation of the (in)effectiveness of the EU's conditionality tool has been a prevailing paradigm in the academic discussion on the EU's transformative effects in the accession countries for more than a decade. But although it most certainly is an important factor, for a complete understanding of the EU's impact on democratization in the accession countries, it is necessary to look at the problem from a broader perspective. The credibility explanation can be called into question because first, in the case of Macedonia credibility has irrefutably decreased over the course of the eight years, since due to the name dispute with Greece the accession negotiations have not been opened to this day, yet still, during the last two years we can observe a reversal of earlier trends and there is clear evidence of compliance with the EU's demands leading to increasing domestic levels of democracy. Nevertheless, the name dispute with Greece played a substantial role in the domestic political development and presumably even contributed to democratic backsliding, which is apparent in the subsequent period after Greece blocked the opening of accession negotiations with Macedonia in 2009, since it provided the ruling party with arguments in favour of growing nationalist discourse opposing the EU's requirements. Therefore, despite having an impact on the process to a considerable extent, credibility of the accession perspective cannot sufficiently explain the varying levels of effectiveness of the EU's conditionality tool. Along similar lines, in the case of Serbia the credibility of accession has increased considerably when in 2012 the country was granted a candidate status, yet counterintuitively, we can see a clear decrease in democracy levels in the subsequent year. In this case again, the credibility explanation for compliance does not hold.

Hence, I argue that instead of the degree of credibility of the enlargement perspective, the enlargement strategy the EU employs denotes whether its endeavours will be successful. The conflicting objectives theory contends that pursuing various goals often perceived as supportive of democratic transition simultaneously with democracy promotion can, in point of fact, lead to ineffectiveness of democracy promotion if the conflict is not addressed properly. Building on this theory, my work has tested whether changes in the ways the EU deals with the conflicting objectives in its

strategies influenced the effectivity of the EU's democracy promotion in the Western Balkans. Based on previous research in the field, the main focus has been on the extrinsic conflict between promotion of democracy and security-related goals, since in the Western Balkan context, the EU has been placing substantial emphasis on stabilisation of the region and settling bilateral disputes between countries, pushing aside conceivably less burning concerns related to democratic transition. My results reveal that an appropriate strategy primarily focusing on enhancement of the democratic transition, properly tackling democratic backsliding and sufficiently motivating the countries' governments to comply with the requirements can lead to increased levels of democracy. A complex approach to democracy promotion with appropriate sequencing of reforms, which is treating advancement in democracy-related goals as a precondition of further progress on the accession path, accompanied by corresponding action by external actors, is essential for the EU's conditionality tool to take effect. And although the sequencing strategy cannot be pinned down as a necessary condition for successful democracy promotion, the specific form it took in the examined case of Macedonia along with complementary action can be marked as sufficient. In my overall set of cases, the effectivity of this strategy has turned out to be the greatest and while keeping in mind other factors which influenced the changing democracy levels, the strategy clearly provided essential incentives for Macedonia to embark on democratic transformation.

The within-case analysis revealed that the necessary and sufficient conditions for a successful sequencing strategy were the following: strong emphasis on democracy-related goals combined with clearly outlined temporal perspective, and corresponding action of international actors. Domestic change following a period of democratic backsliding in the country was found to be strongly beneficial for the effectiveness of the strategy, albeit not necessary to spark pro-democratic reforms, since a shift in attitude can occur even while the same party remains in power. Nevertheless, given the limited scope of my research which mainly revolved around the international dimension, it is important to remain open to alternative explanations which might arise when systematically examining the countries' response, and which could point to additional necessary conditions for a successful sequencing strategy. The analysis of the EU's enlargement strategies sheds light on the EU's stance, but a

thorough systematic analysis of the countries' response to those strategies would help us determine how much of the effect can be attributed to the strategies alone. The simultaneity given by the fact that the EU's strategies are not independent of domestic political development in the enlargement countries, because they are based on the annual progress in democratization of the (potential) candidates, also needs to be taken into account. It is thus unclear whether the sequencing strategy prioritizing democracy would have been effective were it not for the preceding democratic backsliding resulting in the political crises in 2015 and 2016, which gave the EU a bigger leverage. Given a limited number of cases where this strategy has been applied so far, it was impossible to test my inference on a case where previous democratic development had been different, hence, the possibility that the effectiveness of this strategy is dependent upon previous decrease in democracy levels cannot be ruled out.

Alternatively, the national identity explanation claims that conflicting national identity leads to non-compliance or inconsistent compliance of domestic actors with the external actor's requirements. My research can neither confirm nor disprove this hypothesis. But the identity-based conflicts with Bulgaria and Greece undeniably played a role in blocking compliance by VRMO-DPMNE, yet mainly because the party capitalized on the identity-based conflict to consolidate power by spreading nationalist narrative. (Nancheva and Koneska 2015) In order to comply with the EU's appeal to strive for good neighbourly relations, instead of an identity shift, a shift within domestic politics and the ruling elites' political discourse placing lower emphasis on national identity was likely needed. It is possible that it is not the identity itself causing non-compliance or inconsistent compliance, but rather the stance of the domestic actors and the way they exploit an existing identity-based conflict, because change of attitude was possible without an apparent shift within the national identity taking place first. This assumption, however, needs to be further tested by analysing the interaction of domestic political discourse and national identity.

Additionally, the emphasis placed on solving the name dispute in the last two years was much lower than in the previous years' strategies, yet recent development also shows that the past year turned out to be the most fruitful one in terms of dispute settlement. That implies that the conditionality tool is inadequate for dealing with

identity-based conflicts, but again, testing this assumption is beyond the scope of this work and will thus be left for further research.

Democracy promotion by external actors can take many different forms. In the case of the EU and its relation to the accession countries, the conditionality tool is a powerful instrument providing very strong incentives for domestic actors to comply with the external actor's requirements, an instrument that most international actors do not possess. Therefore, generalization of my outcomes beyond the region of the Western Balkans and its connection to the EU would be difficult. Yet, it would be interesting to further test the outcomes of my research in a context unrelated to the EU and see whether tackling conflicting objectives in this certain way can turn out to be successful if employed under different circumstances, by a different actor, and in a different region.

Despite the uniqueness of the instrument of the EU's conditionality and in contrast to the successful democratization process in Central European countries under the influence of the tool (but disregarding recent developments where the conditionality tool is no longer in place), the Western Balkans have long resisted the EU's pressure and instead of increased democracy levels, democratic backsliding was recently apparent in some countries of the region. Reversing this process was enabled by addressing the conflicting objectives properly by opting for a suitable strategy. Identification of the necessary and sufficient conditions for the EU's strategy of sequencing to succeed is, to my knowledge, the first attempt to further elaborate on the conflicting objectives theory by examining the sequencing strategy in greater detail. The results bear high internal validity, because of the deeper insight into contextual information and processes in play in Macedonia during the years subsequent to application of this strategy by the EU. Nevertheless, external validity is considerably limited, since more cases need to be examined in order to test whether the specified conditions bring the same outcomes when applied to other countries under different circumstances. But overall, the results already point to potential policy implications and although it will be essential to adapt the strategies to local idiosyncrasies of each accession country, without shifting the focus primarily towards pro-democratic reforms, the conditionality tool can barely provide sufficient incentives for democratization. Generalizability beyond the setting of the EU using the conditionality tool is restricted

by a number of impediments, mainly because the incentives that other actors are able to provide are weaker. But in principle, same effect is to be expected when the sequencing strategy prioritizing democracy is employed by other international actors if accompanied by corresponding action. In this sense, while keeping a sensitive approach considering the many diversities in local structures, steps taken by the EU can bring inspiration to other actors undertaking democracy promotion around the world.

References

ALIBEGOVA, A. From foreign mercenaries to civic activists: A comparison of youth identity in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia. *Changing Youth Values in Southeast Europe*. Routledge, 2017, p. 110-126.

APTER, D. The politics of modernization. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1965.

BBC NEWS. Macedonia protests: Thousands rally for PM Gruevski. *bbc.com* [online]. 2015. [Accessed 13 September 2018]. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32789747>

BEALE, C. Refugee crisis: Macedonia tells Germany they've 'completely failed'. *Independent* [online]. 2016. [Accessed 15 September 2018]. Available from: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/macedonia-tells-germany-youve-completely-failed-a6927576.html>

BIEBER, F. Power-sharing and the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung*, Skopje, 2008, p. 7-40.

BIEBER, F. Building Impossible States? State-Building Strategies and EU Membership in the Western Balkans. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 2011, 63(10), p. 1783-1802.

BIEBER, F. Patterns of competitive authoritarianism in the Western Balkans. *East European Politics*, 2018a, 34(3), p. 337-354.

BIEBER, F. A Way Forward for the Balkans? *Foreign Affairs* [online]. 2018b. [Accessed 17 September 2018]. Available from: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/southeastern-europe/2018-02-06/way-forward-balkans>

BIRN (Balkan Investigative Reporting Network). New Rules Along Balkan Route Slash Number Of Migrants. *Balkan Insight* [online]. 2016. [Accessed 14 September 2018]. Available from: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/new-rules-along-balkan-route-slash-number-of-migrants-02-21-2016>

BIRN (Balkan Investigative Reporting Network). Skopje 2014 Uncovered. [online]. 2018. [Accessed 17 September 2018]. Available from: <http://skopje2014.prizma.birn.eu.com/en>

BLIZNAKOVSKI, J. Nations in Transit: Macedonia 2016 Report. *Freedom House*. 2017.

BLIZNAKOVSKI, J. Nations in Transit: Macedonia 2017 Report. *Freedom House*. 2018.

BÖRZEL, T. A. When Europeanization hits limited statehood: the Western Balkans as a test case for the transformative power of Europe. *KFG Working Paper Series*, 30, 2011.

BÖRZEL, T. A. AND F. SCHIMMELFENNIG Coming together or drifting apart? The EU's political integration capacity in Eastern Europe. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 2017, 24(2), p. 278-296.

CAROTHERS, T. *Aiding democracy abroad: the learning curve*. Edition ed. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for Internat. Peace, 2003.

CAROTHERS, T., B. LEVY, K. WOLLACK, K. S. HUBLI, et al. Democracy Support and Development Aid. *Journal of Democracy*, 2010, 21(4), p. 12-26.

CASIER, T. The EU's two-track approach to democracy promotion: the case of Ukraine. *Democratization*, 2011, 18(4), p. 956-977.

CASULE, K. Macedonian president revokes pardons in wiretap scandal. *Reuters* [online]. 2016. [Accessed 16 September 2018] Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-macedonia-politics/macedonian-president-revokes-pardons-in-wiretap-scandal-idUSKCN0YS22N>

CASULE, K. Macedonia's parliament approves law on wider use of Albanian language. *Reuters* [online]. 2018. [Accessed 17 September 2018] Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-macedonia-politics/macedonias-parliament-approves-law-on-wider-use-of-albanian-language-idUSKBN1F028Q>

CASULE, K. AND I. SEKULARAC. Macedonia jails 33 ethnic Albanians for 2015 shootout. *Reuters* [online]. 2017. [Accessed 18 September 2018] Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-macedonia-court/macedonia-jails-33-ethnic-albanians-for-2015-shootout-idUSKBN1D227A>

CEKA, B. Macedonia: A New Beginning? *Journal of Democracy*, 2018, 29(2), p. 143-157.

COOK, T. D., D. T. CAMPBELL AND W. SHADISH *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inference*. Edition ed.: Houghton Mifflin Boston, 2002. ISBN 0395615569.

COPPEDGE, M., J. GERRING, C. H. KNUTSEN, S. I. LINDBERG, et al. V-Dem Codebook v8, 2018.

DAHL, R. A. *Polyarchy: participation and opposition*. Edition ed. New Haven [u.a.]: Yale univ. pr, 1971. ISBN 9780300015652;0300013914;0300015658;9780300013917.

DAMJANOVSKI, I. Nations in Transit: Macedonia 2015 Report. *Freedom House*. 2016.

ETHIER, D. Is democracy promotion effective? Comparing conditionality and incentives. *Democratization*, 2003, 10(1), 99-120.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION. Eu-Western Balkans Summit Thessaloniki, 21 June 2003 Declaration. 10229/03 (Presse 163) [Press release]. [Accessed 10 September 2018] Available from: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_PRES-03-163_en.htm. 2003, p. 3.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2009-2010 COM(2009) 533. In. Brussels, 2009.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2010-2011 COM(2010) 660. In. Brussels, 2010.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2011-2012 COM(2011) 666 final. In. Brussels, 2011.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2012-2013. COM(2012) 600 final. In. Brussels, 2012, p. 77.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2013-2014. COM(2013) 700 final. In. Brussels, 2013, p. 45.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2014-15. COM(2014) 700 final. In. Brussels, 2014, p. 48.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION. Agreement in Skopje to overcome political crisis. [online]. 2015a. [Accessed 19 September 2018] Available from: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2014-2019/hahn/announcements/agreement-skopje-overcome-political-crisis_en

EUROPEAN COMMISSION. Commission Staff Working Document: The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Report 2015. SWD(2015) 212 final. In. Brussels, 2015b, p. 81.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: EU Enlargement Strategy. COM(2015) 611 final. In. Brussels, 2015c.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION. Urgent Reform Priorities for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 2015d, p. 5.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION. Commission Staff Working Document: The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2016 Report. SWD(2016) 362 final. In. Brussels, 2016a, p. 88.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. COM(2016) 715 final. In. Brussels, 2016b.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION. Commission Staff Working Document: The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2018 Report. SWD(2018) 154 final. In. Strasbourg, 2018a, p. 96.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION. Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - Population: Demographic Situation, Languages and Religions. [online]. 2018b. [Accessed 11 September 2018] Available from: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/population-demographic-situation-languages-and-religions-48_en

EUROPEAN COMMISSION. Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Facts & Figures. European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations. [online]. 2018c. [Accessed 15 September 2018] Available from: https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/fyrom_en.pdf

EUROPEAN COMMISSION. Rule of law. [online]. 2018d. [Accessed 9 September 2018] Available from: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/effective-justice/rule-law_en

EUROPEAN POLICY CENTRE. The Macedonian 3-6-9 plan: A hop, skip and a jump to accession negotiations? epc.eu [online]. 2018. [Accessed 7 October 2018]. Available from: http://www.epc.eu/pub_details.php?cat_id=6&pub_id=8087

EUROPEAN UNION. Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union C326/13. In.: *Official Journal of the European Union*, 2012.

EWB ARCHIVES. Remarks by Commissioner Hahn following his meeting with political leaders in Skopje. *European Western Balkans* [online]. 2015. [Accessed 14 September 2018] Available from: <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2015/06/03/remarks-by-commissioner-hahn-following-his-meeting-with-political-leaders-in-skopje/>

EWB ARCHIVES. EU's assistance to Macedonia for the refugee crisis amounts to EUR 19 million. *European Western Balkans* [online]. 2017. [Accessed 14 September 2018] Available from: <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2017/01/13/eus-assistance-to-macedonia-for-the-refugee-crisis-amounts-to-eur-19-million/>

FEREDAY, J. AND E. MUIR-COCHRANE Demonstrating Rigor Using Thematic Analysis: A Hybrid Approach of Inductive and Deductive Coding and Theme Development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2006, 5(1), p. 80-92.

FONTANA, G. *Education policy and power-sharing in post-conflict societies: Lebanon, Northern Ireland, and Macedonia*. Edition ed.: Springer, 2016. ISBN 3319314262.

FREEDOM HOUSE. Nations in Transit Methodology. *Freedom House*. [online]. 2018. [Accessed 5 September 2018.] Available from: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit-methodology>

FREYBURG, T. AND S. RICHTER National identity matters: the limited impact of EU political conditionality in the Western Balkans. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 2010, 17(2), 263-281.

GERRING, J. *Case study research: principles and practices*. Edition ed. Cambridge [u.a.]: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007. ISBN 052185928X;9780521859288;0521676568;9780521676564;.

GOGA, A. The Dimensions of a Conflict: the Case of Macedonia. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 2013, 4(10), 16.

GOLDSTEIN, R. J. The limitations of using quantitative data in studying human rights abuses. *Hum. Rts. Q.*, 1986, 8, 607.

GOTEV, G. Bulgaria vetoes Macedonia's EU accession talks. *Euractiv* [online]. 2012. [Accessed 16 September 2018] Available from: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/bulgaria-vetoes-macedonia-s-eu-accession-talks/>

GRIMM, S. AND J. LEININGER Not all good things go together: conflicting objectives in democracy promotion. *Democratization*, 2012, 19(3), p. 391-414.

GRIMM, S. AND O. L. MATHIS Stability First, Development Second, Democracy Third: The European Union's Policy towards the Post-Conflict Western Balkans, 1991–2010. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 2015, 67(6), p. 916-947.

GRIMM, S. AND O. L. MATHIS Democratization via aid? The European Union's democracy promotion in the Western Balkans 1994–2010. *European Union Politics*, 2018, 19(1), p. 163-184.

HUSZKA, B. Human Rights on the Losing end of EU Enlargement: The Case of Serbia: Human rights on the losing end. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 2018, 56(2), p. 352-367.

HUSZKA, B. AND Z. KORTVELYESI Conditional Changes: Europeanization in the Western Balkans and the Example of Media Freedom. *Intersections-East European Journal of Society and Politics*, 2017, 3(2), p. 8-32.

ICJ. Application of the Interim Accord of 13 September 1995 (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia v. Greece). *International Court of Justice* [online]. 2011. [Accessed 17 September 2018] Available from: <https://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/142>

JACOBY, W. Priest and penitent: the European Union as a force in the domestic politics of Eastern Europe. *E. Eur. Const. Rev.*, 1999, 8, 62.

JOHNSON, G. Macedonia on high alert as protests grow over wiretaps scandal. *New Zealand Herald* [online]. 2015. [Accessed 15 September 2018] Available from: https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/news/article.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=11449575

JOSEPH, E. P. AND O. VANGELOV Breakthrough in the Balkans: Macedonia's New Name. *Survival*, 2018, 60(4), p. 37-44.

JUNG, J. K. Power-sharing and democracy promotion in post-civil war peace-building. *Democratization*, 2012/06/01 2012, 19(3), 486-506.

KAI DIEKMANN, PAUL RONZHEIMER AND D. BISKUP. Macedonian president settles a score here. *Bild* [online]. 2018. [Accessed 12 September 2018] Available from: <https://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/gjorge-ivanov/macedonian-president-settles-a-score-here-44888176.bild.html>

KEIL, S. The business of state Capture and the rise of Authoritarianism in Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. *Southeastern Europe*, 2018, 42(1), 59-82.

KER-LINDSAY, J. It's Too Early to Call Greece and Macedonia's Name Agreement a Done Deal. *World Politics Review* (19446284), 06/21/ 2018, 1.

LIPSET, M. S. *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*. Anchor Book, New York, 1960.

MAINWARING, S., D. BRINKS AND A. PÉREZ-LIÑÁN Classifying political regimes in Latin America, 1945-2004. *Regimes and democracy in Latin America: Theories and methods*, 2007, p. 123-160.

MAKSTAT. Key Indicators from theme: Labour Market. State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia. *MakStat database* [online]. 2018. [Accessed 16 September 2018] Available from: http://www.stat.gov.mk/IndikatorITS_en.aspx?id=14

MARCH, J. G. AND J. P. OLSEN The institutional dynamics of international political orders. *International Organization*, 1998, 52(4), p. 943-969.

MARSHALL, M., T. GURR AND K. JAGGERS. Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800–2015. Dataset Users' Manual. *Center for Systemic Peace*. 2016.

MARUSIC, S. J. Macedonia and Greece Reboot 'Name' Talks. *Balkan Insight* [online]. 2017a. [Accessed 19 September 2018] Available from: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-greece-re-boot-name-talks-12-11-2017>

MARUSIC, S. J. Macedonia Opposition Demands Referendums on Migrants. *Balkan Insight* [online]. 2017b. [Accessed 18 September 2018] Available from:

<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/opposition-pushes-for-migrant-referendums-along-with-macedonia-polls-09-21-2017>

MARUSIC, S. J. Macedonia Still Seeking Masterminds Behind Attack on Parliament. *Balkan Insight* [online]. 2018. [Accessed 15 September 2018] Available from: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-still-searches-for-masterminds-behind-parliament-attack-08-23-2018>

MARUSIC, S. J. AND M. CHERESHEVA. Macedonia Approves Landmark Friendship Treaty with Bulgaria. *Balkan Insight* [online]. 2018. [Accessed 17 September 2018] Available from: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-approves-landmark-friendship-treaty-with-bulgaria-01-15-2018>

MHC. Refugees Rights: National and international standards vis-a-vis the situation on the ground. *Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia* [online]. 2017. [Accessed 20 September 2018] Available from: <http://www.mhc.org.mk/analysis/518?locale=en#.W6fmwS3ypE4>

MILLER, B. Democracy Promotion: Offensive Liberalism versus the Rest (of IR Theory). *Millennium*, 2010/05/01 2010, 38(3), p. 561-591.

NANCHEVA, N. AND C. KONESKA Europeanization Without Europe: The Curious Case of Bulgarian-Macedonian Relations. *European Politics & Society*, 2015, 16(2), p. 224-240.

NOUTCHEVA, G. Fake, partial and imposed compliance: the limits of the EU's normative power in the Western Balkans. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 2009, 16(7), p. 1065-1084.

NUSSBAUM, M. Capabilities as fundamental entitlements: Sen and social justice. *Feminist economics*, 2003, 9(2-3), p. 33-59.

OSCE/ODIHR. Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Early Parliamentary Elections, 11 December 2016. *International Election Observation Mission* [online]. 2016. [Accessed 19 September 2018] Available from: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/fyrom/288186?download=true>, pp. 1.

PAVLOVIĆ, S. Montenegro's 'stabilitocracy': The West's support of Đukanović is damaging the prospects of democratic change. *LSE Europp Blog*. [online]. 2016. [Accessed 25 August 2018] Available from: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2016/12/23/montenegros-stabilitocracy-how-the-vests-support-of-dukanovic-is-damaging-the-prospects-of-democratic-change/>

PAWELEC, M. AND S. GRIMM Does National Identity Matter? Political Conditionality and the Crucial Case of Serbia's (Non-) Co- operation with the ICTY. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 2014, 52(6), p. 1290-1306.

PECENY, M. *Democracy at the Point of Bayonets*. Edition ed.: Penn State Press, 1999. ISBN 027104215X.

PESKIN, V. *International justice in Rwanda and the Balkans: virtual trials and the struggle for state cooperation*. Edition ed. New York, NY [u.a.]: Cambridge University Press, 2009. ISBN 9780521129121;0521129125;9780521872300;0521872308;.

PRZEWORSKI, A., M. E. ALVAREZ, J. A. CHEIBUB AND F. LIMONGI *Democracy and development: political institutions and well-being in the world, 1950-1990*. Edition ed.: Cambridge University Press, 2000. ISBN 0521793793.

RICHTER, S. Two at one blow? The EU and its quest for security and democracy by political conditionality in the Western Balkans. *Democratization*, 2012, 19(3), p. 507-534.

ROBINSON, W. I. *Promoting polyarchy: Globalization, US intervention, and hegemony*. Edition ed.: Cambridge University Press, 1996. ISBN 0521566916.

ROHLFING, I. *Case studies and causal inference: An integrative framework*. Edition ed.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. ISBN 0230240704.

SCOBLE, H. M. AND L. S. WISEBERG Problems of comparative research on human rights. *Global human rights: Public policies, comparative measures, and NGO strategies*, 1981, p. 147-171.

SEKULARAC, I. AND K. CASULE. Macedonia's nationalists win election: official results. *Reuters* [online]. 2016. [Accessed 12 September 2018] Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-macedonia-election-result-idUSKBN1412L2?il=0>

SEN, A. *Development as Freedom*. In.: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

SCHIMMELFENNIG, F. AND U. SEDELMEIER *The Europeanization of central and eastern Europe*. Edition ed.: Cornell University Press, 2005. ISBN 080148961X.

SPANGER, H.-J. AND J. WOLFF *Universales Ziel-partikulare Wege? Externe Demokratieförderung zwischen einheitlicher Rhetorik und vielfältiger Praxis*. Edition ed.: na, 2007.

STEINER, N. D. Comparing Freedom House Democracy Scores to Alternative Indices and Testing for Political Bias: Are US Allies Rated as More Democratic by Freedom House? *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice*, 2016/08/07 2016, 18(4), p. 329-349.

STOJANOVSKI, S., D. MAROLOV AND J. ANANIEV Macedonian Question Reframed: Politics, Identity and Culture in Republic of Macedonia. *Balkan Social Science Review*, 2014, 4, p. 295-322.

SUBOTIC, J. Europe is a State of Mind: Identity and Europeanization in the Balkans. *International Studies Quarterly*, 2011, 55(2), p. 309-330.

TEORELL, J., M. COPPEDGE, S.-E. SKAANING AND S. LINDBERG Measuring electoral democracy with V-Dem data: Introducing a new polyarchy index 2016.

THE GUARDIAN. Macedonia: protesters storm parliament and attack MPs. *The Guardian* [online]. 2017. [Accessed 13 September 2018] Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/27/macedonia-protesters-storm-parliament-and-attack-mps>

TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL. Anti-corruption glossary: State capture. *Transparency International* [online]. 2018 [Accessed 6 September 2018] Available from: https://www.transparency.org/glossary/term/state_capture

UNITED NATIONS. Greece and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Interim Accord. No. 32193. *United Nations - Treaty Series* [online]. 1995. [Accessed 17 September 2018] Available from: https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/MK_950913_Interim%20Accord%20between%20the%20Hellenic%20Republic%20and%20the%20FYROM.pdf

VACHUDOVA, M. A. *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage, and Integration Since igSg*. In.: Oxford University Press, 2005.

WETZEL, A., J. ORBIE AND F. BOSSUYT. One of what kind? Comparative perspectives on the substance of EU democracy promotion. In.: *Taylor & Francis*, 2015.

WOLFF, J. Democracy promotion, empowerment, and self-determination: conflicting objectives in US and German policies towards Bolivia. *Democratization*, 2012, 19(3), p. 415-437.

WOLFF, J. AND H. J. SPANGER The interaction of interests and norms in international democracy promotion. *Journal of International Relations and Development*. 2017, 20(1), p. 80-107.

WOLFF, J. AND I. WURM Towards a theory of external democracy promotion: A proposal for theoretical classification. *Security Dialogue*, 2011/02/01 2011, 42(1), p. 77-96.

WORLD BANK. Macedonia, FYR. *The World Bank Group* [online]. 2018 [Accessed 7 September 2018] Available from: <https://data.worldbank.org/country/macedonia-fyr>

List of Appendices

Appendix no. 1: Coding scheme (table)

Appendix no 1. Coding scheme

	Variable	Description	Example
1.	GOALS		
1.1	Democracy		
1.1.1	Democracy Core	Claims supportive of free and fair elections, freedom of expression, and other general claims in favour of democracy: dialogue among political actors, independent institutions, discussion between government and opposition.	"The blurring of the distinction between state and party needs to be addressed, as highlighted by the OSCE/ODIHR in the electoral context." (European Commission 2013)
1.1.2	Rule of Law	Claims promoting justice, fight against organised crime, corruption, and claims in favour of independence of the judiciary.	"Additional efforts are required regarding judicial and public administration reform as well as the fight against organised crime and corruption." (European Commission 2010)
1.1.3	Individual Rights	Claims promoting respect for fundamental rights and civil liberties: freedom of religion, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, the right to equal treatment under the law and due process, the right to a fair trial, the right to life, women's rights and gender equality.	"Fundamental rights need to be fully respected in practice, including protection of the most vulnerable groups." (European Commission 2014)
1.1.4	Public Administration	Claims supportive of reforms of public administration, improvements in coordination and effective implementation of policies.	"Weaknesses in public administration need to be addressed." (European Commission 2014)
1.2	Socio-economic Development		

1.2.1	Economic Criteria	Claims in favour of restructuring the economy, fiscal reforms, enhancing competitiveness, etc.	"In order to enable it to cope in the medium term with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union, Serbia needs to pursue structural reforms to upgrade the productive capacity of the economy and create a climate conducive to increased foreign investment." (European Commission 2011)
1.2.2	Agriculture	Claims promoting agriculture and rural development.	"Particular attention needs to be paid to the areas of agriculture and rural development, ..." (European Commission 2011)
1.3	Security		
1.3.1	ICTY Cooperation	Claims supportive of cooperation with the ICTY.	"Full cooperation with the Tribunal remains an essential condition for membership of the EU, as set out in the Council conclusions of 25 October 2010." (European Commission 2010)
1.3.2	Inter-ethnic Relations and Reconciliation	Claims supporting efforts to strengthen inter-ethnic relations and encourage reconciliation, protection of minorities, and anti-discrimination.	"The review of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, particularly important for inter-ethnic relations, must be completed and its recommendations implemented." (European Commission 2013)
1.3.3	Good Neighbourly Relations	Claims promoting peaceful neighbourly relations, especially concerning settling the name dispute and resolution of the Kosovo conflict.	"Maintaining good neighbourly relations, including a negotiated and mutually accepted solution to the name issue, under the auspices of the UN, is essential. Another year should not be lost." (European Commission 2011)
1.4	Other	Other residual claims which do not fall into any of the categories above, but outline a specific goal to be attained.	<i>no example found</i>

1.5	No Strategic Claim	No strategic claim or an unclear strategic claim.	"The reform momentum needs to be sustained in all areas in particular to ensure implementation." (European Commission 2012)
2.	STRATEGIES		
2.1	Prioritization	Strategy giving preference to one objective over another, claims presenting certain goals as key reform areas, core reforms, priority areas, or goals to which particular attention should be paid.	"The HighLevel Accession Dialogue is a useful tool which will continue to focus on key issues, including good neighbourly relations, but it cannot replace the accession negotiations." (European Commission 2013)
2.2	Sequencing	Strategy where a goal is set as a precondition for further advancement in accession talks or for a different goal to be achieved; statements specifically denoting the temporal dimension, for example stating that the pace of negotiations will depend on progress in certain areas or a goal needs to be done at an early stage.	"In light of this, the Commission is prepared to extend its recommendation to open accession negotiations with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. This shall, however, be conditional on progress with the implementation of the Pržino Agreement, notably the holding of credible parliamentary elections and substantial progress in the implementation of the Urgent Reform Priorities." (European Commission 2016b)
2.3	Compromise	Strategy denoted by a claim stating that two aims need to be balanced and combined in the EU's policy, both equally important, and the strategy implies that one goal needs to be achieved together with another one.	<i>no example found</i>
2.4	No Action (inaction)	Strategy which mentions two goals within one claim, but there is no action how to deal with them implied. The goals can be claimed to be supportive of each other,	"Strengthening the rule of law and accelerating economic reforms remain important. " (European Commission 2009)

		the conflict is not being solved, or the two goals are perceived as complementary.	
2.5	Unclear	Strategy which differs from all of the other strategies defined by the conflicting objectives theory or where the strategy is indistinguishable.	<i>no example found</i>
2.6	No Strategy	Category marking all other statements which do not concern the conflict of objectives in any way.	"The political crisis which followed events in parliament late last year exposed deep divisions among political parties, affecting the functioning of parliament, and demonstrated the need for constructive politics in the national interest." (European Commission 2013)

Univerzita Karlova
Fakulta sociálních věd
Institut politologických studií

Diploma thesis project

The limits of the EU's political conditionality
approach in the Western Balkans



Name: Michaela Kříklánová

Academic advisor: Doc. PhDr. Jan Karlas, M.A., Ph.D.

Study programme: International Relations (Mezinárodní vztahy)

Year of project submission: 2018

Introduction

On 17th May 2018, the EU-Western Balkans summit took place in Sofia and in accordance with the new strategy for Western Balkans entitled the “Credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans” issued in February, the EU again emphasized the importance of the European future for the countries of the region. This development comes at the same time as the Western Balkan states steadily drift towards autocracy and as reported by Freedom House, their scores in various governance and civil liberties indicators decrease. (Freedomhouse, 2018a) The inevitable question thus arises what kind of priorities does the EU have concerning their political development and subsequently, whether the strategy the EU opts for influences the region in the intended way on its path towards democratic consolidation.

The EU, along with other prominent actors in democracy promotion, such as the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or countries like the United States of America or Germany, plays a significant role in global efforts for democratization, but even more importantly in its closest neighbourhood. The EU scholars have acknowledged this in the research body focusing on the enlargement process, however interestingly enough, the EU’s democratization efforts are seldom being connected to the broader literature on democracy promotion. The thesis will attempt to address this deficiency and hereby contribute to both of those interconnected research fields.

Ever since the fall of the Iron Curtain, the EU is for many substantive reasons interested in democratic stability and economic development of its eastern neighbours and accession conditionality is broadly accepted as its most powerful tool in promoting pro-democratic changes in postsocialist European countries. The EU is currently the biggest donor in the Western Balkans and the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) provides the countries of the region with financial and technical assistance in order to help them complete political and economic reforms and meet the accession conditions.¹ This indicates that the EU is indeed highly motivated to foster both

¹ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/29660/Factsheet:%20EU%20Engagement%20in%20the%20Western%20Balkans

democratic and economic development in the Western Balkans. However, to what extent is the EU capable of using “the membership carrot,” if the target countries are not only unable to upkeep their current democratic levels, but we can even observe a clear trend of democratic backsliding across the region?

A vast array of authors has tried to tackle this question and presented several main arguments as potential explanations. Arguably, the core of the issue can lay in the EU’s inconsistent approach towards political conditionality, low credibility of incentives or conflicting national identity which hampers compliance of those countries with the EU’s requirements. With regard to the first argument, the EU has a record of overlooking certain breaches of human rights in some cases and not in others, which in turn leads the accession countries to follow the consequentialist line of reasoning as well and casts doubt on whether the EU acts as a normative actor as it claims or prefers to promote its own strategic interests. The inconsistency can also lay in discrepancies between rhetoric and action or different approaches towards third countries, if the EU promotes certain policy goal towards one country but acts differently when approaching another one. (Fraczek et al. 2016) The main focus of the thesis will be primarily centred around the security argument, which I claim has played a major role in outbidding the normative democratic values in the EU’s decisions, which is in turn expected to affect the democratic quality of the accession countries.

The true effect of political conditionality of the EU on domestic change in accession countries has been a disputed issue since its formal introduction by Copenhagen criteria in 1993, but even more increasingly after the 2004/2007 Eastern enlargement. (Mišćević and Mrak 2017, p. 191) In the regional context of the Western Balkans, although specifically defined among the political criteria, the promotion of democracy, rule of law and human rights have way too often been pushed aside due to arguably more pressing matters concerning security. (Huszka and Kortvelyesi 2017, p. 22) As compared to other Central and East European accession countries, the specific post-conflict setting of the Western Balkans has made the EU adopt a distinctive regional approach promoting peace, stability, and security in the region. (European Commission 1996) But even long after the end of the Yugoslav wars, the security discourse is still prominent due to persisting disputes such as those pertaining to territorial claims, ethnic relations and until recently cooperation with the International

Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Security concerns are thus a substantial argument used to justify underperformance in promotion of democratic values and human rights protection.

Research target, Research question

The thesis will make an attempt to assess the strategy the EU uses in the enlargement context and what impact does it have on the levels of democracy in the Western Balkans. Regardless of the deterioration in media freedom, freedom of expression or the rule of law measures, the accession countries are steadily approaching the EU and despite the stipulated goal of promoting both regional stability and democracy, the EU seems to prioritize the former over the latter. This work will aim to uncover the aspects of the relationship between the EU and the Western Balkans as exemplified on two countries of the region: Serbia, which has been a candidate country since 2012, the accession negotiations are ongoing and the EU recently claimed the country has a potential of becoming a member state already in 2025 (European Commission 2018); and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (henceforth: "Macedonia"), which has been a candidate country since 2005 and with which the EU has now claimed to be prepared to open accession negotiations, on the basis of fulfilled conditions. (European Commission 2018) Despite (or, contrarily, due to) the fact that both of these countries' domestic conditions have been gradually deteriorating in terms of freedom of the press, (Freedomhouse 2018b) Serbia drifting towards autocracy and having the lowest rule of law measures in the region, (World Justice Project 2018) the EU is trying to provide stronger incentives to support the countries on their road to accession. However, it remains unclear to what extent are those incentives effective, if the democratic quality is currently weakening in spite of the EU's existing efforts. According to some policy makers, the only way of transforming the former Eastern bloc countries is by a credible promise of accession. During his official visit of Greece in 2012, Štefan Füle, the former EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, stated that "the European Union must ensure the credibility of its enlargement policy by continuing to support the

enlargement countries and their European perspective.”² But so far, the EU’s steps seem to support or even reinforce regimes defined by a recently coined term *stabilitocracy*, meaning “weak democracies with autocratically minded leaders, who govern through informal, patronage networks and claim to provide pro-Western stability in the region.” (BiEPAG 2017, p. 7) It is crucial to mention that the thesis is not trying to mark the EU as the cause of the decline in democratic measures in the region, since the whole process of democratization is obviously much more complex. Rather, it aims to explain why the efforts to promote democracy in the Western Balkans have been unsuccessful despite the tool of political conditionality employed by the EU. Based on the theoretical framework described below, the EU strategy should have a substantial impact on the effectiveness in the EU’s endeavours to promote democracy in the region. The main question the thesis is about to deal with thus runs as follows: *Do the changes in the EU’s enlargement strategy have an effect on the levels of democracy in the Western Balkans?*

Literature review

Democracy promotion by external actors has long been treated as part of two main research bodies: development studies and peace and security studies. The debate on democratization as connected to socio-economic development and post-conflict reconstruction is very broad and it is effectively impossible to separate these intertwined processes, however, in order to understand democratization as a specific mechanism more deeply, it is necessary to look into a fairly recent scholarship on external democracy promotion. Wolff and Wurm (2011) make the first attempt to conceptualize different approaches to democracy promotion as an aim and strategy of foreign policy, which are based on different actors’ motives and embed them in the existing theories of international relations. In order to further fill the research gap, Grimm and Leininger (2012) provide a theoretical framework on conflicting objectives in democracy promotion, which renders a good basis for further conceptualization to the researchers of both international relations and democratization. The thesis will then attempt to bridge the democratization literature with the much more detailed research

² <http://www.eliamep.gr/en/events/ομιλία-ευρωπαϊκού-επιτρόπου-κ-stefan-fule-διεύ/>

body on the EU endeavours in democracy promotion using the specific tool of political conditionality.

The research focusing on the effects of EU conditionality has often looked at the process through the lens of rational choice theory, in particular the external incentives model, with a common conclusion that consistent and credible political conditionality is crucial in order to ensure the EU's transformative power has a desired effect. (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005) According to this strand of enlargement literature, the "membership carrot" is an essential motivation for the candidate countries in the process of democratization and for this incentive to be effective, it is necessary to make it credible enough by accordingly responding to the states fulfilling or failing to abide by the accession conditions. Börzel and Schimmelfennig (2017) demonstrate that the EU has a robust impact on good governance through the accession incentives, however the effect on democracy is weaker. As compared to other incentives, like for example the benefits provided on the basis of the European Neighbourhood Policy, the motivation brought about by the membership conditionality is much stronger and thus more effective in its impact on transformation. A necessary condition is that the benefits of a credible accession perspective must be higher than the costs of compliance with the conditions set by the EU. (Ethier 2003; Vachudova 2005) However, as noted by Huszka and Kortvelyesi (2017) despite the EU conditionality, we can observe a considerable democratic backlash in the Western Balkan countries, which they try to explain by a hypothesis established by previous studies in the field, that consistent application of political conditionality is crucial for promotion of democratic norms and values. In this context, consistency means coherent application of rules, namely rewards for progress and sanctions for lack of progress or even backsliding. Consistent application of those rules means increased credibility thereof. Hence, consistency and credibility should go hand in hand if the EU is trying to ensure tangible results. Furthermore, realistic prioritization of goals is vital for effectiveness, to prevent an easily retractable "shallow compliance" from occurring. (Huszka and Kortvelyesi 2017, p. 13)

The ineffectiveness of the EU conditionality can further be explained by looking at both the EU level, the domestic level and their interactions. The domestic actors respond to the EU based on the perceived legitimacy of its requirements and in case

of lack of legitimacy they react with either fake compliance, partial compliance or non-compliance, the latter resulting in imposed compliance. (Noutcheva 2009) From the domestic level perspective, some studies have shown that national identity can play a decisive role in determination of appropriate action, regardless of whether the benefits of compliance exceed the costs or not. (Freyburg and Richter 2010; Subotic 2011) However, this argument has been called into question by a crucial case study on Serbia and its (non-)cooperation with the ICTY, where the authors concluded that despite the conflicting national identity, if sufficient pressure was exerted, the EU political conditionality remained effective. (Pawelec and Grimm 2014)

From a broader perspective, the EU conditionality was also approached by democratization researchers, since the EU enlargement policy has for a long time been widely accepted as the biggest success of EU democracy promotion. (Börzel and Schimmelfennig 2017; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004; Vachudova 2014) The main problem here lays in the question under which conditions is the accession conditionality a sufficient motivation for political transformation of the candidate states and what impedes it. Richter (2012) applied the theory of conflicting objectives in democracy promotion on the case of the EU and Macedonia, and concluded that democratization efforts were curbed by the EU simultaneously trying to promote democracy and regional security using the same instrument for both conflicting goals.

Security concerns as an alternative goal hampering democracy promotion is a recurring theme across the ongoing debate on the effectivity of EU conditionality. (Bieber 2011; Börzel 2011; Grimm and Mathis 2018; Huszka 2018; Richter 2012) Whether one considers the external incentives model, where security is mentioned as the cause of lenient application of conditionality (Huszka 2018), the alternative explanation based on distinct drivers of action, where security causes the EU to adopt the consequential logic instead of logic of appropriateness (Noutcheva 2009) or the conflicting objectives theory, security concerns are paramount to the explanation in almost every approach, but prioritization of security concerns is rarely approached explicitly as the treatment variable. Consequently, I have decided to employ the following research design.

Conceptual and theoretical framework, research hypotheses

The thesis will apply the theory of conflicting objectives in democracy promotion designed by Grimm and Leininger (2012), which mainly aims to provide guidelines for researchers of democratization, but has also been applied in the context of the EU conditionality effectiveness. (Richter 2012) First of all, the theory distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic trade-offs between different factors of democracy promotion. The intrinsic conflicting objectives (and the following trade-off of such) refer to contradictory goals which are represented by the clash of different elements within the process of democratization itself. The extrinsic conflicting objectives on the other hand are goals which are external to democracy promotion and which interfere with the process, such as foreign policies or development cooperation. (Grimm and Leininger 2012, p. 397) Once those conflicting objectives emerge, actors can employ one out of four potential strategies: 1) no action, 2) prioritizing, 3) sequencing, or 4) compromising. The chosen strategy will further result in no impact at all on the effectiveness of democracy promotion, or it will have a negative impact, but it can also strengthen the process of democratization, which turns the conflicting objectives into complementary goals. However, the theory indicates that further research is necessary in order to determine which strategies lead to a positive trade-off, i.e. strengthening of the effectiveness of democracy promotion. What the authors confirm is that the prevailing strategy of no action tends to be detrimental for democratization and that in general it is necessary to acknowledge the relevance of conflicting objectives in order to be able to treat them adequately. On that account, I would like to test the following hypothesis: *Shifts within the EU's enlargement strategy influence the effectiveness of the EU's democracy promotion in the Western Balkans.* Previous research suggests that the EU is predominantly using the strategy of prioritizing, which results in hindering or decreasing the effect of democracy promotion. The case study on conflicting objectives in Macedonia by Richter (2012) confirms this claim, however, the author does not support her findings with a systematic analysis of the EU's strategies over time, which is a methodological shortcoming to be filled by this thesis. Furthermore, there is a reason to believe that this trend could be relevant across the whole region of the Western Balkans, based on the previous research, which will be exemplified on the comparative case study of Serbia and Macedonia.

Empirical data and analytical technique

In order to test the hypothesis, EU documents will be scrutinized using qualitative content analysis, namely I will examine the EU enlargement strategy papers issued between the years 2009-2016. With these documents being released on an annual basis, the subsequent analysis will allow me to compare the resulting strategy with the country's progress in democracy levels based on V-Dem democracy score and hence evaluate whether the implementation of the strategy turned out to be successful. Based on the consequent outcomes I will proceed with a cross-case comparison drawing on Rohlfing's (2012) framework for case studies and causal inference and depending on the results of the comparison, I will then conduct a within-case analysis of potential causal mechanisms and causal processes in play, in order to gain a deeper understanding of how the strategy employed by the EU influenced the outcome. This will allow me to address the endogeneity problem inherent in democracy promotion research, caused by the loop of causality between independent variable and dependent variable, since democracy levels usually influence the strategies and actions of the "donor".

The data on democracy levels will be indicated by the V-Dem Electoral democracy index grounded in Dahl's theory of polyarchal democracy, which merges the following elements: "Elected officials", "Free and fair elections", "Freedom of expression", "Associational autonomy" and "Inclusive citizenship." (Teorell et al. 2016, p. 3) Given that the EU lacks a codified definition of democracy which could be applied in the process of democracy promotion in other countries (Wetzel et al. 2015, p. 22), the highly influential concept of polyarchy seems suitable in order to assess the changing levels of the dependent variable. (Anastasakis 2008)

Selection of two cases should increase the external validity of causal inference, given the small overall universe of cases limited by the number of recipients of the EU conditionality policy. Internal validity should be high because I will control for other variables by choosing two very similar cases within the same region over the same time period. However, the issue of indeterminacy could potentially weaken the generalizability of the results, since my analysis will only focus on the "donor" part – in this case the EU, which is only one side of the equation and it is undoubtedly necessary

to consider the domestic level as well in order to fully understand the underlying mechanisms. It is thus important to remain open to alternative explanations.

Planned thesis outline

1. Introduction
2. Literature review
3. Theoretical background: Conflicting objectives in democracy promotion
4. Research design
5. Operationalisation
6. Analysis of the EU strategies and their impact on democratization
7. Conclusion

References

ANASTASAKIS, O. The EU's political conditionality in the Western Balkans: towards a more pragmatic approach. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 2008, 8(4), 365-377.

BIEBER, F. Building Impossible States? State-Building Strategies and EU Membership in the Western Balkans. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 2011, 63(10), 1783-1802.

BIEPAG. The Crisis of Democracy in the Western Balkans. Authoritarianism and EU Stabilitocracy. In.: Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group, 2017.

BÖRZEL, T. A. When Europeanization hits limited statehood: the Western Balkans as a test case for the transformative power of Europe. *KFG Working Paper Series*, 30, 2011.

BÖRZEL, T. A. AND F. SCHIMMELFENNIG Coming together or drifting apart? The EU's political integration capacity in Eastern Europe. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 2017, 24(2), 278-296.

Commission of the European Communities, Common principles for future contractual relations with certain countries in South-Eastern Europe, COM (96) 476 final (October 1996). ISBN 92-78-09772-1.

ETHIER, D. Is democracy promotion effective? Comparing conditionality and incentives. *Democratization*, 2003, 10(1), 99-120.

European Commission. A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans. In. Strasbourg, 2018.

Factsheet: EU Engagement in the Western Balkans. *European Union External Action* [online]. Brussels, 2017 (accessed 19 July 2018). Available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/29660/Factsheet:%20EU%20Engagement%20in%20the%20Western%20Balkans

FRACZEK, S., B. HUSZKA AND Z. KÖRTVÉLYESI. The role of human rights in the EU's external action in the Western Balkans and Turkey. Work Package No. 6, Deliverable No. 2: 2016.

Freedom of the Press 2017. *Freedomhouse.org* [online]. 2018b. Available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/freedom-press-2017> (accessed 1 August 2018).

FREYBURG, T. AND S. RICHTER National identity matters: the limited impact of EU political conditionality in the Western Balkans. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 2010, 17(2), 263-281.

GRIMM, S. AND J. LEININGER Not all good things go together: conflicting objectives in democracy promotion. *Democratization*, 2012, 19(3), 391-414.

GRIMM, S. AND O. L. MATHIS Democratization via aid? The European Union's democracy promotion in the Western Balkans 1994–2010. *European Union Politics*, 2018, 19(1), 163-184.

HUSZKA, B. Human Rights on the Losing end of EU Enlargement: The Case of Serbia: Human rights on the losing end. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 2018, 56(2), 352-367.

HUSZKA, B. AND Z. KORTVELYESI Conditional Changes: Europeanization in the Western Balkans and the Example of Media Freedom. *INTERSECTIONS-EAST EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF SOCIETY AND POLITICS*, 2017, 3(2), 8-32.

MIŠČEVIĆ, T. AND M. MRAK The EU Accession Process: Western Balkans vs EU-10. *Politička misao: časopis za politologiju*, 2017, 54(4), 185-204.

Nations in Transit 2017: The False Promise of Populism. *Freedomhouse.org* [online]. 2018a. Available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/nations-transit-2017> (accessed 15 July 2018).

NOUTCHEVA, G. Fake, partial and imposed compliance: the limits of the EU's normative power in the Western Balkans. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 2009, 16(7), 1065-1084.

PAWELEC, M. AND S. GRIMM Does National Identity Matter? Political Conditionality and the Crucial Case of Serbia's (Non-) Co-operation with the ICTY. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 2014, 52(6), 1290-1306.

RICHTER, S. Two at one blow? The EU and its quest for security and democracy by political conditionality in the Western Balkans. *Democratization*, 2012, 19(3), 507-534.

ROHLFING, I. *Case studies and causal inference: An integrative framework*. Edition ed.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. ISBN 0230240704.

Rule of Law Index 2017–2018. *World Justice Project* [online]. 2018. Washington, D.C., available at: https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/WJP-ROLI-2018-June-Online-Edition_0.pdf (accessed 02 August 2018).

SCHIMMELFENNIG, F. AND U. SEDELMEIER Governance by conditionality: EU rule transfer to the candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 2004, 11(4), 661-679.

SCHIMMELFENNIG, F. AND U. SEDELMEIER *The Europeanization of central and eastern Europe*. Edition ed.: Cornell University Press, 2005. ISBN 080148961X.

SUBOTIC, J. Europe is a State of Mind: Identity and Europeanization in the Balkans. *International Studies Quarterly*, 2011, 55(2), 309-330.

TEORELL, J., M. COPPEDGE, S.-E. SKAANING AND S. LINDBERG Measuring electoral democracy with V-Dem data: Introducing a new polyarchy index 2016.

VACHUDOVA, M. A. *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage, and Integration Since 1990*. In.: Oxford University Press, 2005.

VACHUDOVA, M. A. EU Leverage and National Interests in the Balkans: The Puzzles of Enlargement Ten Years On. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 2014, 52(1), 122-138.

WETZEL, A., J. ORBIE AND F. BOSSUYT. One of what kind? Comparative perspectives on the substance of EU democracy promotion. In.: Taylor & Francis, 2015.

WOLFF, J. AND I. WURM Towards a theory of external democracy promotion: A proposal for theoretical classification. *Security Dialogue*, 2011/02/01 2011, 42(1), 77-96.