11 Between the past and the future

Eurosceptic political parties and the EU integration of Serbia¹

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Introduction

It is estimated that the vast majority of the trade with and direct investment in Serbia comes from European Union (EU) member states;² nevertheless, since the start of the accession process, Serbia has been perceived as one of the most Eurosceptic countries in the post-Yugoslav space. Anti-EU attitudes are fuelled by nationalism, but also by rising populism and anti-establishment rhetoric. Although Serbia's application for EU membership was submitted in December 2009, the accession negotiations only began in 2014. Even though the application for EU membership 'was the result of consensus among political parties that make up the ruling pro-European coalition as well as some opposition parties that support EU membership bid',³ one can observe a significant number of political parties that oppose EU accession. Analysing Serbia's approach to the EU and European integration, we need to take into consideration the historical background. One of the most significant issues that is present in both the public and political discourse, not only in the context of EU integration, is the status of Kosovo and the evaluation of the 1999 NATO intervention in Serbia. The political arena is divided between the advocates of 'direction West' and their adversaries, who not only promote an anti-EU stance, but also the need to strengthen ties with Russia and economic cooperation with China. Both attitudes are embedded in the past and make great use of modern and contemporary history to motivate and justify their claims. While the democratic transition in the post-communist states of Eastern Europe started right after the collapse of the Iron Curtain, the post-Yugoslav space, and Serbia in particular, were affected by an ongoing internal conflict and an unstable neighbourhood setting.

Already back in 2012, the EU Commissioner for Enlargement, Stefan Fuele, underlined the fact that while the EU expected the normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo, the recognition of Kosovo was not a precondition for the eventual EU accession of Serbia.⁴ However, many political parties in Serbia claim that Kosovo would not have been able to declare independence without support from the EU, arguing that 'double standards' are applied with regard to the self-determination of European nations. This

is why the issue of Kosovo, combined with nationalism, remains one of the crucial sources of anti-EU attitudes.

The main aim of this chapter is to identify and analyse the stances of Eurosceptic parliamentary political parties towards Serbian membership of the EU, keeping in mind that the national context and historical background may determine their arguments and stances on EU integration as well as the perception of the European project as such. Most of the political parties that oppose EU integration belong to the family of populist, radical right parties that perceive the European Union as a danger to the national sovereignty. Interestingly enough, one of the anti-EU parties is located on the left side of the political spectrum, combining left-wing populism and nationalism with Euroscepticism.

In most EU member states, Eurosceptic parties are rather minor actors with limited impact on policy making and government. The hard Eurosceptics that reject the EU are located on the fringes of politics. In contrast, the Serbian Radical Party 'was the largest party in the parliament that resolutely opposed Serbian EU membership'.⁵ This is also due to the fact that European issues were 'very salient in Serbia, which was particularly pronounced during the 2008 general election, when European integration was the single most important topic, due to the EU's position on Kosovo'.⁶ This is why, in analysing the Serbian case, we need to take into account specific national and historical contexts that 'affect the way in which a party may choose to debate or/and politicise the question of Europe'.⁷

The research presented in this chapter is based on the qualitative content analysis of the party manifestos of selected parliamentary parties, given that our main aim is to outline the stances of relevant political parties since the 2013 opening of accession negotiations between the EU and Serbia.

The chapter is organised as follows. The first part presents the general background and historical context, while the second part provides an overview of the main actors – parliamentary political parties that oppose EU integration. Finally, the last part of the chapter analyses the parties' manifestos and classifies their stances before drawing some final conclusions.

From the dissolution of Yugoslavia to negotiating EU membership: the historical background

Serbian society became intoxicated with rising nationalism in the late 1980s, as the new leader of Serbia, Slobodan Milošević, appeared on the political scene as a populist and received the support of most of society in 1987. The ideological foundation of the former communist party that he rebranded as the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) was a combination of nationalism and economic and social egalitarianism that had been strongly embedded in the legacy of Serbian radical politicians since the late 19th century. The post-Yugoslav region was marked by the last war on European soil in the 20th century, one that had destructive consequences for the societies of the former

republics. Political elites in Serbia encouraged nationalism, while the process of consolidating democracy was marginalised as a result of inter-ethnic conflicts and the plundering of the state.⁸ As Serbia experienced one of the highest cases of hyperinflation and some of the harshest UN sanctions ever imposed, the political elite in Serbia did not want to accept responsibility for the misery experienced by society, choosing to blame foreign factors instead. This narrative had a fertile ground as previous myths of the 'Allied betrayal' from the First and Second World Wars were popular in Serbian society, especially among nationalists. The EU, the USA and the Vatican were blamed for the collapse of Yugoslavia and most of the misfortunes that had fallen upon Serbia. That narrative remained strong among Milošević and his allies, as well as among a part of the conservative opposition. The post-2000 period marked a turning point in Serbia – after Milošević's regime was toppled in October 2000, the consolidation of electoral democracy and the development of the capitalist market began with the new Prime Minister, Zoran Đinđić, from the Democratic Party (DS).⁹ The reforms initiated were violently broken off on 12 March 2003 as a result of the assassination of a reformist Prime Minister whose main objective was to put Serbia on the path to EU membership. Following the debacle of authoritarianism, wars, international isolation, defeats, and economic collapse, in 2000, Serbia had managed to overthrow Milošević, but the ideological matrix and the national-populist platform survived and the deep state managed to slow down and eventually stop the reforms of the assassinated Prime Minister in 2003. Since then, no other politician has strongly advocated EU integration. The leading politicians since 2003 have been the following: 1) Vojislav Koštunica of the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), who openly turned into a strong Eurosceptic after the declaration of Kosovo independence in 2008; and 2) Boris Tadić of Đinđić's former party, for whom EU integration was nominally a priority but who, nonetheless, continued to pursue a nationalist policy towards Serbia's neighbours. He also restored one of the leading protagonists of the Milošević regime – Ivica Dačić from the SPS. The latter was the Prime Minister from 2012 to 2014, when a new party – the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) became the strongest political force. The SNS and the SPS have played an important role because, in all governing coalitions since 2012, they have managed to include both soft and hard Eurosceptic parties for which the issue of Kosovo was at the top of the agenda.

In 2013, the governments of Serbia and Kosovo signed the Brussels Agreement, considered to be a major step towards normalising relations between these countries. Moreover, this EU facilitated agreement enabled the start of EU accession talks with Serbia. So far, 18 out of 35 chapters have been opened and are undergoing negotiations.

Nevertheless, the issue of Kosovo's status continues to divide the Serbian political arena and public opinion. In that context, Russia is presented as a supporter of Serbia's Kosovo policy, especially in the UN Security Council¹⁰ in contrast to the EU that does not speak with one voice (5 out of 27 members

have not recognised the independence of Kosovo). President Vučić is believed to ‘play the Russia card as an offset to the EU and US influence in the region—a source of leverage in a highly asymmetrical relationship’¹¹ although his SNS party has officially taken a pro-European stance.

Serbian party-based Euroscepticism

Although Euroscepticism is widely used as a political label in the public and media discourse, the phenomenon is multidimensional and difficult to classify. In general, we may say that Euroscepticism is associated with opposition to European integration and criticism of the EU.¹² One of the best known typologies of party-based Euroscepticism was proposed by Szczerbiak and Taggart.¹³ According to their understanding of the phenomenon, there are two main critical positions towards the European Union and European integration: ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ Euroscepticism.¹⁴ Hard Eurosceptics perceive the EU as a threat and call for the withdrawal from the EU or for the termination of the process of EU integration in the case of candidate countries.¹⁵ Soft Eurosceptics do not object to the European project in general, but voice ‘concerns on one (or a number) of policy areas which leads to the expression of qualified oppositions to the EU, or where there is a sense that “national interest” is currently at odds with the EU trajectory’.¹⁶ Euroscepticism is also more visible on the right side of the political arena, due to its natural symbiosis with elements of nationalist ideology, which ‘insists on cultural and economic protectionism’.¹⁷ On the other hand, researchers have noticed that Euroscepticism can be observed as a common denominator for both radical right-wing and radical left-wing parties that use nationalism as their ideology. Halikiopoulou, Nanou and Vasilopoulou claim that EU integration can be seen as a ‘threat to the nation’ which the right wing understands in the ethnic terms, while the left wing in civic terms¹⁸. As mentioned before, the motivation behind Euroscepticism is very much dependent on the national context, and the attitudes of political parties towards integration may not be directly linked to the EU integration process. In this vein, Marko Stojić argues that the stances of parties in Serbia towards EU membership ‘are complex, multifaceted and dynamic categories that are directly related to the legacy of the post-Yugoslav conflicts, particularly the issues of the Kosovo status, and the role of the EU and its key member states’.¹⁹

In the case of Serbia, we have identified soft and hard Eurosceptic actors on both the right and the left side of the spectrum; however, the right-wing criticism of the EU and the prospect of enlargement is predominant. Since the 2013 Brussels Agreement and the opening of the accession negotiations, Serbia has had four parliamentary elections. Our analysis covers the parties that were represented in the parliament in the governments of Iвица Dačić (2012–2014), Aleksandar Vučić (2014–2016) and Ana Brnabić (2016–2020).

The only party that was active during all three analysed terms was the left-wing nationalist Movement of Socialists (Pokret Socijalista), which was

established in 2008 and has been led by Aleksandar Vulin since its formation.²⁰ Before the 2012 elections, the party was part of the coalition led by the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS). What makes this coalition interesting is its catch-all nature – it consists of left and right-wing parties, often with completely opposing stances on foreign policy and the European integration of Serbia.²¹

Among the right-wing parties, we have identified both newcomers, such as the movement Enough is Enough (DJB), and established parties like the Democratic Party of Serbia or the Serbian Radical Party. The latter were much more influential until the internal disagreement over the ratification of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) in 2008, which resulted in the creation of a new right-wing party – the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) led by Tomislav Nikolić and Aleksandar Vučić, previously the second and the third men of the Serbian Radical Party. According to Bandović and Marko Vujačić, this event ‘marked one of the biggest changes in Serbian politics since the introduction of party pluralism in 1990’,²² as the ‘split of the SRS into two factions and the formation of the SNS were a direct corollary of the EU integration process’²³. Since then, the Serbian Radical Party has remained hard-line nationalistic and anti-European, advocating the immediate cessation of the candidacy talks,²⁴ while the pro-European members migrated to the SNS. Another reason for the exodus of former radical party members to the newly established SNS was their frustration with the fact that they had been runners-up in all major elections since 2000 and had remained in the opposition ever since. That reason might be a more important factor in the rapid rise in membership of the new party.

The Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) used to be an important political actor, especially during the transformation period and the toppling of Milošević’s regime, as it was able to attract the sufficient number of nationalist and conservative voters needed to overthrow his rule.²⁵ Pro-European at the beginning, the party officially changed its attitudes after the declaration of the independence of Kosovo, which was recognised by most EU member states in February 2008.²⁶ However, the DSS had changed its stance towards the EU as early as 2001, after its chairman Vojislav Koštunica, the then President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, clashed with the reformist Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić. The clash resulted in former nationalist and conservative political actors, as well as the non-dismantled part of the Milošević elite, joining Koštunica’s circle, providing a justification for demonising the reforms of PM Zoran Đinđić that had a very strong EU integration agenda.

The Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), although playing a minor part in the political arena and elections since 2012, has remained one of the most important, as most of its former members established new Eurosceptic parties on the right of the political spectrum.

The Serbian People’s Party was established in 2014 and is regarded as Eurosceptic, nationalist and Russophile, pointing at Russia as the ‘most relevant economic and political partner’.²⁷ The party strongly advocates the

protection of Serbian interests in Kosovo and the Republic of Srpska. Enough is Enough was first established in 2014 as a political association, while it is currently a political party that is a member of the European Conservatives and Reformists Party, a pan-European Eurosceptic party.²⁸ Furthermore, the Dveri party started as a civic movement and has since the beginning propagated nationalist and right-wing postulates. Dveri opposes the independence of Kosovo and is an openly homophobic organisation.²⁹ The party is also known for its anti-migration stances, criticising the Vučić government for its policy on immigration.³⁰

The 2012 parliamentary elections were overshadowed by the presidential elections, as for the first time since 1992, parliamentary, local and presidential elections were organised at the same time. The outcome of the elections was beneficial for the newly established SNS (see Table 11.1), as former veteran radical Tomislav Nikolić became President, while Iвица Dačić from the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS)³¹ became the new Prime Minister. The coalition *Pokrenimo Srbiju* that was led by the SNS gathered together a broad spectrum of parties that for the first time became part of Parliament, such

Table 11.1 Outcomes of parliamentary elections in Serbia (Eurosceptic parties)

<i>Political party</i>	<i>2012 Parliamentary elections</i>	<i>2014 Parliamentary elections</i>	<i>2016 Parliamentary elections</i>
Movement of Socialists Pokret Socijalista (PS)	Part of the SNS-led coalition 24.05%	Part of the SNS-led coalition 48.35%	Part of the SNS-led coalition 48.25%
Democratic Party of Serbia Demokratska Stranka Srbije (DSS)	6.99 %	-	5.04 %
Serbian People's Party Srpska narodna partija (SNP)	-	-	Part of the SNS-led coalition
Independent DSS Samostalni DSS (S DSS)	-	-	Part of the SNS-led coalition
Serbian Radical Party Srpska radikalna Stranka (SRS)	-	-	8.10 %
Enough is Enough Dosta je bilo (DJB)	-	-	6.02 %
Dveri (Srpski pokret Dveri)	-	-	in coalition with the Democratic Party of Serbia

as the Movement of Socialists (PS). This party, although marginal in size, has remained part of every government formed since 2012, despite retaining its Eurosceptic stance which made it the only left-wing parliamentary party that was Eurosceptic. The PS's chairman and founder, Aleksandar Vulin, was once a protégée of Mirjana Marković, the widow of Slobodan Milošević, and a member of her party Yugoslav Left (Jugoslovenska Levica). Vulin became a member of parliament in 2012, as the PS won only one parliamentary seat at the elections. However, in the 2014 and 2016 elections, the party won two more seats.³² Nonetheless, the only well-established Eurosceptic party in the National Assembly in 2012 was Vojislav Koštunica's DSS, which remained in the opposition. Koštunica's party failed to enter Parliament in 2014, which led to Koštunica's resignation but also to the rise of new Eurosceptic political parties that became part of the Parliament after the 2016 elections.

The 2014 elections saw the switch between the PM and the Deputy PM, hence Aleksandar Vučić of the SNS became the PM while Ivica Dačić of the SPS became the First Deputy. Apart from the mandatory presence of national minority parties, only four political party lists remained in the Parliament. One of the most important results was that once well-established political parties, such as Vojislav Koštunica's DSS, which was the flagship of Euroscepticism among right-wing parties, failed to pass the 5% threshold. As the result of that failure, the following political parties were founded by 'former DSS renegades': the Serbian People's Party (SNP) established by the former vice president of the DSS, Nenad Popović, and the Independent Democratic Party of Serbia (Samostalni DSS). Both of those parties became part of the new Parliamentary majority (see Table 11.1) and the government following the 2016 elections, the former having established itself as strongly Eurosceptic despite being in the governing coalition that put EU integration at the top of its list of priorities.

The next parliamentary elections were held in 2016, with PM Aleksandar Vučić arguing that elections needed to be organised two years earlier, so that Serbia could have four more years of stability and so that he could bring Serbia closer to joining the EU.³³ However, Serbia seems no closer to the EU four years later. What is more, the 2016 elections are very interesting as they gave life to new Eurosceptic parliamentary parties, both within the government and the opposition (see Table 11.1). Of all the 'veteran' parties that were part of the Parliament in 2014, only the PS kept its seats in 2016, while all other parties that passed the 5% threshold had not been present in the Parliament in the period 2014–2016. All of them, except for PS, belonged to the right-wing end of the spectrum, while only Enough is Enough (DJB) was a catch-all populist party.

Based on the analysed material and existing literature, we argue that the new Eurosceptic parties could not only be divided into hard and soft Eurosceptics, but also according to the time of their establishment. Therefore, based on that criterion, we could divide them into two groups: 1) the ones that

were established in the 20th century; and 2) the ones that were established in the 2010s. The first ‘veteran’ group includes the Democratic Party of Serbia, the Serbian Radical Party and Dveri, while the other one includes Enough is Enough, the Serbian People’s Party and the Independent DSS.

‘Yes to Europe, No to the EU’³⁴ – EU integration in party manifestos³⁵

The qualitative analysis of the official documents of political parties allows us to assess which issues are important for the selected political parties and which are intentionally pushed aside. Although European integration and the European Union are not at the top of the political agenda in Serbia, parties present their stance and arguments on this subject in their official programmes. According to the ‘silence theory’, political parties appropriate some issues that are present in the public discourse, as a result of which each party can ‘occupy’ a part of the discourse and grant itself a label that helps to consolidate the electorate.³⁶ In the analysed case, we are interested in Eurosceptic voices and their motivation – both the ‘hard’ ones that reject EU integration and the ‘soft’ ones that voice criticism but do not completely exclude the possibility of Serbia joining the EU in the future.

While analysing the collected material, we strived to assess whether the parties were in favour or against the EU integration of Serbia, what their arguments were, as well as whether there were any potential conditions (conditional support for EU integration). As Euroscepticism is often linked with nationalism, we were also interested in discovering whether certain nationalist elements were visible, and to what extent nationalism influenced the stance towards the EU.

Serbian Eurosceptic parties that have been present in the parliament since the opening of accession negotiations can be divided into ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ Eurosceptics. The first category includes the Movement of Socialists (PS), Enough is Enough and the Independent DSS. Dveri, the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), the Serbian People’s Party (SNP) and the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) can be labelled as ‘hard’ Eurosceptics that call for the immediate suspension of accession negotiations with the EU. In the last analysed term (2016–2020), all seven Eurosceptic parties were represented.

The PS and the Independent DSS were part of the SNS-led coalition that had the majority of seats in the parliament, while Enough is Enough was an opposition party. Overall, the composition of the Serbian parliament was pro-European, although the hard Eurosceptics were present and their voice was widely heard.

What all ‘soft’ Eurosceptic parties have in common is that they pay less attention to the European Union and European integration in their political manifestos compared to ‘hard’ Eurosceptic parties. The Movement of Socialists puts more emphasis on anti-NATO rhetoric and geopolitical issues, including international relations:

The essence of the struggle of the PS, as the only fighting left, is the fight against injustice, and injustice is being done to the Serbian people today like nowhere else in the world. No other nation in the world, in the past and in this century, has experienced so many lies about it being accepted as the truth.

No other nation feels that a large and important part of the state has been taken away from it and that recognition and satisfaction are being asked of it, which diminishes it. No other nation in the world has been bombed by NATO. No other nation has to fear that the greater and more powerful will constantly set all new conditions for it, and threaten to regulate its life in its country, and the size of its country. The PS opposes Serbia's entry into NATO!³⁷

The PS places a special emphasis on cooperation with Russia, which is considered a more appropriate partner for economic and political cooperation. Overall, there is little mention of the EU as such and this also might be due to the fact that the PS was a member of the pro-EU government conducting accession talks.

The programme of the Independent Democratic Party of Serbia has no direct mention of the EU or European integration, but it does talk of the need for 'political neutrality' of Serbia and points out that 'every renunciation of the national sovereignty of Serbia in favour of supranational structures represents a danger to the freedom of citizens and a democratic order'.³⁸ Similarly to the Independent DSS, Enough is Enough focuses rather on the self-sufficiency of Serbia, emphasising that

the approximation to the European Union and cooperation with the European Union member states is a means, not an end. Cooperation with Russia, China and all other countries in the world is a means, not an end. All these countries have their own interests and are actively working on achieving and defending them (...) And they are not, nor will they ever be, our guardians or parents.³⁹

More detailed stances on the European Union and on the European integration of Serbia can be found in the manifestos of the parties identified as 'hard' Eurosceptics. In the programme of the DSS, the party's stance towards EU integration and the EU is elaborated under the title *Principles of political neutrality of Serbia*. The European Union is not only seen as a danger to the Serbian economy but also to Serbian identity:

Serbia is endangered today. The state, its territory, constitutional order, economy, the development of the country, demography, as well as moral and traditional values are endangered. The current relationship of the European Union with Serbia is the main cause of the state, national and economic crisis in Serbia.⁴⁰

The European Union is seen as the promoter of the independence of Kosovo, which the DSS cannot accept under any condition. The manifesto states that the EU

has taken on the role of the bearer of building and creating a new state of Kosovo on the territory of Serbia. And more than that, the European Union has become the main advocate of Serbia's blackmail policy, taking the position that European integration is directly related to the establishment of normal good-neighbourly, and in fact interstate, relations between Serbia and Kosovo. In other words, the European Union has set the break-up of Serbia as the most important condition for the continuation of European integration.⁴¹

In a similar vein, the radical right Dveri blames the EU for the economic failure of Serbia, but also for the independence of Kosovo. Under section *Out of the EU and into the Alliance with Russia*, the party presents its postulates regarding foreign policy and its stance towards the EU:

For more than 15 years, we have been on a disastrous path to the EU at any national cost. During that time, we have lost over half a million citizens, our production and economy have been destroyed, and Serbia has become an economic and political colony of those who bombed us in 1999. At that EU dead end, we are required to legally recognise Kosovo, allow the import of GMO food, impose sanctions on Russia and join NATO, then to break up the family and hand over the last natural and economic resources.⁴²

In the same section, Dveri suggested that their first step would be to terminate Serbia's EU accession negotiations and turn to cooperation with Russia and other non-EU countries.

The independence of Kosovo and nationalism are also one of the most visible driving factors for criticism of the EU by the Serbian Radical Party. The SRS is the longest standing Eurosceptic party in Serbia, led by a controversial politician, Vojislav Šešelj.⁴³ In their party programme, the SRS still advocates the creation of a 'Greater Serbia' that would include most of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Their stance towards the EU has remained hard Eurosceptic, as the party 'opposes Serbia's entry into the European Union' and is 'in favour of Eurasian integration and comprehensive cooperation with the Russian Federation, China and other friendly countries'.⁴⁴ They reject EU accession because they believe that the EU's 'leading member states are financiers and promoters of the self-proclaimed independence of the southern Serbian province – Kosovo and Metohija'.⁴⁵

Interestingly, the Serbian People's Party emphasises the 'principles of Euroscepticism'⁴⁶ as their main stance towards EU integration. The party underlines that Serbia is part of Europe and has long-lasting cultural,

economic and political ties with most European countries. That is why the party is not anti-European, but anti-EU which in consequence means that the SNP 'is against Serbia's accession to the European Union because rational reasons indicate that it is not in our economic and political interest'.⁴⁷ The possibility of a referendum is also mentioned, as the party wants to appeal to the people/citizens of Serbia.

Conclusions

Euroscepticism should be analysed within the context of nation states, as the historical background influences the way in which the EU and European integration are framed and debated. In the case of post-communist countries, Eurosceptic attitudes may be caused by disappointment with the transition, or with European integration as such. Countries or social groups that successfully managed to make it through the transformation period provided stronger support to European integration and the EU than those that were faced with greater difficulties. The aftermath of the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the 1999 Kosovo war and related NATO intervention and, most importantly, the declaration of the independence of Kosovo in 2008, are the internal factors that cannot be overlooked in analysing the Serbian political arena and the European integration of Serbia.

With regard to the Eurosceptic actors, we can clearly see a division between 'soft' and 'hard' Eurosceptics, the latter being mainly motivated by nationalism. Similarly to the post-communist new member states, hard Eurosceptics perceive the European Union as a threat to both identity and economy. The EU is portrayed as the supranational power that imposes its solutions without consultation, i.e. as a source of dominance and oppression. Anti-EU stances go hand in hand with the denial of the independence of Kosovo, which is seen as an integral part of Serbia and an important basis for identity construction. The question of the alternative to the process of European integration remains open – the Democratic Party of Serbia advocates 'political neutrality of Serbia', while other hard Eurosceptic parties like Dveri or the Serbian Radical Party point at Russia as the most important political and economic ally.

Interestingly, the voice of 'soft' Eurosceptic parties is not often heard and their political programmes tend to avoid any discussion of EU integration. This seems to be caused by the fact that the PS and the Independent DSS are part of the governing SNS-led coalition. As already noted by Stojić, who analysed Serbian political parties until 2011, Serbian parties focus on 'membership in the EU only, not the substance of European integration', as they 'appear to view the EU solely in terms of its policy towards Serbia and subsequently formed stances on EU membership'.⁴⁸ Even now, when accession negotiations are ongoing, we will not find any stances towards the European Union or the future of Europe in these parties' documents.

There is one more characteristic issue that makes Serbian Euroscepticism stand out, even though similar trends have already been observed in some new member states (particularly Bulgaria). While in post-communist Eastern European countries (like Poland) EU integration was driven by economic interests as well as by the notion of the 'return to Europe',⁴⁹ in Serbia EU integration seems to be motivated by more pragmatic arguments. Clientelism and political opportunism are even more important as they seem to be the leading motives for parties opposing EU integration to suppress their stances in order to join the government that publicly embraces EU integration as one of its priorities. This strategy may also be a result of the catch-all nature of parties that try to meet the expectations of the maximum number of voters, as the opinion polls show that there is no consensus regarding EU integration, given that only 55% of Serbian citizens support EU accession.⁵⁰

Notes

- 1 This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 822682. It reflects only the author's view and the Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.
- 2 In 2018, 60.5% of imports and 70.5% of exports were to/from EU member states. More can be found in the report of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Trade, https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/isdb_results/factsheets/country/details_serbia_en.pdf accessed 10 June 2020.
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- 4 Balkan Insight, 'EU: Serbia Does Not Have to Recognize Kosovo', 2012, <https://balkaninsight.com/2012/09/05/eu-does-not-request-serbia-to-recognize-kosovo> accessed 12 July 2020.
- 5 Ibid., 17.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Sofia Vasilopoulou, *Far right parties and Euroscepticism. Patterns of Opposition*, (ECPR Press 2018), 138.
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- 9 Ibid.
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- 11 Ibid., 8.
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- 19 Marko Stojić, 'The changing nature of Serbian political parties' attitudes towards Serbian EU membership', (2011), 122, *Sussex European Institute Working Paper*, 4.
- 20 Pokret Socijalista, <https://pokretsocijalista.rs/> accessed 14 July 2020.
- 21 The Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) that is leading the coalition declares itself as pro-European while the Movement of Socialists (PS) and the Serbian People's Party are Eurosceptic.
- 22 Igor Bandović and Marko Vujačić, 'The European Question in Serbia's Party Politics', in Corina Stratulat (ed), *EU Integration and Party Politics in the Balkans*, (ECP 2014), 54, 47–67.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Slobodan Antić, 'Euroscepticism in Serbia', (2012), 5, *Serbian Political Thought*, 56.
- 25 Bandović and Vujačić, (n 22), 56.
- 26 Antić, (n 24), 57.
- 27 Srpska Narodna Partija, <https://srpskanarodnapartija.rs/en/> accessed 15 July 2020.
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