



*Department of Public Policy*

*Department of politics*

# Europeanization of the Western Balkans Impact of Political Culture

---

*Ingrid Xhafa (Y2126225)*

*Final Thesis Project for the Master in European Public Policy  
(Mundus MAPP)*

*Word Count: 11,798 (bibliography not included)*

---

*Department of Politics*  
*University of York*

<h2>Electronic Project Submission Cover Sheet</h2>
--

*This cover sheet should be the first page of your project.*

**Examination Number:** Y2126225

**Module:** Final Dissertation

**Project Deadline:** 01/07/2015

**Word count:** 13 199

**I confirm that I have**

- checked that I am submitting the correct and final version of my project
- formatted my project in line with departmental guidelines
- conformed with University regulations on academic integrity
- included an accurate word count
- put my examinations number on every page of the project
- not written my name anywhere in the project
- saved my project in .pdf or .word format

**PLEASE TICK BOX TO CONFIRM**



**Note:** if you have any questions please see the FAQs

**Abstract**

Since the end of communism in the early '90s, the Western Balkans has been undergoing a triple transformation: building a sustainable democracy, undertaking economic reforms, and moving towards European Union (EU) accession. Despite 25 years of transformation, the region continues to exhibit tendencies towards backwardness, violence and instability. The EU also seeks to transform the region in order to secure stability, prosperity and well-functioning democratic societies. The EU has used the same membership conditionality mechanism in the Western Balkans as it has in the Central Eastern Europe enlargement. However, since the EU made its commitment to enlarge to the Western Balkans at the 2003 Thessaloniki Council, the region has made very little progress towards adopting the necessary reforms. Domestic factors in the Western Balkans have delayed the post-communist transformation process. Yet, research on whether these domestic factors weaken the transformative power of the EU in the same way is limited. This project investigates the role of political culture in mitigating the assumed transformative power of the EU. It examines if the political culture of the Western Balkans plays a salient role in shaping national responses to the externally transformative power of the European community. A cross-national comparison methodology is used to compare the democratic political culture in four Western Balkan countries: Albania, Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro. A small number of experts in EU issues, civil servants, professors and think tank researchers from Albania, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia have been interviewed regarding their perception of the role of political culture in the Europeanization of the Western Balkans. The thesis concludes with some general reflections on the role of political culture in the Europeanization process. It suggests that the EU should take in consideration the impact of domestic political when it develops pre-accession initiatives for prospective counties.

## Acknowledgments

---

I am greatly indebted to my professors, friends and family without whom this work would not have been possible. I thank my supervisors Nicole Lindstorm and Uwe Puetter for their precious help, guidance and feedback during the writing process.

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	6
CHAPTER I .....	11
Methodology .....	11
Research design .....	11
Case Selection .....	12
CHAPTER II .....	13
Literature Review .....	14
Europeanization Concept.....	14
Political Culture Concept.....	19
CHAPTER III .....	23
Previous political experiences and foci of identification and loyalty .....	23
Historical Experiences .....	25
Social organization and civil society.....	31
Fundamental values and Political expectations.....	33
Political Participation .....	35
Materialist/non-materialist values.....	37
Individualism, Power Distance, Indulgence.....	38
CHAPTER IV .....	41
Analysis .....	41
Potential for further research and possible policy considerations .....	46
Conclusions .....	48
ii. Interview questions.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Bibliography.....	54

## Introduction

Central Eastern enlargement is widely perceived as a successful story of the European Union (EU) foreign policy. EU played the fundamental role of transforming Central Eastern European (CEE) countries by promoting democratic consolidation, the rule of law, respect for human rights and the protection of minority rights. The effectiveness of EU's enlargement policy was achieved mostly through the conditionality mechanism, under the logic of compliance in exchange of EU membership (Freyburg and Richter, 2010). Likewise, the EU has committed to the same unequivocal support for the Western Balkan countries, employing the same membership prospective. However, since the EU made its commitment to enlarge to the Western Balkans at the 2003 Thessaloniki Council, the region has made very little progress towards adopting the necessary reforms, despite their great aspiration to become member states (MS). The instrument of political conditionality is not helping to overcome hurdles of the region. For a quarter of a century, the Western Balkans have been struggling between radical reforms and poor political achievements. For many of the countries, European Integration seems to be way more distant than it was in the first years of democratic transition. Although the EU external incentives have heavily relied on political conditionally, the mechanism seems to be less effective in comparison with the CEE countries.

Why are the Western Balkans lagging behind? "As late developers on the post-communist scene-still recovering from ethnic wars and extreme nationalism-it is a

much more traumatic experience than earlier experiences of Europeanization in CEE”(Anastasakis, 2005:80). The countries of the western Balkans have performed particularly poorly in political, social and economic issues. A multitude of reasons can explain the bad performance, although blaming simply the lack of reforms impedes searching for deeper causes. Sedelmeier’s question of “under what conditions is the EU’s “influence effective” encourages looking for possible explanations within the domestic context of the Western Balkans (Sedelmeier, 2006: 8). Under the same social-institutionalism logic, Borzel’s contribution in the field will be utilized as a model, upon which the political culture concept is considered to be one of the mediating factors of Europeanization. The central question of this project is: *does ‘political culture’ of the Western Balkans play a salient role in shaping national responses to externally transformative power from European community?* Generally, the political culture, which consists of values, such as, mistrust in political institutions, apathy for social and political action, legacy of the communist past, lack of civic values, hostility toward “others”, conformism and the feeling of incapacity to influence the political process, has a significant impact in political and economic consequences of a society.

Here, the region of the Western Balkans is regarded as a single entity as it has gained prominent recognition in the academic literature as such. The region is not uniform or homogeneous. However, there are similar, regional features in terms of identity, culture, political, and economic development (See more at: Kacarska, 2012; Kirbis, 2013). Western Balkan is also a small geographical region and countries follow similar co-existing stages of association and integration with the EU. The countries under research (Albania, Montenegro and Serbia) are at the same stages of EU

integration, as candidate states. Croatia is the only country in the region, which is already a member of EU. For this reason, it will be used as a control case study for testing the impact that its political culture has on the Europeanization process. The thesis draws focus on national legacies and cultural specificities. The project examines if the contemporary political behavior have roots located in the political culture components. Practically all the Western Balkan countries have placed EU accession in the top list of their political agenda by enduring EU-led reforms. However, according to the logic of appropriateness, prospective countries should not only meet the formal requirements for admission, but also internalize democratic values and norms, otherwise the countries will only “absorb” European models without “transforming” their inherent patterns. The general focus of the thesis is to understand if the Western Balkans transformation impeded by traditions, mentalities and legacies of an anti-democratic civic culture?

One should be aware of many challenges when analyzing the Europeanization process in the Western Balkans. The region does not only presents complex historic legacies, ethnical divisions, but it also has problematical political systems. Even today, it still demonstrates inherent tendencies towards backwardness, violence and instability. From the fall of communism, it has undergone a triple transformation in building-up a sustainable democracy, undertaking economic reforms, and taking on the European Union accession process. However, for the Western Balkans, Europeanization remains largely an external process. Candidate countries, being non-EU members, have very little impact on shaping EU politics. On the contrary, the EU acts as the main generator of change and reform, offering models and guidelines. It also provides financial assistance for reconstruction, development, transition, and imposes



the criteria and conditions of change. “Given the apparently deep-rooted nature of many of the factors holding back the Western Balkans, there appears to be little chance of a fundamental change in fortunes for the region any time soon” (The economist, 2015). In fact, within a ten-year time frame, it looks unlikely that any other country from the region will join the EU. It is possible that transformation might not occur in the absence of cultural prerequisites. Commonly, cultural factors play a strong explanatory role in analyzing political outcomes in the Balkans. The aim of the study is to evaluate if the Europeanization process depends on attitudes and beliefs, which originate from ordinary citizens. The thesis does not reject the importance of formal compliance with EU legislation and guidelines, but it carefully scrutinizes how people’s perceptions and attitudes, myths, and culture reflect and inform politics.

After presenting the research puzzle and a general outline, the project continues to develop in 4 chapters. The first chapter opens remarks on the methodological framework. It briefly describes the research design and the procedure of collecting the data. Secondary data, resulting from surveys, is used in identifying cultural particularities of the Western Balkans. A cross-country comparison method is applied for pointing the differences among Western Balkan societies. The discussion then turns to whether these differences present a unique dynamic in explaining the Europeanization process for the region or not. Primary data collected from the expert testimonies contribute to the quality of this discussion. The second chapter displays an extensive review of the predominant literature on Europeanization issues. It is explicitly described how the thesis utilizes the parsimonious model of Southeastern Europeanization drawn by Borzel and Risse, for the Western Balkans context (Borzel and Risse, 2000). The key concepts of Europeanization and political culture are

reviewed and conceptualized, in accordance with the proposed model. The third chapter offers a mixture of description and analysis. It starts by comparing the components of political culture between the Western Balkans, where Croatia appears to perform better in most of the indicators of political culture, such as political participation, institutional memory, civic values, etc. A distinctive political experience compared to the rest of the Balkans has played a significant contribution to Croatia's political culture. The interviewees confirm the same tendency, by stressing that Croatia is more European than the rest of the Balkans. However, notwithstanding this, they attribute its EU membership to other influential factors, as well. The final chapter summarizes the findings of the research and draws some tentative conclusions. Finally, it concludes by suggesting that the EU should reconsider the applicability of political culture when initiating the transformation processes.

However, the project has its own limitations. First, it is acknowledged that cross-national studies, compared to in-depth case studies, limit the depth of the analysis for particular countries. The aim of the project is not to provide a particular picture for each of the countries in the Western Balkans, but to provide some distinctive insights for the whole region. Also, it is out of the scope of this project to test for a statistical correlation between the components of political culture and the transformation process. However, including more data and applying a regression analysis might be useful to increase the validity of the findings. In this way, one can rigorously measure the degree of significance of political culture in Europeanization process.

## CHAPTER I

### Methodology

The aim of this thesis project is to examine the extent to which political culture affects transformation of prospective member states of EU, respectively the Western Balkans. The purpose of the chapter is to describe the research methodology, the research design, the procedure of collecting the data, and justify the sampling.

### Research design

Despite the fact that the data derived by the literature review could be framed in a quantitative way, the research has a qualitative nature in overall. A twofold strategy is employed to conduct it. First, an extensive review of the prevailing literature on Europeanization is utilized to select the theoretical framework of Social Institutionalism and the operating concepts of ‘Europeanization’ and ‘political culture’. In here, data collected from large-scale opinion poll surveys, including the European Values Survey and Hofstede Values Survey Module, are used to identify the components of the political culture. The purpose of the project is to identify those behavioral specificities, which may be the reason why political outcomes are different among the Western Balkan countries. Given the demands of space, in this thesis is practically impossible to search for all the possible explanatory factors. Therefore, the project draws upon an already existing model, offered by the Europeanization literature (Borzel and Risse, 2000). Moreover, the method of cross-nation comparison is used to compare political culture components among the Western Balkan countries,

without investigating for a correlation between them and transformation. Here, a simple cross-tabulation method is used to produce graphs and compare data for the region. Secondly, primary data is utilized with the purpose of investigating the correlation between the political culture and transformation. Additionally, a small number of experts in EU issues, civil servants, professors and think tank researchers from Albania, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia, have been interviewed regarding their perception of the role of political culture in the Europeanization in the Western Balkans. Finally, examining both primary and secondary data, the thesis evaluates the weight of the components of the political culture in the transformation process of the Western Balkans.

### Case Selection

This study considers 4 countries from the Western Balkans: Albania, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia. The Western Balkans is considered to be the natural geographical enlargement for the EU. It also includes Bosnia Herzegovina, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo. Given that the project focuses on the domestic factor of political culture and its impact as a mediator in the Europeanization process, it was decided to exclude the last three countries for the following reasons: First, the three excluded countries have specific international circumstances and unresolved issues with the EU or with specific MS in the EU. The limited space and resources in the project do not allow researching these countries separately from the initial sample selection. Their Europeanization process might be facilitated/hampered by political culture at the same level it does for the countries under research, however their Europeanization outcomes are undoubtedly associated to external factors. For

example: the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYRM) has an open and well-known dispute over the ‘name issue’ with Greece (See more at: Sašo Ordanoski, 2011). In these conditions, it is impossible to scrutinize the role of political culture in the transformation process of FYRM, given that the Integration process is pending over the conflict with Greece. Bosnia Herzegovina’s dysfunctional political system, ethnic division and the infamous Sejdic/Finci case brought before the European Court of Human Rights, are considered to be the main reasons blocking its accession bid toward European Union (See more at: Starčević- Srkalović, 2010). Furthermore, Kosovo is not yet recognized as a sovereign state from some of the EU member states. The lack of more sophisticated research tools does not allow a full examination of all the variables (domestic and external once), which might affect Europeanization for the whole region. It is not feasible to draw a comparison between the internal and external mediating factors and analyze which of them plays the primary role in influencing the Europeanization outcomes. This is a theme for another, and more spacious project, where all variables can be taken in consideration.

The study analyses those countries, which are similar in a number of important features (Albania, Montenegro and Serbia), but diverse in the political outcomes (Croatia, as the only EU member state in the region). These features consist of similar historical and political experiences, comparable socio-economic development, and geographical proximity. Croatia is used as a ‘control’ case study in testing the importance of political culture in the Europeanization process because of its success to be the first country in the Western Balkans to access the EU

## CHAPTER II

## Literature Review

The Europeanization literature on candidate or potential candidate countries is considered to be a fast-growing research area, but significantly small compared to the one on Members States. The existing studies on applicant states focus mostly on Central and Eastern European countries (See: Borzel, 2002; Borzel and Risse, 2005; Grabbe, 2002; Knill, 2007; Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeir, 2005). Europeanization of the Western Balkans generally remains an under-researched area. Wherever it has been the object of scholarly enquiry, the focus has placed on how Western Balkan countries have complied with EU formal regulation and recommendations, except for the efforts of Borzel 2011; Demetropouli, 2002; Anastasakis, 2005; Elbasani, 2013; Freyburg and Richter, 2010. In overall, the “Europeanization studies looking at the domestic side of the equation are still at an early stage, lacking conceptual detail and comparative evidence on the array of domestic factors that challenge the role of the EU in difficult cases of democratization” (Elbasani, 2013). Hence, this project brings back into focus the Southeast region of Europe, the Western Balkans, and analyzes the Europeanization process from the perspective of domestic settings. It applies the constructivist approach of Europeanization and scrutinizes the correlation between domestic transformation and the mediating factor of political culture, attempting so to bridge a gap in the existing literature.

## Europeanization Concept

Generally, the concept of **Europeanization** refers to the interaction between EU and member states (MS) or third countries. The dimensions of this interaction can be of a bottom-up or top-down nature. The bottom-up approach explains how states upload

their domestic preferences to the EU level. On contrary, the top-down perspective of Europeanization seeks to explain the mechanisms and processes through which EU prompts domestic change in MS and third countries. This project takes on this latter approach. However, instead of searching for causes at the EU level for domestic change in the Western Balkans, it examines the impact of domestic factors, as a reaction to EU influence. More specifically, it reviews a particular angle of the Europeanization literature, one that gives relevance to ideational and cultural domestic factors and their role in the Europeanization process.

Radaelli's concept of Europeanization seems to be the most applicable for this study for many reasons. First, he describes it as:

*“processes of (a) construction (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’ and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic (national and subnational) discourse, identities, political structures and public policies”* (Radaelli 2003, p. 30).

The importance of the definition relies in its emphasis in both formal and informal institutions, including here behavioral motivations, which lead to change. Also this definition includes “ways of doing things”, which indirectly accommodates mass attitudes beside the ones of the elites or formal institutions. Moreover, it is useful to be applied to third countries, which are not yet member states, but are in different stages of Europeanization.

In the project, the concept of European Integration will be used as an equivalent of Europeanization. Some scholars might consider this practice as disputable because of the timeframe when both processes occur. For example, Radaelli argues that Europeanization happens once EU institutions are created, but Integration occurs when countries merge sovereignty when joining EU (Radaelli, 2000). However, European Integration does not end when accession in the EU is reached (Mungiu, 2007). So, because both concepts encompass the same process, the unending process of “becoming European, or at least more European”, they will be used as complementary to each other.

The analytical tools for explaining Europeanization outcomes of candidate countries will be drawn upon the model offered by Borzel 1999, Borsel and Risse 2000, Featherstone and Radaelli 2007, Heritier 2001, and March and Olsen, 1998. Applying this model to the Western Balkans means to transfer Europeanization literature to the Southeast of the European continent. The mainstream Europeanization literature considers two domestic adaptational strategies in response to EU impact. The rationalist institutionalism follows the “logic of consequentialism” as a structural misfit between EU and domestic institutions and policies (March and Olsen 1998). For them, *veto players* and *formal institutions* are mediating factors in the process, both having the power to foster or hinder change. In contrast, the project finds particularly applicable the sociological institutionalist perspective and its “logic of **appropriateness**” (March and Olsen 1998). More than emphasizing the misfit between institutional structures, it centers the misfit between domestic norms and collective understandings with those of EU. Here, the mediating factors are *norm entrepreneur* and *political culture* (Borzel and Risse, 2000).



EU politics and institutions persistently drive domestic change not only in MS, but also in third countries (Cowels et al., 2001). However, the convergence does not seem to happen in the same way in all cases, mainly because of the costs of adaptations, which are related to the misfit between EU requirements and domestic conditions (Borzel and Risse, 2003). Generally, misfit can be of two types: ‘policy misfit’ and ‘institutional misfit’ (Borzel and Risse, 2000). The former is related to a mismatch between EU regulatory frameworks and domestic policies. The latter, is related to the inconsistency between domestic rules, procedures and collective understandings with the ones coming from EU. There is a thriving literature on the impact of Europeanization in domestic policies, politics and polity. Some of the consensual findings of these studies suggest that the Europeanization effects on domestic conditions are differential. Many internal factors, varying from the most formal to the informal ones, have a say in the process. There is also a degree of consent when arguing that ‘misfit’ between EU and domestic settings is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for accommodating Europeanization. The domestic impact of EU is undoubtedly filtered by domestic mediating factors (Cini, 2013). This thesis questions how much political culture, as a mediating factor, affects Europeanization.

There are four possible outcomes in response to the adaptational processes of Europeanization: inertia, absorption, transformation and retrenchment (Featherstone and Radaelli, 2007). **Inertia** implies a condition of no change. This might happen when EU institutions, legislation, norms, models, tools, etc. are dissimilar compared to the domestic settings (Olsen, 1996). “**Absorption** is accommodation for policy requirements without real modification of the essential structures and changes in the

logic of political behaviour” (Heritier, 2001 in Fatherstone and Radaelli, 2007: 37).

**Transformation** happens when member states replace their existing legislation, policies and institutions, in accordance with the change in their collective understandings (Borzel and Risse, 2000). **Retrenchment** is considered to produce the opposite effects of Europeanization, implying that domestic change will happen in the opposite direction of EU influence. This means that the countries will become ‘less European’ than before the process started (Fatherstone and Radaelli, 2007).

There have been some attempts to investigate the correlation between the adaptational responses of Europeanization and mediating factors in terms of political culture (See: Borzel and Risse, 2000, 2003; 2009; Borzel, 2013; Risse at al. 2001; Olsen, 2002; Gaffney and Kolinsky 1991). However, the model is hardly used in analyzing the Europeanization process for the Western Balkans. There is a ‘soundless’ consent that the region is poorly performing in adopting EU requirements. As Cini argues, “states are good in taking or downloading policies if they are able to respond swiftly to impetus for change coming...” (Cini, 2013: 119). In fact, domestic response towards EU influence can be determined by several factors. Most of the current studies emphasize the role of formal institutions in mediating the impact of EU. For this reason, the project attempts to find the connecting link in the literature, between transformation and informal institutions, such as political culture. Can candidate countries be fully transformed if the mediating factor of political culture helps shaping a European collective understanding? Transformation implies that domestic convergence happens because of internalized European norms and identity. This thesis further investigates if candidate countries are somewhere near transformation process of Europeanization and understand the role of their political culture in the

process. “Historical, social and cultural factors may significantly mitigate and refract the diffusion of ideas, inside and outside the EU” (Borzel and Risse, 2009). What is happening in the Western Balkans? How much does their political culture ease/hamper the Europeanization process?

Operationalization of Europeanization outcomes assists also in resolving the problem of measurement. The thesis focuses on transformation, as an outcome of Europeanization, and attempts to measure it empirically. Here, the model of Fatherstone and Radaelli is being applied to measure the concept of transformation (Fatherstone and Radaelli, 2007). Their study tries to answer the question of ‘what is being transformed’. It finds that transformation happens when institutions and norms are modified along a European model. Data derived from the literature review and expert interviews are used to evaluate the level of transformation in the Western Balkans.

### Political Culture Concept

Sociological institutionalists perspective categorizes ‘political culture’ as one of the mediating factors in response to Europeanization pressures (Borzel and Risse, 2000). According to it, political culture, as an informal institution, involves the collective understandings of a society and as such it can obstruct or encourage the process (March and Olsen 1989). Informal institutions can strongly affect the way in which domestic factors respond to Europeanization. The sociological institutionalism perceives political culture in terms of a domestic political climate with reference to a consensual or conflictual political life. It claims that there is a causality between low

adaptational costs of Europeanization and a consensual political culture (Borzel and Risse, 2000). Thus, a consensus-oriented political culture helps to overcome *veto players* and therefore reduces adaptational cost. In contrast, a conflictual political culture prevents cooperation and may inhibit domestic change. However, even in the presence of a consensual political culture and therefore absence of multiple veto players, transformation is unlikely to happen. Transformation, as an outcome of Europeanization, is strongly related to the ‘logic of appropriateness’, which perceives human action driven by rules of “appropriate behavior”, not because of a lack of opponents or veto players. “Rules are followed because they are seen as natural, rightful, expected, and legitimate” (March and Olsen, 1998: 2). For this reason, the conceptualization of political culture will start by channeling it through a civic culture concept. In fact, the concept of “political culture” is often described as an “overused buzz-word” in most of political science studies (Baker in Formisano, 2001). In many Europeanization studies regarding the Western Balkans, political culture is frequently mentioned as a ‘catch-word’ without sufficiently explaining its real impact in political processes. When the concept of political culture was first introduced, it suffered from measurement assertions and validity. Now, there is substantial evidence to think that distrust in the political culture theory has been overcome and the theme has gained a considerable academic respectability (Eva Kolinsky and John Gaffney, 1991: 1).

It could be argued that rule-driven behavior can be studied through the concept of political culture, best described by Archie Brown (Brown, 1977). Almond and Verba are considered to be the pioneers of political culture studies, defining it as “political orientations – attitudes toward the political system and its various parts, and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system”(Almond and Verba, 1989: 31-34). However,

this definition is considered to be shallowly suggestive rather than explanatory (Shafir, 1983). On the other hand, Brown's definition represents the same behaviorist approach, but it also facilitates the empirical measurement for case-studies research. It is the most appropriate model when used for scrutinizing the historical experience of the Western Balkans because of its applicability with communist studies. According to Brown, political culture will be understood as "*subjective perceptions of history and politics, the fundamental beliefs and values, the foci of identification and loyalty, and the political knowledge and expectations, which are the product of the specific historical experience of nations and groups*" (Brown and Gray, 1979). Moreover, the definition is useful in identifying the theoretical framework and the research methods. However, some critics consider that the model needs to be revised for post-communist studies (Whitefield, 2005). For this reason, two prerequisites will be taken in consideration: The first one links the meaning of the concept with political orientations of a group, who share the same political and historical experience (Reisinger 1995 in Whitefield, 2005). The second adds essential normative orientations, which are durable over time, to the political culture definition (Eckstein, 1988).

In the general framework of European Commission for the Western Balkans, it is explicitly written that the region should be brought closer to EU (COM/2008/0127 final). The formal way of moving towards EU is by complying with Copenhagen Criteria and the Stabilization and Association Agreement. Among other factors, good governance and democratic development play a key role in bringing the Western Balkans closer to EU. In an intergovernmentalist perspective, the incentives for responding to EU policy download are based on a rational cost-benefit analysis for

having a full EU membership. Moravcsik argues that Central-Eastern enlargement for example, was entirely dependent on MS preferences and part of a rational calculation of cost-benefits analysis, ignoring in this way historical encouragements and political rhetoric (Moravcsik, 1998). However, authors like Schimmelfennig argue that intergovernmental bargaining within EU or EU and third countries cannot explain the process of enlargement (Schimmelfennig, 2001). According to a sociological institutionalism paradigm, the international system is structured by intersubjective understandings and norms. Memberships in international organizations materialize when countries share a collective identity and adhere to same values and norms (Risse and Kappen, 1995). “In the sociological perspective, sharing a community of values and norms with outside states is both necessary and sufficient for their admission to the organization”(Schimmelfennig, 2001: 61). In the same perspective, the political culture literature argues that the evolution and persistence of mass-based democracy requires the emergence of certain supportive habits and attitudes among the general public” (Inglehart, 1998: 1204). EU is more likely to admit candidates, which have similar values and norms with the union (See more at: Schimmelfennig, 2001). Likewise, values and fundamental political beliefs are a major component of political culture concept (Brown and Gray, 1979). Almost all the studies of political culture recognize the importance of values and beliefs in political issues.

From reviewing the political culture literature, the components of a pro-democratic Civic Culture are: freedom and self-expression, high political participation, emancipative values, etc. (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). The thesis will engage in scrutinizing the value system of the region by analyzing data from the European Value Surveys (EVS) and Hofstede’s Values Survey Module. Moreover, political

culture consists of additional components such as: previous political experience, foci of identification and political knowledge and expectation (Brown and Gray, 1979). They will be briefly analyzed and described following the theoretical outline proposed by Brown and Gray.

## CHAPTER III

### Previous political experiences and foci of identification and loyalty

One of the most prominent features of the Western Balkans is undoubtedly, heterogeneity. However, the region is small and shares similar historical experiences, comparable socio-economic development and parallel stages of association with the EU (except Croatia, which is already a member from July 2013). When analyzing the extent to which political culture is affecting the Europeanization process for the Western Balkans, it is important to clarify some uncertainties. First, one cannot take for granted that there is a single, dominant political culture for the whole Western Balkan region. Indeed, there is a common EU practice to group together countries, which share similar features, and then follow one-approach and working plan for all of them. However, there is no doubt that each of the countries carries their own peculiarities, which diverge significantly from each other. Most authors will treat the Balkans as a single unity, by arguing that some features, in term of socio-political organization, are similar for the whole region (Diamandouros and Larrabee, 2000:24-64 in Demetropoulou, 2002: 90).

In the same way, expert testimonies suggest that the Western Balkans, even if they do not have a single, common political culture, have undoubtedly similar features and a

very similar political culture typology. Almost, all the interviewees agreed that political culture in the region has deep historical roots. More specifically, they all related it to the influence of the great empires of the nineteenth century, communist regime and lack of previous democratic experiences.

The cross-country comparison seems to be moderately fruitful in analyzing the Europeanization of the Western Balkans. The vast literature on political culture argues that previous political experiences have staying-power peculiarities, which accompany countries for a long time (Almond and Vebra, 1980; Brown and Gray 1997; Dawisha and Parrott, 1997; Diamond, 1999; Rosenberg, 1995). The thesis scrutinizes if there is a correlation between previous political experiences and the Europeanization process of the Western Balkans. It investigates if Croatia has a significantly different previous political experience and if this influenced its earlier accession to EU, in comparison with the other countries in the region. A twofold strategy is used to explain the phenomenon. An extensive analysis of all previous political systems in the Balkans is beyond the scope of this thesis. In order to overcome methodological complications, the thesis relies on historical interpretations from different scholars, within a timeframe of the last 100 years. Secondly, testimonies from expert interviews are used for the purpose of validating the findings of the literature on these issues.

The thesis focuses on three important historical periods for the region: occupation by imperial powers, the communist regime and democratic transition. The four countries being researched have passed through a similar set of past experiences. They were under foreign conquest for centuries, belonging in this way to the most powerful



empires. However, they also experienced dissimilar historical processes. Albania, Serbia and Montenegro were under the Ottoman rule, while Croatia belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Also, Albania is the only country in the region, which did not belong to the Former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Their path toward democratization was similar, but had some substantial variations as well (fig. 3.1).

**Fig. 3.1 Compared demographic and historical data for Albania, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia**

Nationality	Language	Religion	Post WWII	Early modern period
Albanian	Albanian	Muslim	Albania	Ottoman Empire
Croats	Serbo-Croat	Catholic	SFR of Yugoslavia	Austro-Hungarian Empire
Montenegrin	Serbo-Croat	Serbian	SFR of Yugoslavia	Ottoman Empire
Serbs	Serbo-Croat	Orthodox	SFR of Yugoslavia	Ottoman Empire
		Orthodox		

### Historical Experiences

Dyker argues that Balkan countries under the Ottoman rule did not develop any indigenous tradition or adopt political attitudes of the state administration. The levels of participation into administrative position were parochial, superficial and limited (Dyker, 1979: 66-97). The opposite happened in Croatia. It had a favorable position in

the Habsburg kingdom. Some features such as internal self-government, the existence of a middle class, and Croatian influence in the public life of the kingdom, enabled a participation model beyond the parochial level. This is how Croatia gained an institutional memory and experience with the state apparatus, features that are absent in the case of the other countries of the region and which are considered to be extremely important in the Europeanization process. Moreover, the “Catholicism of Croats was an important badge of identity, reflects centuries of contacts with Germans, Magyars and Italians, and has provided powerful channel for orientation to the West in cultural matters” (Dyker, 1977:66). The whole region was dominated by foreign powers for many centuries. However the Croats have developed the habit of opposition for the authority of the government further than any nation in Europe (Macartney: 189 in Dyker 1966). The others have developed more submissive attitudes towards authority, having contributed in this way to the creation of a more traditional type of political culture.

In the same way, almost all the primary data provided by expert interviewees claim that the political culture of the region has deep historical roots. According to them, the Western Balkans (with the exemption of Croatia) experiences an authoritarian political culture. They address the limited impact of the transformative power of EU to the lack of a democratic political culture. Afrim Krasniqi, former presidential advisor in Albania, mentioned ‘the existence of a hybrid and rivalrous political culture in the region, with a mixed influence from the ottoman and communist regimes, which is basically authoritarian and hostile to the liberal elites and ideas.’ Part of this “ambiguous political culture is the sensitivity towards populist political alternatives and nationalist agendas. He stated that the Ottoman Empire left an oriental model in

organizing social, and political state in the Balkans. ‘Oriental’, in this context, means primitive and backwards. Croatia, on the contrary, “is more ‘*Western*’ than ‘*Balkanic*’, notably in the way Croatian society adapts to imported models of Western democracy and rule of law” –Afrim Krasniqi.

It is hard to underestimate the importance of the previous political experiences when analyzing the actual political context in the Balkans. European Integration is more than a political project for the region. Not only it is placed as a top-priority in the political agenda, but it also shapes the general socio-political skeleton of the society. The legacy of the communist past in the region may affect in many ways their Europeanization process. The thesis concentrates on how it effects social organization, participation and political attitudes of the Western Balkan society. It does not state that because of similar communist occurrence, these countries have followed similar political trajectories. On the other hand, it cannot neglect the existence of a communist legacy and its power in shaping political attitudes and the form of political organization of the society. Authoritarian tendencies are inherited from the previous political experiences of imperialistic occupation and communism and they might have a role in creating fragile undemocratic political systems afterwards (Pridham and Gallagher, 2000). In what way is Croatia an exemption from the rest of the Western Balkans?

After Tito’s death in 1980, Croatian communist leadership was the most docile in the communist apparatus in Yugoslavia. During this time, whether they, emigrated or remained in the country, the intellectual elite worked towards non-communist, reformist goals. The interview respondents argued that the Croatian diasporic

community abroad provided an exceptional help for Croatian accession into the EU. They lobbied, provided financial assistance, and actively pushed for reforms. They also acted as a norm socializer, transmitting Western values and standards to friends and relatives. During communism, Croats had liberal aspirations and beliefs and they were yearning for new political options, other than the predominant socialist model. Survey studies at the time showed that Croats were mild, tolerant, and cosmopolitan compared to other groups in Yugoslavia (Brown and Grey, 1977). A reemerging of Catholic sentiments and bonds gradually shaped the form of a Croatian Civil society at the time (Cohen, 1997). Prior to the dissolvent of communist regime, Croatia had its own forms of party pluralism. Ideas of independence, social reconciliation, nationalism emerged. Around 95% of 1500 people, irrespectively of age, occupation, political affiliation, etc. were interviewed before the first pluralist elections of 1990 and declared that a “multiparty system was the best guarantee for group expression” (Prpic 1993 in Dawisha et al., 1997:78). However, Croatia had difficult transition at the same way the others in the region. President Tudjman’s autocratic rule (1992-1999) significantly harmed the liberal political life and only after his death in 1999, did democracy flourish in Croatia.

“Although Serbia has the structures and institutions necessary for democratic government, there is no democratic culture” (Miller, 1997: 146). The authoritarian government of Slobodan Milosevic and the socially constructed myths of enemies everywhere, hampered Serbian society to embrace liberal values of democracy. The Serbia’s intelligentsia failed to embrace civic values of respect for the individual as opposed to the nation. The prevalence of a collective political culture hampered the creation of an anti-authoritarian opposition to the Milosevic regime (Miller, 1997:

146). The political experiences when part of the Yugoslavia and extreme nationalism played a key role in shaping attitudes and beliefs of the Serbian population. During the Yugoslav wars (1941-1945) 500, 000 Serbs were killed, more than any other ethnic group in the region. Sentiments of anger, blame, and mourning have been nourished since then. In Serbia, unlike Croatia, the free political voices in the '80s did not prompt pluralization, but encouraged a new orthodoxy of nationalism (Miller, 1997). In spite of a victimization psychology, Serbian citizens feel that they should be defended from a variety of threats, real or unreal. They feel victimized by regional and international actions and perceive that international community has been biased and unfair in judging conflicts of the past (Anastakasis, 2005). As a consequence, a political culture of intolerance was cultivated.

Montenegrians experience feelings of missing nationhood and statehood, because of a complex history of joint coexistence with the Serbs. There is a general, identity confusion if the population here is Serbian or not (Morrison, 2009). In fact, most of Montenegro political experience was under joint 'states' with Serbs from 1918 till 2006. Montenegro, unlike the other former countries of Yugoslavia, did not seek for independence. The country gained independence only in 2006. Before, and during communist rule, Belgrade was considered to be the political and spiritual leader of Montenegro. In contrast to other nations, the nationalism in Montenegro was more in terms of a traditional heroic concept (Brown and Gray, 1979).

In contrast, Albania is considered to be the country with the least democratic experience in the region. The communist regime enforced isolation and massive domestic oppression, leaving the country completely cut off from its neighbors and

other Western societies. A low level of participation in political activities is what best portrays the Albanian political culture. The society does not fully understand concepts of democratic governance, accountability of public officials or respect and tolerance for diverse opinions (Pano, 1979: 285-353). In this way, corruption, abusive power and excessive partisanship have characterized the political life since the fall of communism. The type of communist rule in Albania was significantly different from the one in Yugoslavia. The communist party dominated completely the political, economic, social and cultural life of the country. Any kind of individual or organized opposition was physically eliminated. The political system was highly centralized and no private initiative was allowed. After implementing the Chinese model of “Cultural Revolution”, religion was banned in the country and religious objects were totally destroyed. No free public space, political debate or articulations of interest were possible in Albania during communism (Pettifer, 2000: 237-249). In these conditions, there was impossible the formation of the class of intelligentsia. Furthermore, after the fall of communism, Albania did not experience same nationalism based on national myths such as the rest of the Western Balkans. “The Albanians somehow fell back to where they had started their history of the formation of the nation: scattered array of clans trying to survive” (Lubonja, 2002: 91-103)

Most of the authors argue that previous political experiences influence political patterns, by developing a particular political culture, which plays a major role in democratic transformation. However it is empirically impossible to determine which of the historical experiences are more relevant in shaping the political culture of a country. Often in between different regimes, there have been experiments with democratic forms of governance, but they did not last long. The short-lived

democracies in the Western Balkans did not produce long-lasting behavioral models (Vejvoda, 2000: 219-237). However, employing such logic means to accept the ‘path dependency’ model and consider each of the current problems as a legacy problem. This might simplify the magnitude of the problem in itself, but it reduces the chances to tackle it accurately.

### Social organization and civil society

It is necessary to understand the way in which the aforementioned factors inflict a distorted social organization. “One of the most difficult legacies of communism is the destruction of civil society”(Vejvoda, 2010). According to Putman, the political and civil society of a country resembles the face of the prevailing political culture (Putnam, 1993). In the Balkans case, “kinship, clans, family relations, social networks, social circles, intrigues, ties of loyalty, informal linkages, and a host of social obligations somehow inhibit people from fulfilling their official duties to formal institutions, or prevent organizations from operating in an efficient, transparent way. These are the famous "parallel structures" which played such a prominent role throughout the Balkans both before and during communism. In another sense, these parallel structures are the true civil society, the social self organization to fulfill grass roots needs in a hostile political environment”(Sampson, 2002). “The legacy of the totalitarian regime may favor elements of ‘uncivil’ civil society rather than a civil one” (Dawisha and Parrot, 1997: 26).

Successful completion of the membership tasks with the EU includes a strong cooperation between national governments and civil society. The latest EU progress

reports for Albania, Montenegro and Serbia, confirm that the cooperation between civil society and government is weak and to some extent completely missing (European Commission (EC), 2014). Albania, despite an improvement in adopting a proper legal framework, suffers from inadequate capacity to ensure the right cooperation between the government and civil society sector (EC, 2014). In case of Montenegro and Serbia, civil society operates in a quite hostile environment and the relations with the government are “overly adversarial”, especially on issues concerning human rights and rule of law (EC, 2014). As much as the countries approve the EU legislative framework and adopt EU recommendations in regulating civil society issues, they fail to consistently implement them in practice. Moreover, civil society organizations lack the capacities and resources to monitor, produce effective policy alternatives or have a unified attitude in standing up for the protection of fundamental rights. The civil society sector is largely, overly depended on public or foreign funding, making it so predominantly vulnerable. Efficiency and transparency are massively missing components of these social organizations. In fact, “in thousands of registered NGOs, no more than 10% are truly active” (Sampson, 2002).

The question raised here is how much do traditional institutions obstruct Europeanization? Is the West completely devoid of these parallel structures? The fact that Western foreign assistance tries to transform these parallel institutions shows that they are obstacles for transformation. The Western projects ...”are about replacing loyalty to persons with a Western model of loyalty to an institution and its principles”(ibid, 2002). The presence of these parallel structures and traditional ways of social organization might obscure the transformation process of Europeanization. In the EU for example, people rely on institutions instead of informal family/peer relations. Not



that the last ones are completely non-existent in the European context, but they do not feed a system of patronage, nepotism, clientism and other forms of favoritism. At least, they are largely punishable in moralistic and legal terms. For example, Croatia is the only country in the region where a high-ranked official (the prime minister), was sentenced to 10 years in prison for corruption. On the contrary, in the rest of the Balkans, informal structures are socially acceptable and harshly inhibit a fair, equal and merit system. Gentian Elezi, the Albanian Deputy Minister of EI states that “the ‘culture of punishment’ is certainly and considerably missing in the rest of the region”. In the case of the Balkans, a model of legal contraction, credit arrangements has not replaced yet the trust mechanisms.

### **Fundamental values and Political expectations**

The EU demands for accession principally reflect the general democratic norms, which are framed under the Copenhagen Criteria. “European integration was thus based on a pan-European, liberal, both antifascist and anticommunist ideology and identity”(Schimmelfennig, 2001: 65). Western Balkans attempts in accommodating EU policy requirements have raised some uncertainties as to whether they can really transform their basic structures or modify their political behavior. The EU also seeks for a transformation in the region (Borzel, 2011). “Most Western Balkan countries consist of borderline cases of transformation or ‘deficient democratizers’ that face unfavorable domestic conditions and share a poor record of reforms” (Elbasani, 2013: 6). Political culture is part of those domestic conditions, which play a facilitating role for Europeanization (Borzel and Risse, 2000). Among others, the components of the

political culture are the fundamental political beliefs and values of a society (Almond and Verba, 1981; Brown and Gray, 1977).

Are the political beliefs and values of the Western Balkan society, favorable or unfavorable conditions for transformation? People of any society have durable cultural beliefs and values, which considerably effect political outcomes at any level. One may argue that these values of the Western Balkans inhibit EU transformative power. This implies that those countries, which have already achieved some level of transformation, have different values and beliefs. Croatia, as an EU member has already achieved some level of transformation. For this purpose it is used as a control case study and it is compared with the rest of the region in terms of political beliefs and values. Empirical investigation from surveys and primary data from the interviews are used to examine some of the attitudes of people towards current or previous political systems. “The evolution and persistence of mass-based democracy requires the emergence of certain supportive habits and attitudes among the general public” (Inglehart, 1998: 1204). By using the cross-national comparison method, the thesis examines the degree to which Western Balkans citizens are attached to sentiments such as freedom, equality, nationalism, individualism, tolerance, etc.

## Political Participation

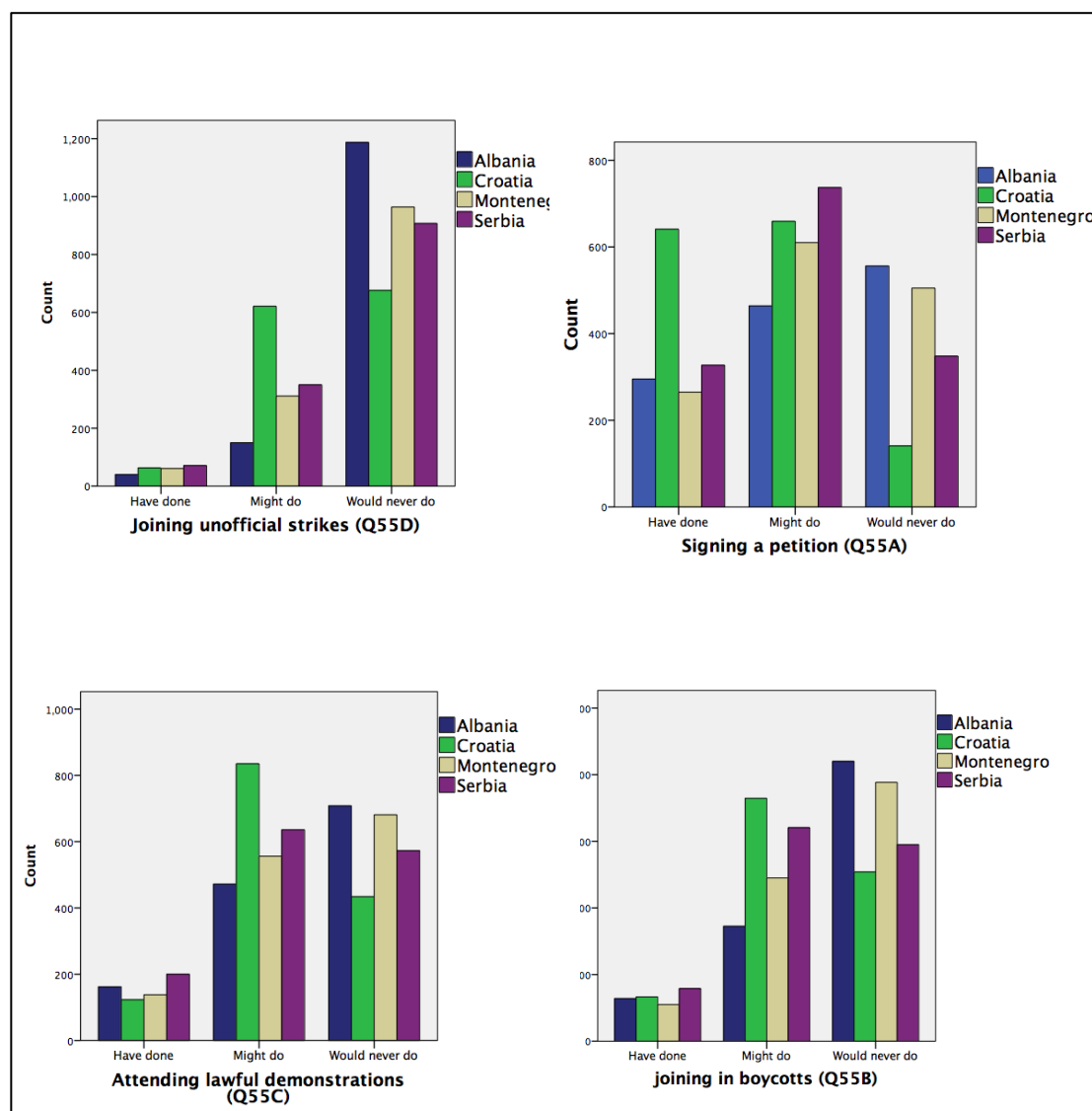
**Table 3.1: Parliamentary elections turnout in the Balkans**

	2003	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Albania		48.73				50.77	
Bosnia-Herzegovina			54.94				56.49
Croatia	61.65			59.58			
FYR Macedonia			55.98		57.99		
Kosovo				44.90			45.62
Montenegro			72.05			66.19	
Serbia				60.57	61.35		

Source: IDEA (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) voter turnout

Citizens in the Western Balkans do not believe that they are able to influence the political process and thus they show apathy for social and political mobilization. The level of political participation across the region is extremely low (Jano, 2008). “The communist legacy left sentiments of anti-politics, cynicism and apathy” (Vejvoda, 2000).

Participation consists of political activities, which go beyond than just conventional engagement in public issues, such as electoral participation (Kirbis, 2012). To estimate the extent to which low participation rate can make a difference in speeding the Europeanization process, it is important to examine cross-national cultural orientations in the Western Balkans. The Voter Turnout Database points out that in the last decades, electoral participation in the Western Balkans has been relatively low, around a 50% voter turnout (IDEA, 2011). Some authors have noticed that in post-communist democracies, citizens with authoritarian attitudes tend to participate in electoral voting or party membership (Letki, 2004). However, these countries score low in other forms of political participations such as protest, signing petitions, boycotting, etc. (fig. 3.1).

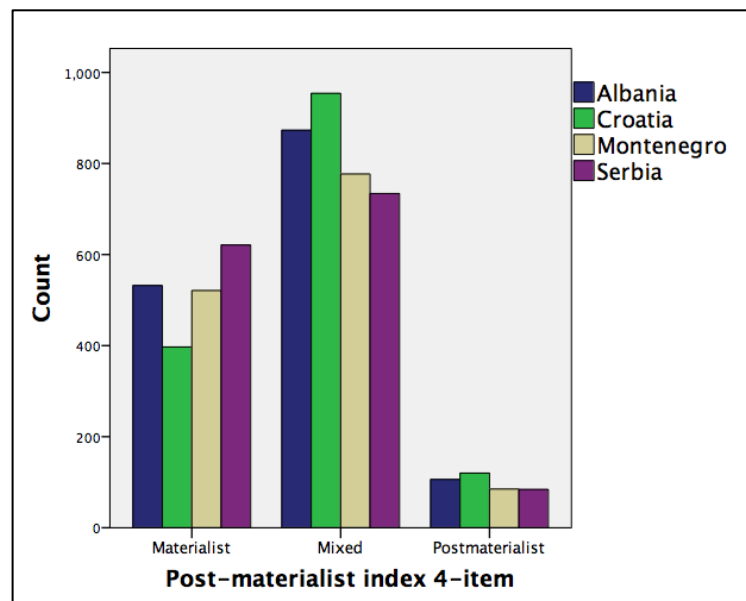


**Fig. 3.2. Non-conventional political participation (EVS Integrated Dataset, 2008)**

The existence of a protest participation culture is fundamental for an “effective” democracy (Inglehart and Welzel 2007). In the data provided by European Value System, the largest European database on value system indicators, it is clearly shown that generally Croats tend to participate more in non conventional political activities, such as signing petitions, joining in boycotts, attending lawful demonstrations and joining unofficial strikes (EVS, 2008: Fig. 1).

### Materialist/non-materialist values

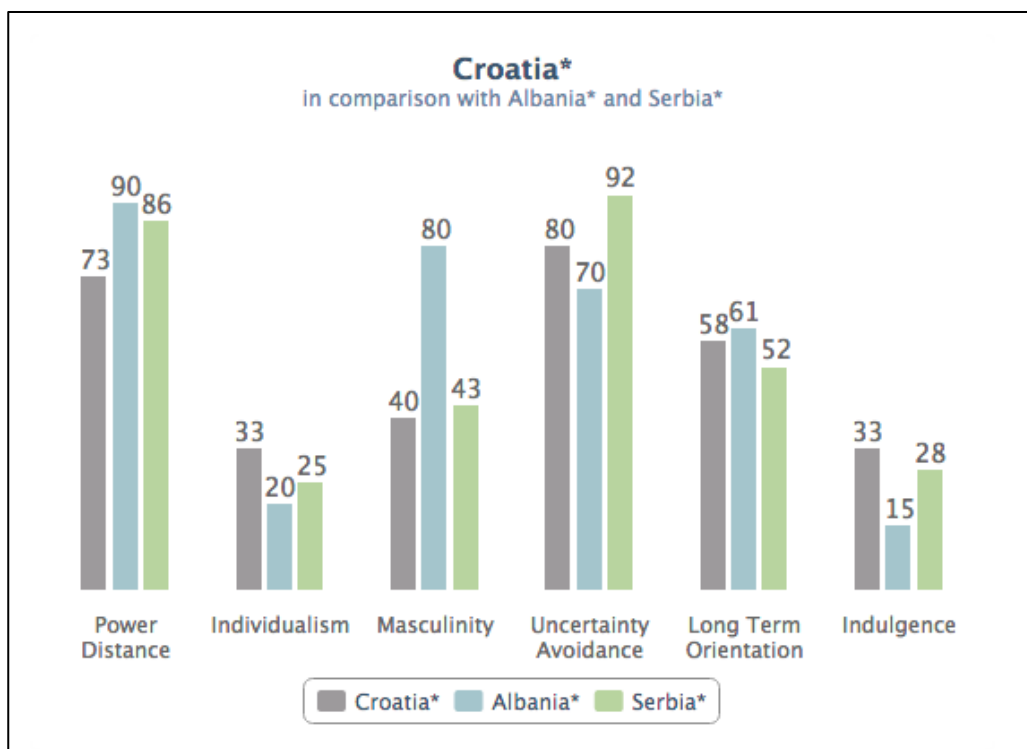
Materialist citizens focus on fulfilling basic functional needs, while post-materialists predominantly focus on other activities, such as participation in public issues, which emphasize self-expression and the quality of life (e.g. environmental protection (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). Data provided by EVS 2008, shows that Croatia scores higher in the post materialist index compared to Albania, Serbia and Montenegro (Fig. 3.2). The values that motivate people of the latter countries are driven by economic concerns. People in the Western Balkans are concerned by materialist values, such as employment, costs of life, free education, and health care (Tales of two generations Survey, 2011).



**Fig. 3.3 Post Materialist Index**

### Individualism, Power Distance, Indulgence

Former communist principles of “brotherhood and unity” indisputably narrowed the existence of personal interests. Private interests would not be only inadmissible, destructive, but would also be considered as enemy actions (Brown and Gray, 1979). During the communist regime people remained passive, hardly giving any expression of their particular interests, due to the consequences of opposing the government. Collectivism encourages an authoritative style of government, where the political leader manifests himself as a father of the nation and citizens should follow with respect and obedience (Pržulj and Kostadinović, 2012).



**Fig. 3.4. Societal values (Hofstede, Values Survey Module 2013).**

\*Unfortunately, there is no data available for Montenegro.

The Balkan region has inherited a spirit of collectivism instead of individualism (fig 3.4). Although it scores higher than Albania and Serbia in the individualism scale (33 in comparison to 20 and 25 respectively), Croatia is still considered a collectivistic society. Loyalty characterizes a collectivist culture and it has prevalence over other societal rules and regulations.

#### *Power Distance*

According to Hofstede model, power distance is defined as the extent to which people accept the unequal distribution of power. Albania is the country, which scores higher on this dimension, meaning that people tend to accept the prevailing hierarchical order. In these cultures, the political leader is considered to be the benevolent autocrat. Croats seems to score lower than the two other countries, but it still scores higher in accepting inequality.

#### *Indulgence*

“Indulgence here refers to the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses. Croatia's low score of 33 in this dimension marks it as a restrained country. Societies with a low score in this dimension have a tendency to cynicism and pessimism” (Hofstede, 2013).

#### *Institutional distrust*

A civic culture expresses high levels of interpersonal trust (Almond and Verba, 2008; Inglehart, 2001; Putnam, 2000). In the Western Balkans, the level of distrust in political institutions is high and sentiments of dissatisfaction and pessimism are deeply rooted in people's mindsets. Trust in institutions and personal identification with political community is what constitutes a democratic political culture (Dalton and Shin, 2014). A 2011 survey by the European Fund for the Balkans revealed that the level of trust in political and administrative institutions is very low for the Western Balkans region (The European Fund for the Balkans, Survey "The Tale of Two Generations", 2011). Croatia does not substantially differ from the rest of the region.

#### *Lifestyle intolerance*

Another measure of non-democratic political culture includes the concept of *lifestyle intolerance*. Lifestyle tolerance measures the "emancipative" values, which are essential components of an effective democracy (Inglehart and Welzel 2006). According to Kirbis model, the tolerance indicator shows the extents to which society accept matters such as "divorce", "abortion" and "homosexuality"(Kirbis, 2012). According to data from EVS 2008, the Western Balkans are unlikely to accept "abortion" or "homosexuality" and Croatia does not seems to deviate from the general trend. However, the entire region seems to be more open to "divorce" with only 24 % rejection rate (EVS, 2008).

Usually, the Western Balkan region is intolerant of unorthodox behavior and ideas. Moreover, ethnic conflicts and war, created a psyche of fear towards neighboring states. Generally, the lack of emancipative values, historical legacies and a hostile



culture towards others, hinders mutual understanding and political dialogue, which are fundamental mechanisms for the Europeanization process. As Borzel and Risse claim “a consensus-oriented political culture allows for the sharing of adaptational costs thus facilitating the accommodation to pressure for adaptation”(Borzel and Risse, 2003: 68). Furthermore, authors like Demetropoulou add other social elements, which impact the transformation process for the Western Balkans, such as:

- “Anti-urban and anti-modern mentalities
- Lack of middle class
- Social discontent by shock effects
- Lack of new social structures”

(Demetropoulou, 2002; 91).

## CHAPTER IV

### Analysis

The data provided by the surveys suggests that Croatia performs statistically better than Albania, Montenegro and Serbia in many indicators, such as participation in political activities, individualism, and post-materialist values. However, the scale of disparities between countries is not large enough, to make a significant cultural difference between them. In other indicators, such as emancipative values, trust in political institutions, support for democracy, Croatia scores equal or lower than the rest of the Balkans. Certainly, as stated by Inglehart, “different societies are characterized to very different degrees by a specific syndrome of political cultural attitudes...and that they have major political consequences, being closely linked to

the viability of democratic institutions” (Inglehart, 1998: 1203). However, it is empirically impossible to evaluate, which particular attitudes of the political culture shape more substantially the political outcomes of a society in terms of democratization or European transformation. For example, one cannot tell if political participation patterns are more important for a functional democracy than the emancipative values of a society. The matter might still be framed under any model of the democratization literature, but in reality it does offer an empirical authentication.

The correlation between emancipative norms and beliefs and consolidated democracy is still ambiguous and not fully established. It is still unclear if democratic attitudes are a consequence or a precondition for democracy (See more at Hadenius and Teorel, 2005). Also, cultural differences might be durable, but they are not completely irreversible. It is understandable that for the Western Balkan region, which experienced more than four decades under communist rule, where freedom of speech, media, independent organization were suppressed, civic values would not emerge overnight. However, recent trends have demonstrated that recently, Europe (its norms and values) has become the epicenter around which a new collective identity of the Balkans has begun to develop (Bechev, 2011).

Moreover, despite the vast encouragement for active participation in order for democracy to flourish, there is an increasing trend almost everywhere in the world of non-participation in political activities. Many studies, for instance, point out that countries with high levels of socio-economic development have lower rates of political participation. For example in Slovenia, the participation rate is lower than in

any other former Yugoslav republic, despite its high levels of economic development (Kirbis, 2012).

Many political culture studies also neglect the existence of subcultures and influential groups and their role in shaping transformation. The Western Balkans for example has a very young population. Around 20% of the population of the country was born after the dissolution of the communist regime (OECD, 2013). ‘The Tale of Generation’ survey states that there are no significant differences between generations in the Western Balkans. The youth of the region senses the same level of pessimism, apathy for social mobilization, and mistrust in institutions, as their parents (The tale of two generations, 2011). However, the survey does not fully grasp every dimension of the value system and fundamental beliefs of the young generation.

“The success of Europeanization rests on local will. All South East European countries have had problems with their reform process as a result of domestic resistance to external pressure” (Anastasakis, 2005: 85). This thesis focuses in the mass attitudes and political beliefs. However, political elites and bureaucrats also produce domestic resistance to change. “Political elites are ineffective, corrupt, or illegitimate, human capital is limited with a tendency to migrate abroad, technical expertise is scarce, public administrations are anemic, and civil societies are too dependent or indifferent to react to changes generated from abroad.”(Anastasakis, 2005: 85).

The Balkans are considered to be peripheral to Western Europe, not only in geographic terms, but especially in modernization, state and civil formation (Bechev, 2011). One of the most qualified authors in 'Balkanization' issues, Maria Todorova discusses in her enlightening book "Imagining the Balkans" how the Balkans are considered as 'the backward', 'the primitive', compared to the rest of Europe. "What has been emphasized about the Balkans is that its inhabitants do not care to conform to the standards of behavior devised as normative by and for the civilized world" (Todorova, 1997:3). She argues that most of these generalizations derive from stereotypes and reductions than real facts and data. Moreover, she claims that modernization has eroded the 'Balkaness' left from the Ottoman influence, and the region has evolved independently from orientalism (Todorova, 1997). The interviewees also expressed that there is a pejorative understanding of the word 'Balkans' and they there is a tendency coming from domestic leadership to replace the concept of the 'Western Balkans' with the 'Southeastern Europe'.

Wars, conflicts and instability are often attributed to the Balkans, dismissing sometime the fact that they are not purely Balkan's phenomenon. EU in itself is a project developed in the climate of conflicts, wars, and intransigency. Political culture might foster or hinder the magnitude of the transformation for the region, but it cannot be considered as a preliminary condition for it to happen. For example, it is believed that France and Germany have completely different political cultures. Whereas France has a more conflictual type of culture, Germany is characterized from a loyal and constrictive type of political culture. "However, social mobility and economic changes have modified cleavages and blunted partisan positions" (Eva

Kolinsky and John Gaffney, 1991: 1). Today, both countries represent two of the most fundamental pillars of the EU project.

On the other hand, when asked if European Integration of the region depends on the values and attitudes of Western Balkans citizens, and if these values are different to those of EU, interviewees responded that there is nothing such a single, dominant European political culture. However, they said that intuitively, when one mentions European values, immediately associates it with liberal ideology, democracy, rule of law, and protection of human rights. However, it was also stated that in times of economic crises, Europe seems to forget the common values of unity, tolerance and freedom. Member states tend to turn back to their national value system, which is partially xenophobic, intolerant and close-minded. One of the respondents stressed that cultural specificities are not and cannot be an official precondition for the European Integration process, but in practice, the long-lasting integration process of Turkey poses serious doubts on the accuracy of this fact.

In conclusion, all the interviewees agreed that Croatia differs substantially from the other countries of the region and most of them attributed this fact to Croatian historical impact from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in comparison with the rest of the Balkans, which had an eminent Ottoman influence. However, in the same way, all of the respondents agreed that this was not the only reason why Croatia gained EU membership. They expressed that the country responded quickly and efficiently to the mechanisms of conditionality, mainly because an efficient and competent public administration, which is inherited from the previous political regimes. The high level of educated people during the communist regime and a mobilized and powerful

lobbying diaspora were also mentioned as indirect, favorable conditions for membership. Moreover, some from the respondents claimed that Croatia had a particular German and Austrian support, probably allied with historical factors. It is particularly interesting the viewpoint of the Albanian Deputy Minister of EI, Mr. Gentian Elezi, who believes that regardless outstanding efforts to meet the accession criteria in time, the Croatian government also used a very efficient strategy to accelerate the process. The strategy consisted of repositioning Croatia as identical to its European neighbours in values and traditions. A massive national program was proven to be successful in creating the image of a 'European Croatia'. So, indirectly Mr. Elezi agrees that there is a correlation between Integration and cultural values and the more European values you have or you "pretend to have", the closer to EU you get. In fact, this belief has gained an academic recognition. Many scholars have investigated if the determinant factor of Croatian accession into EU was Croatian reposition as identical in history and culture to its Western European neighbors (Rivera, 2008).

### Potential for further research and possible policy considerations

Due to the limited scope of the project, some countries from the Western Balkan region are left out of the focus. Although the validity of the findings in here can be applied to the rest of the region, an extensive analysis is still recommended. The picture for the whole region of the Western Balkans would be clearer if more sophisticated statistical tools, (such as an extensive dimension of system-values for each of the countries and an expansion in the number of cases studies into the big-N cases) were included. Moreover, EU Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), with 16 partner

countries in Eastern Europe and the southern Mediterranean, is an integral part of EU's foreign policy. EU would definitely be more successful in transferring guidelines, achieving the closest economic integration and political association, if it considers domestic factors of third countries, whether in cultural or non-cultural terms.

The existing Europeanization literature for region almost unanimously agrees that EU approach and involvement in the region is not entirely adequate (See more at: Elbasani, 2013). The pressure of conditionally appears to be necessary for Integration, but it is not proving to be effective for transformation. The EU had not only a clearer approach in treating CEE countries, but also a real strategy, instruments and vision, which seem that are lacking in the case of the Western Balkans (Borzel, 2011; Demetropoulou, 2002; Vachudova, 2005). The EU has expressed an unequivocal support for the European Integration of the Western Balkans and different mechanisms have been involved in the process. However, there is a general perception in the Balkans that after the economic crisis, the EU has disengaged from the region. As Demetropoulou stresses, "the EU has promoted an approach that aims to keep the Balkans (especially the Western Balkans) within Europe but outside the EU institutional core" (Demetropoulou, 2002:102).

The interviewees also supported the idea that EU is not fully engaged in the Western Balkans, or at least not in the same way it was for the CEE countries. They mentioned that there is lack of specific instruments, special funds and other incentives to foster the acceleration of the Integration Process. The latest European summit on Western Balkans, which was held in Berlin in 2014, extensively focused on economic and

connectivity issues, such as energy infrastructure, transport networks, regional cooperation and economic advancement. It looks like EU is not willing to bear anymore the burden of future unstable economies within the union. However, the role of EU as a source of domestic change cannot be underestimated (Goetz, 2001). The EU has a great potential as an ‘external socializer’ or as a ‘norm entrepreneur’ for the region (Borzel, 2011). The interviewees argued that the Western Balkans are in favor of a more intrusive role of the union in domestic affairs, differing from other MS in this regard. The main reason behind this statement involves the disillusionment of the local people with politics and the high levels of institutional mistrust. With the exception of Serbia, the rest of the region will consent if EU shares beliefs and institutional practices. “The EU is unlikely to deploy much transformative power in its neighborhood as long as it does not adjust its “accession tool box” to countries whose statehood is seriously limited” (Borzel, 2011). The thesis does not imply that it is ineffective for EU to transfer policies, laws and procedures and it does not suggest that the EU should reconsider its conditionality mechanisms. However, it suggests that for a stronger transformative power, the EU might consider transferring simultaneously with the formal patterns of influence, the informal ones, which consists of shared beliefs and norms’ and ‘ways of doing things’(Grabbe, 2005). A quote from Stefano Bianchini describes best the purpose of these implications: “Balkan political cultures are perfectly able to interact with Western European political cultures, so that the future of Balkan democratization will mainly depended on these interactions” (Pridham and Gallangher, 2000:81).

## Conclusions



The thesis project starts by scrutinizing the existing studies on the Europeanization of the Western Balkans. While most of it focuses on the role of informal institutions in accommodating EU influence or the EU impact on domestic institutions, another, smaller, but fast-growing literature focuses on domestic factors and their role in distressing the transformative power of EU. The domestic setting appeared to be the perfect place where to look for explanations for a long-lasting turbulent process for the Western Balkans. This latter approach and the model of ‘mediation factors’ offered by Borzel and Risse, was employed throughout the research (Borzel and Risse, 2000). Europeanization is a process, which seeks a systemic transformation and a structural accommodation (Demetropoulou, 2002). At the same time, it is a process, which can be facilitated or hampered by domestic factors in prospective or actual member states. In fact, it is notable that the Western Balkans are lagging behind EU. It took Croatia 23 years from the dissolution of the communist regime to enter the EU. On the other hand, Serbia, Montenegro, and Albania are candidate countries, with Serbia having already started the negotiations for accession. Therefore, an enlargement scenario in the south east of Europe seems unrealistic for at least one more decade. In short, the transformation process seems not happening in the region. Accommodation of EU incentives is in the absorption levels, without modification of collective understandings or beliefs. Europeanization happens mainly because of the conditionality mechanisms rather than the appropriateness of ‘European ways of doing things’.

The research investigates the extent to which political culture of the region is responsible for a deficient transformation. The research is based both on secondary data from historical sources and surveys, and from primary data, collected from

expert interviews. A cross-country comparison method is employed, using Croatia as a control variable while examining its performance in political culture indicators in comparison with the rest of the Balkans.

The findings confirm that the citizens in the Western Balkan, in overall, score low in indicators of political participation and emancipative values. Croatia holds a slightly better position in the data offered from the surveys, however its scores are still low if compared to a normative, global level. Unfortunately, the data from surveys are collected before Croatia entered EU. It would be interesting to analyze the same data after this period and evaluate the transformative power of EU after accession. Differences between Croatia and the rest of the Western Balkans indicate a correlation between previous historical experiences and current political attitudes. Authoritarian occupations, the communist legacy and a severe transitional process towards democratization have undoubtedly shaped the mentality of the citizens in the region. However, it is difficult to evaluate the degree to which political culture is significant for the process of Europeanization. Nonetheless, it plays a salient role in the process of transformation, in congruence with other, multiple factors, varying from organic to structural ones. In the same way, the testimonies from the interviews suggested that the complexity of the region does not allow the process of Europeanization to be attributed to a single particular factor. However, the respondents also implied that political culture plays an important role in shaping the Europeanization outcomes in the region and that indisputably integration is facilitated by a democratic political culture. They concluded by stressing that a limited democratic political culture might restrict the transformative power of EU in the Western Balkan region and the process might be prolonged, if not terminated.

The thesis draws a few tentative conclusions for several reasons. First, it is difficult to analyze the whole region from an entirely socio-cultural perspective. Not only because there are multiple factors involved in the process, but also because different countries manifest them in different forms. Survey data gives a limited reflection of the citizen's real perceptions, attitudes and beliefs toward the political system. Secondly, there is a risk of falling into generalizations or stereotypes. It is clear that the historical past of the Balkans has affected the country's course of post-communist transformation. However, 25 years of democracy, even when it has been mostly fragile, unconsolidated, and flawed, has relativized the past legacy to some extent. The legacy of the past is not immutable. The thesis closes by arguing that the Western Balkan countries should not be considered as hopeless cases of Europeanization. Previous patterns of political attitudes can be used in favor of change. After this, transformation is next to come.

## Appendix

### i. Interview list

	Country	Name	Expertise profile	Place
1.	Albania	Afrim Krasniqi	Former Presidential Advisor; Professor	Email
2.	Albania	Gentian Elezi	Deputy Minister of European Integration	Face to face
3.	Croatia	Andrea Covic	PR in the European Parliament Information Office in Croatia	Email
4.	Montenegro	Jovana Marovic	Working Group for the EU accession negotiations - Chapter 23  Former Counselor for European Integration Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Montenegro	Email
5.	Serbia	Vladica Jovanovic	Civil initiative Program Coordinator for Public Policies at Civic Initiatives	Email
6.	Serbia	Mina Lazarevi	Program Coordinator at Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence	Email

### ii. Interview questions

Europeanization of the Western Balkans  
**Impact of Political Culture**

1.	Do you believe there is a single political culture, which is common to the whole region? If there is any, what particular features does it have?
2.	Do you notice differences among different countries of the Western Balkans in terms of 'political culture'? If so, what are they?
3.	What people associate with "Western European" and "Western Balkans" in cultural terms?
4.	What makes Croatia a successful story and why did it become a member of EU before any of the countries in the region? Are Croatians more European than the rest of the Western Balkan people?
5.	Some people argue that the EU is a social construction with a collective identity, sharing common norms and values. In your opinion, to what extent does the EU integration depend on the values and common habits of the candidate countries?
6.	Keeping in mind that the region has serious problems in implementing the rule of law, fighting corruption and respecting human and minority rights, do you believe there are cultural orientations behind these failures? Are the EU existing MS completely immune to these problems?
7.	How do you evaluate the EU engagement in the region? Do you believe conditionality mechanisms are sufficient in helping Western Balkans enter EU as it did with Central and Easter European countries? How can the EU do better?

## Bibliography

Almond, G. A. and Verba, S. (eds.) (1989) *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. United States: Sage Publications

Anastasakis, O. (2005). Europeanization of the Balkans, *The Brown J. World Affairs.*, 12, 77

Brown, A., & Gray, J. (1979). *Political culture and political change in communist states*. Macmillan.

Balfour, R. and Stratulat, C. (2011) 'The democratic transformation of the Balkans', *E P C*, 66

Bechev, D. (2011) 'Constructing South East Europe', doi: 10.1057/9780230306318

Borzel, T. (2013) 'When Europeanization Hits Limited Statehood The Western Balkans as a Test Case for the Transformative Power of Europe', *KFG Working Paper*, 30doi: 10.4324/9780203386064

Borzel, T. A. (2002) 'Member State Responses to Europeanization', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40(2), pp. 193–214. doi: 10.1111/1468-5965.00351

Börzel, T. A. (2011) 'When Europe hits ... beyond its borders: Europeanization and the near abroad', *Comparative European Politics*, 9(4-5), pp. 394–413. doi: 10.1057/cep.2011.8

Börzel, T. A. and Risse, T. (2000) 'When Europe Hits Home: Europeanization and Domestic Change', *SSRN Electronic Journal*, doi: 10.2139/ssrn.302768

Börzel, T. A. and Risse, T. (2011) 'When Europe Hits Home: Europeanization and Domestic Change', *SSRN Electronic Journal*, doi: 10.2139/ssrn.302768

Börzel, T. and Risse, T. (2003) *The Politics of Europeanization*. Edited by Kevin Featherstone and Claudio M Radaelli. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press

Börzel, T. and Risse, T. (2009) 'The Transformative Power of Europe The European Union and the Diffusion of Ideas', *KFG working Paper*, 1

Dalton, R. J. and Shin, D. C. (2014) 'Reassessing the Civic Culture Model', *From Allegiant to Assertive Citizens*, pp. 91–115. doi: 10.1017/cbo9781139600002.009

Dawisha, K. and Parrott, B. (1997) *Politics, power, and the struggle for democracy in South-East Europe*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press

Demetropoulou, L. (2002). Europe and the Balkans: Membership aspiration, EU involvement and Europeanization capacity in South Eastern Europe. *Southeast European Politics*, 3(2-3), 87-106.

Dyker, D (1979). (ed )Brown, A., & Gray, J. *Political culture and political change in communist states*. Macmillan 66-97

EC (2014) *Albania Progress Report*. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_documents/2014/20141008-albania-progress-report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20141008-albania-progress-report_en.pdf) (Accessed: 1 July 2015)

EC (2014) *Montenegro Progress Report*. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_documents/2014/20141008-montenegro-progress-report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20141008-montenegro-progress-report_en.pdf) (Accessed: 1 July 2015)

EC (2014) *Serbia Progress Report*. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_documents/2014/20140108-serbia-progress-report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20140108-serbia-progress-report_en.pdf) (Accessed: 1 July 2015)

Elbasani, A. (ed.) (2013) *European Integration and the Western Balkans: European Enlargement, Domestic Challenges and Institutional Challenges*. 1st edn. London: Routledge

EVS (2008) Available at: [http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/frmShowpage?v\\_page\\_id=9002471901798834](http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/frmShowpage?v_page_id=9002471901798834) (Accessed: 1 July 2015)

Featherstone, K. and Radaelli, C. M. (eds.) (2003) *The Politics of Europeanization*. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press

Formisano, R. P. (2001) 'The Concept of Political Culture', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 31(3), pp. 393–426. doi: 10.1162/002219500551596

Freyburg, T. and Richter, S. (2010) 'National identity matters: the limited impact of EU political conditionality in the Western Balkans', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 17(2), pp. 263–281. doi: 10.1080/13501760903561450

Gaffney, J. and Kolinsky, E. (1991) 'Political Culture in France and Germany: A Contemporary Perspective.', *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, 68(1), doi: 10.2307/2620523

Goetz, K. H. (2001) 'Making sense of post-communist central administration: modernization, Europeanization or Latinization?', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 8(6), pp. 1032–1051. doi: 10.1080/13501760110098332

Grabbe, H. (2002) 'Europeanization Goes East: Power and Uncertainty in the EU Accession Process', *The Politics of Europeanization*, pp. 303–328. doi: 10.1093/0199252092.003.0013

Grabbe, H. (2006) *The EU's Transformative Power: Europeanization Through Conditionality in Central and Eastern Europe*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Hadenius, A. and Teorell, J. (2005) 'Cultural and economic prerequisites of democracy: Reassessing recent evidence', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 39(4), pp. 87–106. doi: 10.1007/bf02686166

Hofstede, G. (2013) Available at: <http://geert-hofstede.com/croatia.html> (Accessed: 1 July 2015)

Inglehart, R. (1988) 'The Renaissance of Political Culture', *The American Political Science Review*, 82(4), doi: 10.2307/1961756

Inglehart, R. and Welzel, C. (2001) 'Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy', doi: 10.1017/cbo9780511790881

Jano, D. (2008) 'From "Balkanization" to "Europeanization": The Stages of Western Balkans Complex Transformations', *L'Europe en Formation*, 349 - 350(3), doi: 10.3917/eufor.349.0055

Kacarska, S. (2012) *20 YEARS AFTER 1991: THE TALE OF TWO GENERATIONS*. Available at: <http://balkanfund.org/spd/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/pp6.pdf> (Accessed: 1 June 2015)

Karatnycky, A. and Ackerman, P. (2005) 'How freedom is Won: From Civic Resistance to Durable Democracy', *Washington DC Freedom House*,

Kirbiš, A. (2012) 'Political Participation and Non-democratic Political Culture in Western Europe, East-Central Europe and Post-Yugoslav Countries', *Democracy in Transition*, pp. 225–251. doi: 10.1007/978-3-642-30068-4\_12

Letki, N. (2004) 'Socialization for Participation? Trust, Membership, and Democratization in East-Central Europe', *Political Research Quarterly*, 57(4), pp. 665–679. doi: 10.1177/106591290405700414

Lubonja, F. (2002) *Albanian Identities: Myth and History*. Edited by Bernd J Fischer and Stephanie Schwandner. Indiana University Press

March, J. G. and Olsen, J. P. (2011) 'The Logic of Appropriateness', *Oxford Handbooks Online*, doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199604456.013.0024

Morrison, K. (2008). *Montenegro: a modern history*. IB Tauris.

Noutcheva, G. and Aydin-Düzgit, S. (2012) 'Lost in Europeanisation: The Western Balkans and Turkey', *West European Politics*, 35(1), pp. 59–78. doi: 10.1080/01402382.2012.631313



OECD (2013) *JOBS FOR YOUTH: HOW THE BALKAN COUNTRIES COMPARE?*. Available at: <http://wiiw.ac.at/jobs-for-youth-how-the-balkan-countries-compare--dlp-2999.pdf> (Accessed: 1 July 2015)

Olsen, J. P. (2002) 'The Many Faces of Europeanization', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40(5), pp. 921–952. doi: 10.1111/1468-5965.00403

Pano, N. (1997) *Politics, power, and the struggle for democracy in South-East Europe*. Edited by Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrot. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press

Pettifer, J. (2000) *Experimenting with Democracy: Regime Change in the Balkans (Routledge Studies of Societies in Transition, 13)*. Edited by Geoffrey Pridham and Tom Gallagher. New York: Routledge

Pržulj, Ž. and Kostadinović, S. (2012) 'Profile of a Leader in the Western Balkans Cultural Environment', *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)*, 2319-7064

Putnam, R. (1993) 'Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy', *Foreign Affairs*, 72(3), doi: 10.2307/20045657

Rivera, L. A. (2008) 'Managing "Spoiled" National Identity: War, Tourism, and Memory in Croatia', *American Sociological Review*, 73(4), pp. 613–634. doi: 10.1177/000312240807300405

Rosenberg, T. (1995). Overcoming the legacies of dictatorship. *FOREIGN AFFAIRS-NEW YORK*-, 74, 134-134.

Sampson, S. (2002) *Weak States, Uncivil Societies and Thousands of NGOs: Western Democracy Export as Benevolent Colonialism in the Balkans*. Available at: [http://www.anthrobase.com/Txt/S/Sampson\\_S\\_01.htm](http://www.anthrobase.com/Txt/S/Sampson_S_01.htm) (Accessed: 1 July 2015)

Schimmelfennig, F. (2001) 'The Community Trap: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action, and the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union', *International Organization*, 55(1), pp. 47–80. doi: 10.1162/002081801551414

Schimmelfennig, F. (2003) 'The Community Trap: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action, and the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union', *International Organization*, 55(1), pp. 47–80. doi: 10.1162/002081801551414

Sedelmeier, U. (2006) 'Europeanisation in new member and candidate states', *Living Reviews in European Governance*, doi: 10.12942/lreg-2006-3

Sedelmeier, U., Rev, L. and Euro (2011) 'Europeanisation in new member and candidate states', *Living Rev. Euro. Gov.*, 6

Vachudova, M. A. (2005). *Europe undivided: democracy, leverage, and integration after communism*. Oxford University Press.

Vejvoda, I. (2000) *Experimenting with Democracy: Regime Change in the Balkans (Routledge Studies of Societies in Transition, 13)*. Edited by Geoffrey Pridham and Tom Gallagher. New York: Routledge

Vejvoda, I. (2010) 'The Balkans: an Up-date', *State of the Union 2010*, pp. 111–115. doi: 10.1007/978-2-8178-0175-9\_14

Welzel, C. and Inglehart, R. (2005) 'Liberalism, Postmaterialism, and the Growth of Freedom', *International Review of Sociology*, 15(1), pp. 81–108. doi: 10.1080/03906700500038579

Welzel, C. and Inglehart, R. (2006) 'Emancipative values and democracy: Response to Hadenius and Teorell', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 41(3), pp. 74–94. doi: 10.1007/bf02686237

Whitefield, S. (2005). *Political culture and post-communism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.