



The changing nature of Serbian political parties' attitudes towards Serbian EU membership

Marko Stojic

Sussex European Institute, University of Sussex

M.stojic@sussex.ac.uk

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University of Sussex, Falmer,
Brighton BN1 9RG
Tel: 01273 678578
Fax: 01273 678571
[E-mail: sei@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:sei@sussex.ac.uk)

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Abstract

Serbian political parties express a wide range of attitudes towards Serbian integration into the EU, spanning from strong support to outright opposition to it. The aim of this working paper is to locate such diverse stances of core, parliamentary political parties on Serbian membership in the EU, as well as to depict changes of party attitudes over the last decade. Party positions are therefore mapped out using a clear-cut, ordinal axis of dynamic party stances, a framework currently well suited to EU candidate and potential candidate states in the Western Balkans. The paper demonstrates that Serbian parties do not have elaborated stances on ‘the substance of the European integration project’, although they express fully developed attitudes towards Serbian membership in the EU, which has been the single most important political issue since the last parliamentary election in 2008. It also argues that domestic political debate on the EU is abstract and that the EU is almost exclusively perceived through its policy towards the former Yugoslavia over the last two decades. The paper thus concludes that Serbian parties’ stances on Serbian membership in the EU are multifaceted and dynamic categories that are directly related to the legacy of the post-Yugoslav conflicts, particularly the issue of the status of Kosovo.

The Changing Nature of Serbian Political Parties' Attitudes Towards Serbian EU Membership

Marko Stojic

Sussex European Institute, University of Sussex

1. Introduction

In October 2010, the Council of the European Union decided to invite the European Commission to deliver an opinion on Serbia's application for EU membership, which had been submitted in December 2009. The Council also reaffirmed that the future of the Western Balkans lies in the European Union. However, Serbia remains a country where some of the key parliamentary political parties argue that its future is not in the EU and strongly oppose further integration into the EU. On the other side, 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.

The aim of the working paper is to explore the wide range of party attitudes to European integration over the last decade. Specifically, it intends to locate and describe the stances of parliamentary political parties towards Serbian membership in the EU as well as to depict changes in party attitudes. The study also looks at the way the topic of EU membership has played out through a national party system as a political issue over time. The paper argues that Serbian parties' stances towards Serbian membership in the EU 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.

The paper also argues that Serbian parties do not have elaborated stances on 'the substance of European integration' (Szczerbiak 2008, p.222) in their party programmes or in public politics. On the other hand, all parties express fully developed attitudes towards Serbian membership of the EU, which has been a single most important domestic, political issue since the last parliamentary election in 2008. Therefore, the paper deals with the attitudes of political parties towards Serbian membership in the EU, not towards the EU in general. It also reviews the theoretical concepts that have been most widely used in the comparative literature and argues that they currently may have a limited usefulness if rigorously applied in the analysis of Serbian parties. That is a consequence of the fact these conceptual frameworks assume that parties have clearly articulated views on 'the substance of the European integration process' (Szczerbiak 2008, p.230), which is at present difficult to identify in the case of Serbian political parties.

The stances of Serbian parties are therefore mapped out using a framework better suited to EU candidate and potential candidate states in the Western Balkans, where a domestic political debate on the EU is still abstract, and the EU is largely perceived through its policy towards the former Yugoslavia over the last two decades. Specifically, the paper presents a clear-cut, ordinal axis of dynamic party stances towards Serbian EU membership, ranging from a strong opposition to an unquestioned support. The intention of this working paper is not to offer a new theoretical concept. It instead locates party stances and offers a tentative framework that could help us to better understand the features of Serbian party politics in the context of its peculiar relation with the EU. In addition, the conclusions presented in this working paper are working assumptions based on current data.

This analysis draws primarily on a qualitative content analysis of programmatic documents and election manifestos of parliamentary parties, as well as public statements of leading politicians and party leaders. The study is also based on the analysis of parliamentary voting on key European issues, such as the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU, and a number of secondary sources from major nongovernmental organizations and political experts' opinions. The paper first examines whether theoretical concepts derived from the comparative literature can be purposefully employed in the analysis of Serbian party stances to EU integration. It then moves on to depict key features of Serbian party politics since the October 2000 democratic changes. The paper next examines individual party stances in detail, while the conclusion offers final conceptual and empirical remarks.

2. Theoretical frameworks and the Serbian case

The following section presents an overview of the most important theoretical concepts of party stances on the EU. It also examines the usefulness of different concepts in analysing Serbian party positions. The paper argues that the typologies based on elaborated party attitudes towards 'the substance of European integration' (Szczerbiak 2008, p.222) are difficult to apply rigorously to Serbian political parties as they do not consider such issues in their party programmes and politics. The section also presents a tentative framework of party stances on Serbian EU membership (Table 1).

The literature that deals with conceptualization of party attitudes to the EU can be broadly divided into two groups. The first group of scholars is particularly interested in framing the concepts of Eurosceptic attitudes since they analyse parties that to a certain degree oppose European integration, the EU or its particular policy. The second group aims to develop a broader typology that would cover a full spectrum of possible party positions, from an outright rejection to a strong support for the EU and EU integration.

The most widely used theoretical concept of party-based Euroscepticism is developed by Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008a), who broke this position down into 'Hard' and 'Soft' Euroscepticism. The first term implies 'a principled opposition to the EU and European integration and therefore can be seen in parties who think that their countries should withdraw from membership, or whose policies towards the EU are tantamount to being opposed to the whole project of European integration as it is currently conceived' (Szczerbiak

and Taggart 2008a, p.2). The second term refers to a situation 'where there is not a principled objection to the European integration or EU membership, but where concerns on one (or a number) of policy areas 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' (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a, p.2). This concept was later utilised in analysing a number of individual case studies. Thus, Henderson (2008) added to this concept one more degree of Euroscepticism, referred to as 'phony Europhile', in order to explain Slovak parties that are strategically in favour of EU integration but tactically reluctant to face the fact that this has implications for the domestic politics. This category of parties is hostile to EU criticism and demands, and fear an engagement with the realities of Western democratic principles (Henderson 2008, p.279). Jan Rovny (2004) conceptualised Euroscepticism in terms of two scales, the first one addressing its magnitude and the second its motivations. Rovny used the concept of Hard and Soft Euroscepticism when analysing the magnitude of Euroscepticisms, but noted that there are different degrees of both categories. Consequently, he argued that the magnitude of Euroscepticism can be seen as a continuum between Soft and Hard Euroscepticism in ordinal, rather than nominal terms, while the central point separating the two sides remains the question if a party expresses principled opposition to the EU and advocates withdrawal or non-accession.

The concept developed by Kopecky and Mudde (2002), on the other hand, covers both pro- and anti-EU positions and introduces a distinction between support for the ideas of European integration that underlie the EU and support for the EU as it is in reality. They further made a distinction between Europhiles and Europhobes based on the support for, or opposition to, the ideas of European integration, as well as between EU optimists and EU pessimists based on the attitudes to the EU as such. As a consequence, the authors constructed the four ideal-type categories of party positions on Europe. Euroenthusiasts thus combine Europhile and EU-optimist positions and support both the general ideas of European integration and the EU as it is. Eurosceptics express Europhile and EU-pessimist positions and support the general ideas of European integration but are pessimistic about the EU as such. Eurorejects adopt Europhobe and EU-pessimist attitudes and oppose both the ideas underlying the process of European integration and the EU as it is in reality. Finally, Europragmatists combine Europhobe and EU-optimist positions as they do not support the general ideas underlying the EU but support the EU. Similarly, Flood and Usherwood (2007) proposed a typology based on the degrees of support for or opposition to EU integration in general, or some aspect of it. Their framework covers a full range of party attitudes towards Europe, from maximalist in favour of pushing integration as far and as fast as is feasible, to rejectionist characterized by an outright refusal of integration, coupled with an opposition to participation. Moreover, they identified a spectrum of more nuanced attitudes towards Europe between the two extreme poles. On the positive side, these authors found reformist who endorse advance of integration subject to remedying the deficiencies of what has already been achieved, and gradualist that accept some slow and piecemeal advance of integration. On the negative side of the continuum, they identified minimalist that accept status quo but want to limit further integration as well as revisionist that want to return to an earlier state.

Finally, Conti (2003) presented a framework for the analysis of party attitudes towards European integration based on the synthesis of factors identified as important in the comparative literature. In order to explain Italian parties' attitudes towards the EU, he first used the concepts of Hard and Soft Euroscepticism before introducing three additional attitudes that party may adopt. Conti proposed a neutral category, defining it as lack of a clear position on European integration. He considered this a temporary position of a party on the way to move from past to new positions, or of a new party on the way to shape its preferences. Alternatively, he argued, it could be the long-lasting position of a party that finds it problematic to shape its preferences on EU because of internal tensions or external constraints. Conti also introduced the two pro-European stances labelled as functional and identity Europeanism. The former stance is characterized by a strategic interest and context-based support, while the latter describes an identity and ideology based support for the EU and European integration.

All of the presented concepts require parties to have elaborated stances on the EU in principle in order to classify their attitudes. However, the majority of Serbian parties do not express stances on this issue. This phenomenon also occurred in other Central and Eastern European (CEE) states before they joined the EU. Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b, p.246) argued that it is difficult to identify a party's stance on either the EU in principle or on the EU's current trajectory in candidate states because most of them do not articulate them or simply have not even considered them. This phenomenon is even more pronounced in Western Balkan countries, and may be attributed to the fact that with the exception of Croatia, which has concluded accession negotiations, other states have not yet started negotiations. Moreover, Serbia has not even obtained candidate status, and a political debate regarding the EU is still abstract and general. In addition, the majority of parties perceive the EU exclusively through its policy towards Serbia and the region over the last two decades. As a result, they do not have any meaningful positions towards the principles of European integration, or its future trajectory. Thus, it is very difficult to determine parties' attitudes towards any of the key EU policy areas. They rarely take elaborated positions on the enlargement policy, viewing it as a set of political preconditions that the EU has unjustly imposed on Serbia, as it is often formulated by Eurosceptics. On the other hand, Serbian parties have clearly expressed attitudes towards Serbian membership in the EU, which has been the single most important political issue since the 2008 general election.

As a consequence, if the presented concepts are rigorously applied, party positions towards the substance of European integration, not only towards a country's EU membership, must be clearly identified. Specifically, the reformulated concept of Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008a, p.2) abandons the idea that attitudes towards a country's membership in the EU should be viewed as the ultimate litmus test of whether party belongs to a Hard or Soft Eurosceptic camp. Instead, they argued that the key variables in determining party attitudes should be underlying support for or opposition to the European integration project as embodied in the EU and attitudes towards further actual or planned extensions of EU competencies, rather than a party's stances to their country's membership at any given time (Szczerbiak and

Taggart 2008b, p.242). Szczerbiak (2008) also pointed to this issue when analysing Polish parties in the pre-accession period, when, as their Serbian counterparts, they did not have any meaningful statements about the EU's current or future trajectory. Szczerbiak (2008, p.239) thus concluded that in the absence of such data some Polish parties cannot be characterized as Soft or Hard Eurosceptic since 'there was simply not enough data available at that time, either from the party's published policy statements or from statements by its representative leaders, to be able to categorize the party as being Eurosceptic or not'.

The same can be observed in applying the typology developed by Kopecky and Mudde (2002). This concept also requires articulated party stances towards the ideas of European integration that underlie the EU, such as institutionalized cooperation on the basis of pooled sovereignty and an integrated liberal market economy, as well as the EU as it is and as it is developing (Kopecky and Mudde 2002, p.300). Similarly, the concept of Flood and Usherwood (2007) is based on a high degree of differentiated and nuanced positions of parties towards the EU. However, political parties in EU member states often do not have 'a chosen model' of the EU they want to achieve, nor are they aware of deficiencies in the already existing model. This is particularly the case with political parties in Serbia, a country that is not even a candidate state for EU membership. It is therefore difficult to say whether Serbian parties are more or less in favour of strengthening the EU or what is a desirable form of the European integration project.

At the current level of relations between Serbia and the EU, only party stances on Serbian EU membership can be reliably determined. Therefore, this working paper maps party attitudes by using a typology that is more appropriate to the specific circumstances of Serbia and other Western Balkan countries. The intention of this paper is not to offer a new theoretical concept. Rather, it presents a simple, clear-cut and tentative framework of party positions (Table 1), conceptualised as an ordinal axis covering a full range of possible attitudes, spanning from strong support to outright opposition to Serbian EU membership.

In order to classify party positions, a number of party documents and public statements of leading party officials have been analysed. In addition, parliamentary voting and party positions on key events of Serbian EU accession, such as signing and ratification of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA), as well as the decision of the EU to start preparing an opinion on Serbian membership bid have been examined. Therefore, party stances are classified according to the degree to which they support or oppose Serbian EU membership, both rhetorically and practically.

In the case of Serbia, the conditions set by political parties to support EU integration of the country are of key importance. Thus, party stances located in the middle section of the axis are labelled as 'qualified support' or 'qualified opposition', due to a spectrum of different conditions they may use in order to limit their support or opposition to EU membership. Some conditions are unrealistic, such requiring major EU member states to rescind their recognition of Kosovo's sovereignty. Therefore, the key criterion for party classification has been the extent to which individual parties insist on the withdrawal of the decision of some

EU member states to recognise Kosovo as well as their willingness to compromise on this issue in order to expedite Serbia's accession into the EU.

Furthermore, Serbian parties' stances on EU membership are highly dynamic categories given that some parties have recently shifted attitudes from a total rejection to a commitment to Serbian EU integration, and vice versa. Therefore, individual categories depicting party positions are marked by arrows in order to indicate the blurred nature of borders between them, as presented in Table 1. For the same reason, some parties may have attitudes that belong to, or are on a border between, the two categories at the same time. The latest examples of these developments are a shift of the New Serbia towards accepting Serbian EU accession, as well as gradual, but also substantial moderation of the Serbian ruling parties' attitudes to the issue of Kosovo's independence aimed at speeding up Serbian EU accession.

The proposed typology serves as a tentative tool for mapping out Serbian party positions to country's EU membership. It may also serve as a basis for the analysis of other post-Yugoslav parties, given a similar set of outstanding issues that characterize party politics in this region. As European integration of Serbia advances, parties will most likely adopt the patterns of behaviour and attitudes of their CEE counterparts. This will enable a more comprehensive analysis of their attitudes and a rigorous application of the existing theoretical concepts identified in the comparative literature.

Table 1. Attitudes of Serbian political parties towards Serbian membership in the EU (2000-2011)

SERBIAN MEMBERSHIP IN THE EU							
SUPPORT				OPPOSITION			
2000-2008							
<i>Support</i>			<i>Qualified Support</i>		<i>Qualified Opposition</i>		<i>Opposition</i>
Liberal Democratic Party	G17 PLUS	Democratic Party	Democratic Party of Serbia	New Serbia	Socialist Party of Serbia	Serbian Radical Party	
2008-2011							
<i>Support</i>		<i>Qualified Support</i>			<i>Qualified Opposition</i>		<i>Opposition</i>
Liberal Democratic Party	G17 PLUS	Democratic Party	Socialist Party of Serbia	Serbian Progressive Party	New Serbia	Democratic Party of Serbia	Serbian Radical Party

3. Serbian party politics since 2000

The next section demonstrates the dynamic features of Serbian party politics since ‘the October 2000 revolution’ that marked a radical change in the country’s recent political history. It aims to put Serbian parties’ attitudes into a wider context of domestic party politics, a difficult legacy of the post-Yugoslav wars, as well as contradictory relations with the EU over the last two decades.

In October 2000, following a largely peaceful revolution on the streets of Belgrade, more than a ten-year authoritative reign of the Socialist Party of Serbia (*Socijalistička Partija Srbije, SPS*) and the Serbian Radical Party (*Srpska Radikalna Stranka, SRS*) came to an end. Mass protests occurred following elections for the president of what was then the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (comprised of Serbia and Montenegro) after opposition candidate Vojislav Koštunica won significantly more votes in the first round (50.24%) than the long-time Serbian and Yugoslav president Slobodan Milošević, who received 37.15% of the total votes (Orlović 2011). President Milošević, however, did not accept the election results, argued that neither candidate received more than 50% of the vote and insisted on the second round of elections. In response to this, opposition parties held a mass anti-government rally in Belgrade on 5 October, and, with the support of police and military forces, quickly took over key state institutions. President Milošević was forced to step down from power. The transition of power was completed later that year when the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (*Demokratska Opozicija Srbije, DOS*), a group of parties that had been in opposition to the Milošević’s rule since the early 1990s, won the parliamentary election (Table 2). The new government consisted of the eighteen parties of the DOS, although the Democratic Party (*Demokratska Stranka, DS*) and the Democratic Party of Serbia (*Demokratska Stranka Srbije, DSS*) had been by far the strongest parties of the coalition. Despite the many differences within this heterogeneous group of parties, they all adopted an affirmative attitude towards the free market, democracy, ethnic and confessional tolerance, as well as openness to the world (Goati 2009, p. 284).

A new reformist government led by the president of the Democratic Party, Zoran Djindjić, managed to secure foreign financial support for the economically ruined country, started introducing market reforms and privatization of state-owned companies, and swiftly re-established relations with the EU and other international organizations. However, within a few months, an internal division of the loose coalition, particularly between the Democratic Party and the Democratic Party of Serbia, became apparent. The conflict intensified after the Serbian government extradited Slobodan Milošević to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY, The Hague Tribunal) in June 2001, despite strong opposition from the Democratic Party of Serbia. This party, in response to it, left the government in August that year. The conflict between the two parties was primarily the result of profound political differences. The Democratic Party advocated a pragmatic policy that would bring Serbia closer to the West, rapid reintegration into the international community, and it was ready to fulfil the EU accession conditions, including the extradition of Serbian citizens indicted by the Hague Tribunal. On the other side, the Democratic Party of Serbia opposed

such cooperation with the Hague Tribunal, favouring voluntary surrendering of the indicted. This party supported what might be termed 'a legalist approach'; this gave priority to strict adherence to the rule of law, including the laws passed during the Milošević era and the respect of the procedures, 'as if a routine change in government in a stable democracy had taken place, instead of the ousting of an authoritarian regime, knee-deep in crime and violence' (Goati 2009, p.288). On the other side, the parties of the old regime denied the legitimacy of the newly established system, viewed the democratic changes as a coup and believed that Slobodan Milošević had been kidnapped and illegally extradited to the Hague Tribunal (Goati 2009, p.289).

The next two years were marked by further intensification of the conflict between the two parties. As the Democratic Party and its minor coalition partners held the power only in Serbia and the Democratic Party of Serbia maintained control of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, this led to a serious institutional crisis. The radical change came after the assassination of the Prime Minister Djindjić in March 2003 when the remaining cabinet members were unable to proceed with economic and social reforms. Consequently, an early election was called later that year. The results of the election indicated that the voters had punished democratic parties as the radical right Serbian Radical Party, a member of the old regime, received the highest number of votes (Table 2). However, the minority government was formed by other parties: the Democratic Party of Serbia whose leader, Vojislav Koštunica, became Serbian Prime Minister, the G17 Plus and a coalition of the Serbian Renewal Movement (*Srpski Pokret Obnove, SPO*) and New Serbia (*Nova Srbija, NS*). Since this coalition did not have enough parliamentary votes and given animosity of the Democratic Party of Serbia towards the Democratic Party, the government was supported by the party of the old regime - the Socialist Party of Serbia.

The new government's policies clearly deviated from those of the previous government, particularly in regards to cooperation with The Hague Tribunal and attitudes towards the legacy of the Milošević regime. The government immediately suspended cooperation with The Hague Tribunal by insisting on the voluntary surrender of people indicted for the war crimes. As a result, financial support from the Western countries was suspended, while the Feasibility study on Serbia's readiness to enter into a contractual relationship with the EU was postponed. Although the G17 Plus insisted on the importance of cooperation with the Hague Tribunal, it was a weaker coalition partner that did not favour an early parliamentary election. Thus, the Democratic Party of Serbia was persistent in avoiding its obligations to the Tribunal. Goati (2009, p.291) argued that it was a result not only of the reservations this party had towards the Hague Tribunal, but also of a promise it made to the Socialists, who publicly emphasized that the sole condition for its support of the minority government was the refusal to extradite those charged with war crimes and the improvement of the position of those already in custody.

However, the negative economic effects of these policies and bad results of the ruling parties at the presidential and local elections in 2004, led the Democratic Party of Serbia to gradually modify its attitude toward The Hague Tribunal. As a consequence, the government managed

to 'persuade' 14 people charged with the war crimes to surrender voluntarily and adopted the National Strategy for Accession to the EU as a sign of its readiness to continue European integration, which led to the EU's decision in the mid-2005 to resume negotiations with Serbia. The following year, the citizens of Montenegro supported independence of the republic at a referendum, despite a sharp opposition from the Serbian government, especially Prime Minister Koštunica. In this way, Serbia renewed its independence after nearly 90 years and adopted a new constitution in late 2006 after reaching an agreement with all parliamentary political parties, except the Liberal Democratic Party (*Liberalno Demokratska Partija, LDP*).

Following the proclamation of the new constitution, a parliamentary election was held in January 2007. The Serbian Radical Party again emerged as the strongest party in Parliament (Table 2). After lengthy and difficult negotiations, the government was formed shortly before midnight on 15 May 2007, when the constitutional deadline would have passed, thus indicating the level of distrust among parties that had ousted Milošević. A key role of the Democratic Party of Serbia was evident, since this party was comfortably placed between the two blocks - the radical right and Eurosceptic Serbian Radical Party and the pro-European Democratic Party and G17 Plus - with the ability to form a coalition government with either of them. After temporarily cooperating with the Serbian Radical Party in order to elect the speaker of the Parliament, the Democratic Party of Serbia turned to the pro-European parties and formed a government with them, while its president Koštunica again became the prime minister (Stojić 2010, p.2).

Initially, it seemed the new government had managed to preserve its fragile internal unity, which was primarily reflected in a common attitude towards Kosovo's status and European integration. In November 2007, the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU was initialled and supported by all members of the coalition government. However, as the negotiations on the status of Kosovo progressed in a direction unfavourable to Serbia later in 2007, conflicts within the ruling coalition became more visible. All ruling parties believed Kosovo must remain an integral part of Serbia. However, there was a key difference on the measures to be taken as a reaction to the declaration of independence adopted in February 2008 and EU involvement in the process of establishing Kosovo's. Prime Minister Koštunica, backed by the Democratic Party of Serbia, the New Serbia and the opposition Serbian Radical Party took a hard stance towards the EU, arguing that under new circumstances Serbia must refuse to sign the SAA with the EU, while other coalition partners argued that the SAA was neutral on the issue of Kosovo's status (Stojić 2010, p.3). The irreconcilable views on future of the country and how to react to the Kosovan independence, which was supported by key EU member states, led to an early election in May 2008.

The issue of the EU was the single most important topic during the campaign because the election was widely perceived as a referendum on Serbian EU membership. The coalition formed around the Democratic Party of Serbia argued in favour of stopping further integration into the EU until the EU explicitly recognized the international borders of Serbia. It also pledged stronger measures against the countries that had recognized Kosovo, the

preservation of military neutrality, as well as strengthening cooperation with countries in favour of the Serbian position on Kosovo, primarily the Russian Federation (Stojić 2010, p.4). Conversely, the coalition led by the Democratic Party stressed that the SAA needed to be signed, that the issue of Kosovo and the EU were two separate issues and that Serbia must not return to the isolation seen in the 1990s. This coalition of parties was openly supported by the EU and this was most visible when the SAA was signed with a pro-European part of the Serbian caretaker government in April 2008. Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy then stated that he ‘wanted to see a majority vote for the pro-European forces in Serbia’ and argued that ‘the EU has to do the utmost to take measures that would send a very clear signal to the Serbian people that we care about them’ (Solana 2008).

While opinion polls predicted a victory for the far right-wing Serbian Radical Party, the election constituted a victory for the coalition associated with the Democratic Party and G17 Plus. Although the Democratic Party was the Socialist Party’s main political opponent, and its former leader Djindjić was the most prominent figure of the Serbian opposition throughout the 1990s (Bochsler 2010, p. 105), it unexpectedly formed the government with the coalition based around the Socialist Party of Serbia, which gradually adopted more pro-European rhetoric and politics. Finally, as a result of the lost election and internal conflicts over the issue of Serbia's EU membership, a group of senior party officials left the Serbian Radical Party and formed a new Serbian Progressive Party in September 2008. This represented the latest in a series of events that caused ‘a political earthquake’, which completely changed the Serbian political scene. Political consequences of these events have been present even since, and they will be further explored later in this paper.

Table 2. Serbian election results and a number of parliamentary seats

Sources: Serbian Electoral Commission 2010/ Emerson and Sedo 2009, p.14/ National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia 2011

	Dec 2000		Dec 2003		Jan 2007		May 2008		July 2011
Electoral list	Per cent of votes	Number of seats	Per cent of votes	Number of seats	Per cent of votes	Number of seats	Per cent of votes	Number of seats	Number of seats
Democratic Opposition of Serbia ¹	64%	176	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Democratic Party	-	-	13%	37	22.71%	64	-	-	-
G17 plus	-	-	12%	34	6.82%	19	-	-	24
For a European Serbia ²	-	-	-	-	-	-	38.4%	102	78
Serbian Radical Party	9%	23	28%	82	28.59%	81	29.45%	78 ³	57
Serbian Progressive Party	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21
Democratic Party of Serbia	-	-	18%	53	-	-	-	-	20
Democratic Party of Serbia- New Serbia	-	-	-	-	16.55%	47	11.61%	30	-
New Serbia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
Serbian Renewal Movement- New Serbia	-	-	8%	22	-	-	-	-	-
Socialist Party of Serbia	14%	37	8%	22	5.64%	16	-	-	15
Socialist Party of Serbia- United Serbia- Party of United Pensioners of Serbia	-	-	-	-	-	-	7.58%	20	-
Party of United Pensioners of Serbia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Liberal Democratic Party	-	-	-	-	-	-	5.24%	13	12
Liberal Democratic Party- Civic Alliance of Serbia- League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina- Social Democratic Union	-	-	-	-	5.31%	15	-	-	-
Party of Serbian Unity	5%	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

¹ Democratic Opposition of Serbia was a coalition of 19 parties and trade unions: 1. Democratic Party, 2. Democratic Party of Serbia, 3. Social-democracy, 4. Civic Alliance of Serbia, 5. Democrat-Christian Party of Serbia, 6. New Serbia, 7. Movement for a Democratic Serbia, 8. League of Social-democrats of Vojvodina, 9. Reformist Democratic Party of Vojvodina, 10. Vojvodina Coalition, 11. Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, 12. Democratic Alternative, 13. Democratic Centre, 14. Serbian Resistance Movement, 15. Social Democratic Union, 16. Sandžak Democratic Party, 17. Association of Free and Independent Trade Unions, 18. League for Šumadija, 19. New Democracy (Flags of the world, 2010)

² 'For a European Serbia' was a coalition of Democratic Party, G17 plus, Serbian Renewal Movement, League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina and Sandzak Democratic Party

³ 22 MP's broke away from the Serbian Radical Party in September 2008 and formed a separate parliamentary group and a new party- the Serbian Progressive Party

Table 3. Serbian presidential elections results from 2000 to 2008

Source: Serbian Electoral Commission 2010

Candidate	Sept/Oct 2002		Dec 2002	Nov 2003 ⁴	Jun 2004		Jan/Feb 2008	
	1. round	2. round			1. round	2. round	1. round	2. round
<i>Serbian Radical Party</i>								
Tomislav Nikolić	-	-	-	1 166 896 46.23%	954 339 30.60%	1 434 068 45.40%	1 646 172 39.99%	2 197 155 47.97%
Vojislav Šešelj	845 308 23.24%	-	1 063 296 36.08%	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Democratic Party</i>								
Boris Tadić	-	-	-	-	853 584 27.37%	1 681 528 53.24%	1 457 030 35.39%	2 304 467 50.31%
<i>Democratic Party of Serbia</i>								
Vojislav Koštunica	1 123 420 30.89%	1 991 947 66.86%	1 699 098 57.66%	-	-	-	-	-
Dragan Maršićanin	-	-	-	-	414 971 13.30%	-	-	-
<i>New Serbia</i>								
Velimir Ilić	-	-	-	229 229 9.08%	-	-	305 828 7.43%	-
<i>Democratic Opposition of Serbia</i>								
Dragoljub Mićunović	-	-	-	893 906 35.42%	-	-	-	-
<i>Socialist Party of Serbia</i>								
Bata Živojinović	119 052 3.27%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ivica Dačić	-	-	-	-	125 952 4.04%	-	-	-
Milutin Mrkonjić	-	-	-	-	-	-	245 889 5.97%	-
<i>Liberal Democratic Party</i>								
Čedomir Jovanović	-	-	-	-	-	-	219 689 5.34%	-
<i>G17 plus</i>								
Miroslav Labus	995 200 27.36%	921 094 30.92%	-	-	-	-	-	-

4. Attitudes of Serbian political parties towards Serbian EU membership

The following section deals with the peculiar factors that characterise Serbian party politics and its relationship with the EU. In doing so, it outlines how parties have been adopting and changing their attitudes towards Serbian EU membership over the last decade. The section examines in detail and maps out individual party positions. It also presents party voters' stances on issues in regards to the EU (Tables 4-6) and how they may be linked to actual

⁴ Three presidential elections in 2002 and 2003 were declared invalid because the turnouts were less than 50% of all eligible voters, which was a mandatory legal requirement

party positions. The conclusions regarding party stances presented below are tentative and based on the currently available data.

There are a number of peculiar features of Serbian party politics and party attitudes towards the EU. It is a country where the core parliamentary political parties had a wide range of opinions regarding the country's EU integration. Eurosceptic parties that outright objected to European integration were not confined to minor parties positioned on the periphery of the party system. Until 2008, the Serbian Radical Party was the largest party in the parliament that resolutely opposed Serbian EU membership. Unlike a majority of other CEE countries, 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. Moreover, parties tended to alter their stances on the EU, as occurred in 2008 when some of them fundamentally changed attitudes. Finally, Serbian political parties were exceptionally influential social actors. The whole system of government was designed as a 'partitocracy' that gave the parties a high degree of autonomy in making the most important decisions. The current and future nature of the country was therefore to a large extent determined by the beliefs and interests of political elites expressed through the attitudes and actions of political parties.

Furthermore, relations between Serbia and the EU over the past two decades have been very complex and contradictory. These two sides have a rather unique relation because Serbia, as a state that aspires to EU membership, and leading EU countries have had fundamentally opposing views about the most basic issues: what constitutes Serbia and the location of its borders. Specifically, the province of Kosovo was recognized by a large number of EU member states as an independent state, although the EU had no formal stance towards its status, given that there was no agreement of all member states on the issue. On the other side, the Constitution of Serbia defined Kosovo as an integral part of its territory, obliging 'all state bodies to uphold and protect the state interests of Serbia in Kosovo in all internal and foreign political relations' (Serbian Parliament 2008). The government of Serbia therefore considered Kosovo an inalienable part of the country and was obliged under the Constitution to maintain this policy. The fact that major EU member states recognized Kosovo's independence heavily impacted the attitudes of all social actors, especially political parties. As a result, Serbian parties' stances towards Serbian membership in the EU are very complex and dynamic categories that were directly related to the issues of the Kosovo status and the policy of the EU and its key member states.

Party attitudes towards the EU can be generally divided into two distinct periods, between 2000 and 2008 and after 2008. There were two groups of parties during the first period. The first, often termed the 'anti-European group', consisted of the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Serbian Radical Party. These two parties shared the same Eurosceptic attitudes, expressed by a rejection of Serbian EU membership and opposition to cooperation with the EU. They perceived the EU as a direct promoter and a symbol of 'anti-Serbian policy' of The Hague Tribunal, which indicted the presidents of both parties with the war crimes. At that time, these parties did not recognize the new democratic order established in 2000 and were often

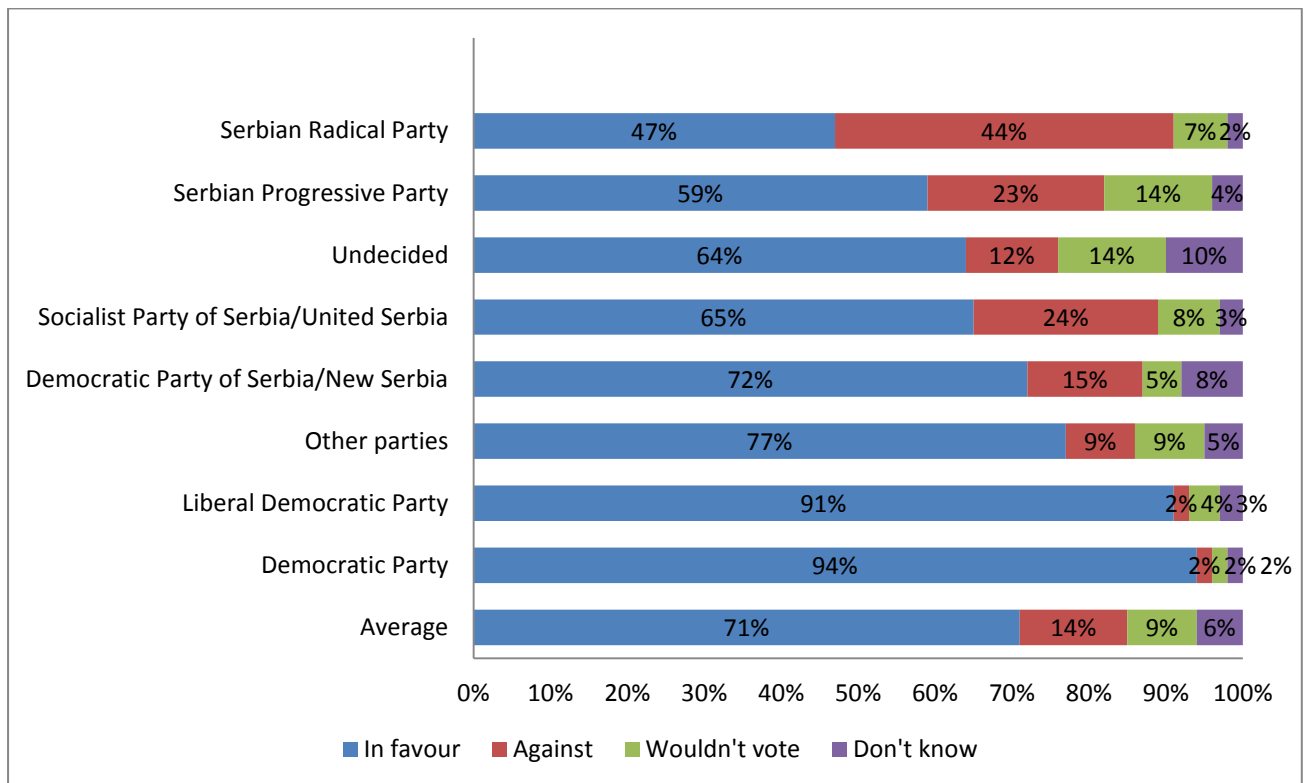
considered non-institutional parties. The second 'pro-European group' was comprised of a number of parties organised within the Democratic Opposition of Serbia that rose to power in October 2000 by strongly advocating Serbian membership in the EU.

However, the division between the two groups of parties has gradually become less pronounced due to many conflicts among democratic parties, primarily between the Democratic Party of Serbia and the Democratic Party, and a slow moderation of the Socialists' attitudes towards the Serbian EU integration. The Democratic Party advocated rapid and radical social changes and a break with the politics of Slobodan Milošević, while the Democratic Party of Serbia was in favour of preserving the existing structures of power and strictly implementing the laws enacted during the previous regime. More importantly, this party resisted cooperation with the Hague Tribunal, although its general pro-European and democratic credentials were not questioned. On the other hand, the Socialist Party of Serbia supported the minority government of the Democratic Party of Serbia and indirectly returned to power in 2004.

The recognition of Kosovo's independence by a majority of EU member states in early 2008 was a major turning point, marking the beginning of the second period when many parties changed their attitudes towards Serbian EU membership. In light of the recognition of Kosovo's independence by a number of EU member states, political parties became divided on the issue of further EU integration of the country. As a result, the previous division between pro- and anti-European parties ceased to exist. This, however, did not mean that parties reached a national consensus on this issue. Rather, a new, more complex positioning of parties emerged and this is analysed in the subsection on individual party positions.

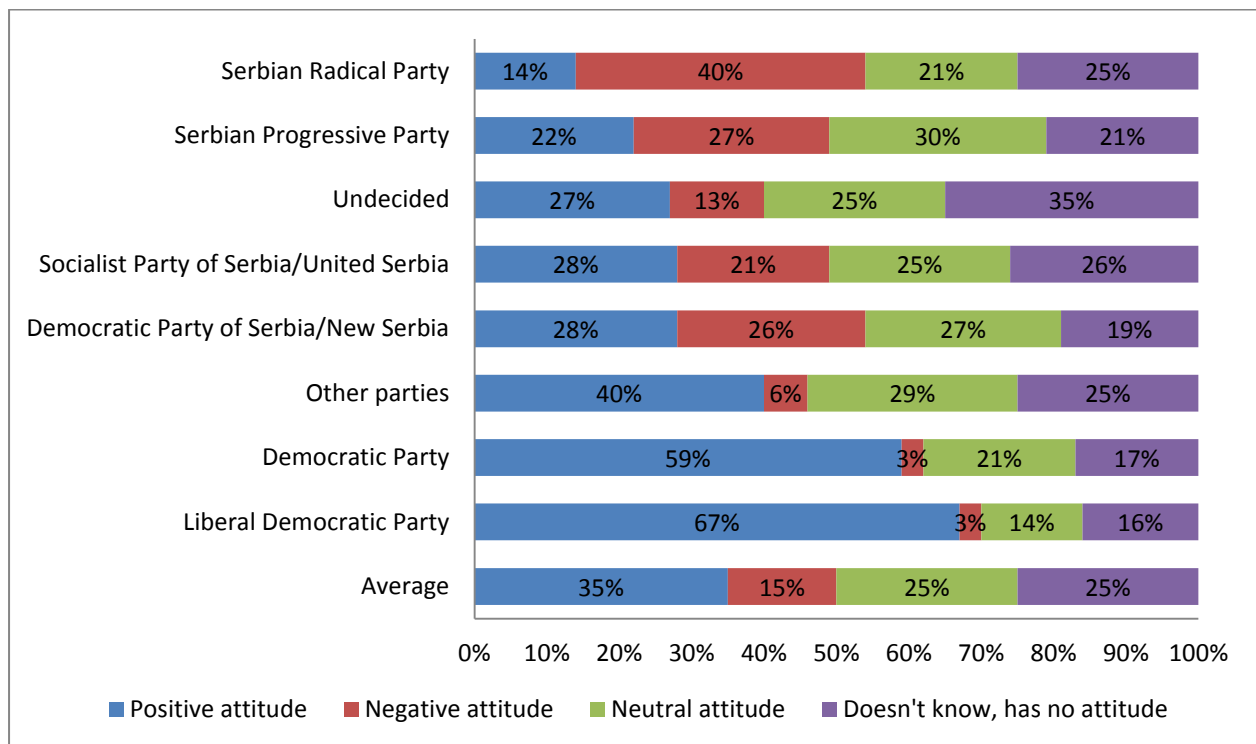
The complex attitudes of Serbian parties towards the EU were also well reflected in the stances of party voters on this issue, presented in the following tables. When directly asked whether they would support Serbian EU membership in the referendum, a large majority of electorates have been in favour of it (Table 4). That has been the case with the voters of all parties, including the most Eurosceptic one, the Serbian Radical Party. This party has consistently and strongly opposed European integration of Serbia for more than twenty years, but the majority of its voters supported EU membership in September 2009. Similarly, there was an obvious discrepancy between the voters' attitudes and politics of the Democratic Party of Serbia that has opposed Serbia's EU membership since 2008, although more than 70% of its supporters favoured it in 2009. This fact indicates that some parties did not formulate their policy based on the preferences of their constituents, even at a cost of losing the election, which happened to the Democratic Party of Serbia in 2008. Therefore, the data from Table 4 shows that Serbia's EU membership was widely accepted and supported by voters, as opposed to political parties that expressed a large variety of positions on this issue.

Table 4. Parties' supporters and voting in a referendum on Serbian membership in the EU, September 2009 (*CESID 2009a, p. 4*)



Yet the picture becomes very different if one takes into account voters' attitudes towards the EU in principle, as shown in Table 5, since a much smaller percentage of Serbian voters (35%) had a positive attitude towards the EU. With the exception of the voters who support the Liberal Democratic Party and Democratic Party, the Serbian electorate perceived the EU mostly negatively or neutrally. This was especially seen among the Serbian Radical Party supporters, since 40% of them had a negative attitude towards the EU. In addition, a high percentage of voters of almost all parties did not have an opinion on the EU in 2009.

Table 5. Parties' supporters and attitude towards the EU, September 2009
(CESID 2009a, p. 6)



The following statements were used to measure Serbian party voters' attitudes towards the EU: the EU is a guarantor of peace, stability and development of Serbia; by joining the EU, we risk our identity and culture; the EU is a system where rules are known, where it is well known who does what; the EU is full of injustice and malice; in the EU, people have solidarity, the rich help the poor; the EU wants us only because of their own interests (cheap labour, healthy food and water); the EU wants to help us fight poverty and become "normal"; it is in the interest of the EU that we become part of it, in order that they may control us more easily; the relationship between the EU and Serbia should be built on clear interests of both sides; the EU is just an idea, utopia, a dream that does not exist at all (CESID 2009a).

The data from both tables demonstrates the complex attitudes of Serbian voters and parties towards the EU. The vast majority of the electorate did not perceive the EU in a positive light, or did not have position on this issue, thereby expressing strong disagreement and dissatisfaction with EU's policies towards Serbia over the last two decades. Serbian voters expressed particularity negative stances on the pre-accession conditions set by the EU, primarily cooperation with The Hague Tribunal.⁵ Moreover, the policies of the EU and its key member states towards the region, especially those regarding Kosovo's status since 2008, was seen as 'a double standard policy', that failed to treat all post-Yugoslav states equally. If there had been a credible alternative to the EU, the majority of Serbian voters would have probably opposed Serbian EU accession. However, in the absence of such alternatives, it appears that a large majority of supporters of all parties suppresses dissatisfaction cumulated over the years, acts pragmatically and supports Serbian EU membership. It seems that the

⁵ 60% of Serbian population did not support the extradition of Ratko Mladić to the Hague Tribunal in December 2009 (51% in May 2011) (Politika 2011, Slobodna Evropa 2011)

voters give priority to economic issues, and thus rationalise EU accession by perceiving it in pragmatic, cost-benefit terms, being aware that there is no credible alternative to it.

However, as Table 6 shows, the average Serbian voter had a relatively strong European identity, with an exception of the supporters of the Serbian Radical Party. That may be explained by the fact that they differentiate between the negatively or neutrally perceived EU and Europe as a continent, which includes Russia and other non-EU, eastern European countries. The majority of Serbian voters largely identified themselves with the latter and accept the former out of necessity.

Table 6. European identity of supporters of Serbian political parties, December 2009
(CESID 2009b, p. 9)

Political party	Arithmetical centre (1-5)	Very strong, strong and medium European identity
1. Democratic Party	3.23	74
2. Liberal Democratic Party/ League of Social-democrats of Vojvodina/ other parties	2.98	64
3. Democratic Party of Serbia/ New Serbia	2.97	67
4. Coalition partners of Democratic Party (G17 plus)	2.86	61
5. Abstainers	2.68	56
6. Serbian Progressive Party	2.64	54
7. Serbian Radical Party	2.26	41
AVERAGE	2.80	59

Questions used to measure European identity: To what extent do you feel ‘European’? - How much are you connected to other Europeans? - How satisfied are you being ‘European’? - How much are you like an average European? - How much is it important to you to be a European? - To what extent is your opinion on Europe similar to opinions of other Europeans? - How much are you personally hurt when a non-European criticises Europeans? (CESID 2009b, p.8)

Individual party attitudes

4.1. Democratic Party- *Both the EU and Kosovo*

Founded in 1990 as a centre-right and liberal party, the Democratic Party advocated minimizing the state’s role in economy, strengthening the market economy and respecting democratic principles. However, this party began shifting towards the left-centre after coming to power in 2000. Senior party official Zoran Alimpić (Interview 2011) argued that it was the then-party president Zoran Djindjić who personally pushed for the strengthening of social-democratic values in the party and, under his leadership, the party has gradually begun presenting itself as social-democratic. It became a member of the Socialist International (SI) in 2003 and obtained an observer status in the Party of European Socialists (PES) in 2006.

This may be attributed to need for the Democratic Party, as a core political party, to join one of the leading European party federations, and it turned out that the PES was the only viable option, given that its main political rival, the Democratic Party of Serbia, had already been associated with the European People Party (EPP). The case of the Democratic Party thus seems to confirm that CEE parties join transnational party groups for strategic rather than ideological reasons.

Despite the party's intentions, Vujačić (2007, p.167) argued that the Democratic Party remained close to a liberal political family since it primarily advocates liberal ideas, including such as legal equality, protection of minorities, decentralization, private property and entrepreneurship. Moreover, a majority of the party electorate, including party members, did not view the Democratic Party as a social-democratic option, although it has striven to obtain a key position on the moderate left part of the political spectrum since 2000 (Stojiljković, 2007, p.151). Goati (2009, p.284), therefore, asserted that the Democratic Party was close to the social-democratic family according to its intentions, but that it belonged to the liberal political family judging by its policies.

What is not contested is the party's consistent pro-European orientation since the early 1990s. The party program (DS 2009, p.23) clearly stated that its goal is Serbian accession into the EU, while its obligation was to affirm European values and prepare the country for a genuine European integration. The Democrats wanted 'European structures and standards to become a part of Serbian society, and Serbia to become an equal member state of the EU' (DS 2009, p. 23). The party argued that EU accession is the most important issue and was above all political parties and political leaders (Komšić 2007, p.40).

The Democratic Party strongly promoted the idea of Europe and pleaded for the EU accession during the 2008 election campaign, despite the fact that major EU countries had recognized Kosovo's independence. It particularly stressed that the SAA needed to be signed and that Serbia must not return to the isolation of the 1990s (Stojić 2010, p.4). The Democrats supported cooperation with The Hague Tribunal as well as regional cooperation and reconciliation between former Yugoslav states. When the Council of Ministers invited the Commission to prepare an opinion on Serbia's EU candidacy bid in October 2010, the party argued that 'it meant an irreversible path toward EU membership, an access to European funds, prosperity and a better living for every citizen of Serbia' (DS 2010a). The party also tended to present itself as a leading pro-European force and challenged European orientation of its main rival, the Serbian Progressive Party, by arguing that this party does not have an ideology or political vision and changes its attitudes towards the EU on a daily basis in an attempt to seize power (DS 2010b).

Supporters of the Democratic Party are also characterized by pronounced liberal-democratic and 'European' values. They supported economic reforms and privatization, modernism, non-authoritarian values, ideas of limited sovereignty, decentralization, tolerance and strongly identified with Europe (Komšić 2007, p.24). In December 2009, 74% of the party voters expressed European identity (CESID 2009b, p.9). They are also unwavering supporters of

Serbian accession to the EU. In 2005, 96% favoured Serbian EU accession (Goati 2006, p.43), while in September 2009, 94% expressed the same attitude (CESID 2009b, p.9).

In summary, the party strongly supported Serbian EU accession until 2008. The key element of the party policies since 2008 has been that EU integration and Kosovo's status are two separate issues, and that recognition of Kosovo is not a precondition for Serbian EU accession. Vuk Jeremić, Minister of Foreign Affairs and a senior party official (RTS 2010), thus argued that it would be 'a tragic mistake with extremely complicated consequences' if the EU conditions Serbia by the recognition of Kosovo. He stressed that 'those who advocate this connection depart from the wrong assumption that Serbia would choose Europe, if faced with the choice between Europe and Kosovo, but that would not happen. Anyone who would believe in it is wrong' (RTS 2010).

However, the party has gradually moderated its position on Kosovo's independence. Responding to pressure from the EU, the Serbian government led by the Democratic Party agreed to begin negotiations with Kosovo's authorities on practical issues, thereby renewing its bid for EU candidacy. In doing so, the party shifted its stance from claiming that EU accession and Kosovo are two separate issues to arguing that the issue of Kosovo must be resolved before Serbian EU accession. Deputy Prime Minister and senior party official Božidar Djelić (DS 2010c) argued that the desire of Belgrade and Priština to join the EU can be a strong incentive for compromise on all outstanding issues, including Kosovo's status, and that there can be no sustainable solution if one side receives everything and the other loses all. The Democrats thus gave priority to Serbian EU accession over the issue of Kosovo, by calling for a historic compromise of two nations, although without accepting Kosovo's independence or elaborating the nature of that compromise.

Therefore, the Democratic Party can be categorised as a party that has expressed qualified support for Serbian EU membership since 2008, given its position on the Kosovo status. However, it is not very likely that the EU would directly and officially condition Serbian accession by recognition of the Kosovo's independence. Nevertheless, the party leaders appeared to be aware that the Kosovo issue must be resolved before Serbian accession into the EU. It became evident that party has moderated attitudes towards the Kosovo status, placed a high priority on Serbian EU integration and strengthened its pro-EU orientation. It is also very likely that the party will adopt a largely positive attitude towards the substance of the European integration in the future, which would be in line with the position of its European Socialist partners.

4.2. Serbian Radical Party- *Principled anti-Europeans*

The Serbian Radical Party was a radical right, nationalist party whose fundamental political aim, proclaimed in the first paragraph of the 2009 party programme, was 'the unification of the entire Serbian nation and establishment of a single, unitary state, called Great Serbia, on the whole Serbian national territory, which would include Serbia, Montenegro, Republic of Srpska and Republic of Serbian Krajina' (SRS 2009, p.2). Its leader Vojislav Šešelj has been on trial for war crimes at The Hague Tribunal since 2003, and the party supported fugitive

war crimes suspects. It perceived The Hague Tribunal as ‘a political instrument of the new world order, which is against freedom-loving nations’ (SRS 2010a). The party has not been a member of any of European party federations, and it has never expressed any intention to join them.

It was a conservative party that advocated development of the national consciousness and patriotism, preservation of national traditions, protection of the traditional Serbian family, and upbringing the youth in the Serbian Orthodox spirit. The party called for the return to traditional moral values and norms of the Orthodox Christianity as written in the Ten Commandments of the Bible (SRS 2009). In social economic terms, the Radicals have adopted a neoliberal approach advocating entrepreneurial initiative, liberal market economy, reaffirmation of the market mechanism, suppression of state interventionism, completion of the privatization of state-owned companies and individual responsibility for economic and social position in society (SRS 2009).

The Serbian Radical Party has been the strongest opponent of Serbian EU integration and cooperation with the Western countries and has also been a proponent of close relations with the Russian federation. Its programme, however, did not say anything explicitly about the EU, although it clearly expressed strong anti-globalist attitudes. The Serbian Radical Party hence ‘strive to make Serbia a member of international organizations that will respect Serbian interests and the principle of non-interference in internal affairs of sovereign countries’ given that Serbia has no reason to join ‘international organizations which serve to implement the political will of one country or a group of countries at the expense of the remaining members of such organizations’ (SRS 2009, p.29). The party was in favour of international organizations ‘whose activities are based on cooperation, solidarity, and not on pressure, blackmail and force’ (SRS 2009, p.29). It advocated alternative foreign policy and developing ‘the traditional friendly relations with the peoples and countries that have supported us and expressed solidarity in the most difficult historical moments’ (SRS 2009, p.28), an obvious reference to Russia, China, India and other non-Western countries.

The full scale of its anti-Western and anti-European orientation was, however, visible in other party documents, its political activities and particularly in numerous books and public statements by Vojislav Šešelj. In his 2006 political testament, Šešelj called on party members to ‘strongly oppose any attempts to include Serbia in NATO and the EU, because all traditional Serbian enemies are there’ (Komšić 2007, p.14). He further argued that ‘they (the West) have been furious with us because the Serbs had defeated their grandfathers and ancestors who therefore left a testament to their heirs to punish Serbia’ (Komšić 2007, p.16). His attitudes to the EU was often on the verge of open hatred towards the West, which is best seen in the offensive titles of his books, such as *The European Union: A satanic creation*, *Javier Solana: An offender and a war criminal*, *Bloody hands of Madeleine Albright* and other titles that referred to the Catholic church, European politicians and Serbian pro-European politicians in the offensive ways.

The Serbian Radical Party neither supported the Resolution on joining the EU in 2004 nor Parliament's ratification of the SAA in 2008. It strongly objected to the EU policy towards Serbia and the Western Balkans, particularly after a large majority of EU members recognised Kosovo's independence in 2008. This party firmly opposed conditions for Serbian EU integration, especially the extradition of suspected war criminals to The Hague Tribunal. It often called on the government to suspend all negotiations with the EU and 'to give up the disastrous policies of European integration and turn to the countries that respect international law and territorial integrity of our country' (SRS 2010b). When the Serbian government agreed to start negotiations with Kosovo's institutions on practical issues under the auspices of the EU, the Serbian Radical Party condemned the regime for 'a shameful act of capitulation to the EU demands and implicit recognition of the independence of Kosovo' (SRS 2010c). After the Council of Ministers supported Serbia's candidacy bid in October 2010, the party deputy leader argued that it 'essentially means absolutely nothing', since 'it is yet another deception of the EU when it comes to Serbia' (Danas 2010).

In line with the party profile, its supporters are characterized by a belief in patriotism at all costs, traditionalism, conservatism, authoritarianism, anti-European orientation and opposition to reform (Komšić 2007, p.24). However, 41% of the party electorate expressed some European identity in December 2009 (CESID 2009b, p.9), while 47% was in favour of and 44% against Serbian accession to the EU in September 2009 (CESID 2009a, p.4), thus showing a discrepancy between the party and its supporters. This may be attributed to the fact that a significant percentage of its supports, although essentially 'anti-European' oriented, realistically accepted Serbian membership into the EU, given the lack of any other viable alternative. However, it should not be noted that almost the same percentage of its electorate opposed Serbian EU integration. Additionally, the relatively high expression of European identity within the Radical electorate could be because they considered themselves Europeans in a wider sense, thereby including Russia and other non-EU eastern European and orthodox countries in their understanding of 'Europe'.

Furthermore, the Serbian Radical Party briefly altered its rhetoric towards the EU when its then-deputy president Tomislav Nikolić declared in the 2003 presidential election campaign that 'he and his party will provide a full contribution to Serbian accession to all European institutions and organizations, particularly the EU, but by preserving Serbian identity, national pride, honour and dignity' (Komšić 2007, p.15). Such attitudes were however primarily result of an internal power struggle between two factions that culminated in 2008 when the anti-European faction led by Šešelj prevailed and expelled Nikolić and other relatively moderate members from the party.

With the brief exception of Nikolić's rhetoric during the presidential campaign in 2003, the Serbian Radical Party has consistently been a Eurosceptic party. Key EU members' policies toward Kosovo have further reaffirmed its ideologically driven anti-EU attitudes and the party will most likely remain a resolute opponent of Serbian EU integration in the future. Even though there was a lack of elaborated attitudes toward the substance of European integration in its programmatic documents and policy, this party appeared to be well en route

to becoming a Hard Eurosceptic and Eurorejectionist party that principally rejects both the project of European integration and Serbian participation in it.

4.3. G17 Plus- *Liberal Europeans*

The G17 Plus was founded by an independent expert group of influential Serbian economists in 2002. The mission of the G17 Plus was ‘the creation of an economically strong and democratically stable Serbia that will become a leader in the Balkans, ready to accept European standards and able to preserve and protect the best from its own traditions and culture’ (G17 Plus 2004, p.2). It was in favour of ‘an open society based on democracy, private property and market economy, where free individuals and their individual rights are the foundation of the overall social organization’ (G17 Plus 2004, p.3). Its ideological profile was normatively consistent since, as Vukomanović (2007) argued, it was not prone to ideological eclecticism and firmly adhered to the ideal-typical form of neo-liberalism; therefore the G17 Plus had the ‘clearest’ ideological position among Serbian political parties. In 2005, the party became an affiliated member of the European Peoples’ Party, despite the fact that it did not share its conservative political profile. This again underlined strategic rather than ideological reasons for the transnational affiliations of Serbian parties.

Since its establishment, the G17 Plus has been part of all Serbian governments as a firm supporter of EU integration. In its programme, the party specified that historically, culturally, economically and emotionally, Serbia is already a part of Europe but that institutionally it is not. Accordingly, the party’s main goal was to achieve EU membership as soon as possible (G17 Plus 2004, p.12). The G17 Plus was very enthusiastic about that goal, and it was the only party to include a date for Serbian EU membership in its programme. The party’s 2004 programme (G17 Plus 2004, p.12) explicitly argued that Serbia was able to ‘catch up’ with other Balkan countries and be in the next round of EU enlargement, together with Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria. It further stated: ‘we have passed the first stage of integration faster than others, and we have to do the same during other phases, if we want Serbia to become an EU member state in 2010’ (G17 Plus 2004, p.13). In 2010, the G17 Plus joined with a number of small regional parties to create the United Regions of Serbia aimed at presenting itself as a key promoter of economic decentralisation of the country. The Union’s declaration specified that it will advocate for the rapid achievement of European standards and Serbian membership in the EU (G17 plus 2010).

The G17 Plus was therefore one of the strongest supporters of Serbian integration into the EU. The party, however, officially followed governmental policy stating that Kosovo is an integral part of Serbia, which was in opposition to politics of key EU member states. Consequently, it made party support for Serbian EU accession qualified. Nevertheless, this party was far less concerned with Kosovo and prioritised Serbian EU membership, making it closer to the Liberal Democratic Party than its coalition partners. As a result, this party can be best placed on the border between the categories describing support and qualified support, leaning towards the former. Given its pro-European and neoliberal ideology, it is very likely

that the party will adopt strong affirmative attitudes towards the principles of European integration in the future.

4.4. Democratic Party of Serbia- *There is no alternative to Serbia*

The Democratic Party of Serbia was founded in 1992 as a conservative and right-wing party. The party's key principles included support for the Serbian Orthodox Church, demographic recovery, preservation of traditional moral values, protection of national identity and self-awareness, strengthening the national cultural institutions and protecting the Cyrillic script, as well as true patriotism and education of youth in the spirit of love for the motherland (DSS 2010). The party maintained close relations with the ruling Russian party, the United Russia, and was affiliated with the European People's Party (EPP). However, party relations with the EPP have considerably weakened, given that this European party federation has questioned its European credentials since 2008, at which time the party began opposing Serbian EU accession.

The Democratic Party of Serbia has maintained a complex attitude towards Serbian EU membership. From its creation, this party has distrusted West, primarily the USA, and has contested the legitimacy of The Hague Tribunal (Goati 2009, p.287). However, it was not essentially a party with anti-European ideology. Its reasons for opposing Serbian entry into the EU were substantially different from those of the Serbian Radical Party, since the Democratic Party of Serbia did not object to Serbian EU integration in principle. Its programme underlined a party's European orientation that is based on an old European, conservative heritage. It stated that Serbia, as a European country, should closely cooperate with European countries, ultimately becoming a member state of the EU (DSS 2009, p.11). However, party programme also said that Serbia should become an EU member state 'under the equal conditions' and that the country, although strategically oriented towards Europe, should systematically cultivate friendly relations with Russia, China, India and the USA (DSS 2009, p.11). Reference to 'the equal conditions' was a result of the party opinion that the EU did not treat Serbia in the same manner as other states and that the accession conditions imposed to Serbia were unfair.

The party programme (DSS 2009, p.11) also stated that the fundamental principle of foreign policy should be respectful of the territorial integrity of internationally recognized states and that Serbia's relations with all countries in the world should be based on the principle of non-interference in internal affairs. More specifically, the party was 'committed to conducting independent foreign policy in line with the real interests of the state and its citizens, and based on generally accepted principles of international law and the Serbian Constitution'(DSS 2009, p.11). Thus, preserving territorial integrity and sovereignty was by far the most important fundamental principle of this party and, consequently, it strongly disagreed with the Western policy towards Kosovo.

The complex party attitude toward Serbian EU membership was also reflected in its practical politics. The Democratic Party of Serbia was a key ruling party in the period from 2004 to 2008 when Serbia made initial steps towards the EU. Two Serbian governments led by the

party president Vojislav Koštunica proclaimed Serbia's entry into the EU to be their strategic goal. He stated in March 2004 that Serbia essentially belongs to Europe and that 'EU membership is not only what we want, but it's something that has to be done and cannot be avoided', adding that there was no alternative to the European path (Serbian government 2010). In May 2007, Koštunica's second government was formed based on the same principle. The government announced that its goals would be acquiring EU candidate status and speeding up the process of legislative harmonisation with the EU standards. The government also adopted the principle that Serbia's EU accession cannot be compensation for any concessions when it comes to the territorial integrity of the country (Parliamentary network 2010). However, the Democratic Party of Serbia opposed cooperation with The Hague Tribunal and the arrest of the individuals indicted for war crimes, which was the most important condition for Serbian EU integration. As a result, negotiations on conclusion of the SAA were frozen for a year during its first government. After the government 'persuaded' the people indicted for the war crimes to voluntarily surrender, the negotiations were reopened, and Serbia completed negotiations and initialled the SAA in October 2007.

The more significant problem of Kosovo status arose in late 2007, when key EU member states announced its support for the independence of Kosovo, fundamentally affecting this party's attitude to Serbian European integrations. In the 2008 election campaign, the party hardened its attitudes and argued for ceasing further EU integration until the EU explicitly recognized the international borders of Serbia. It also opposed the signing of the SAA, claiming that Serbia would have implicitly recognized the independence of its southern province by signing it (Stojić 2010, p.4). After losing the May 2008 elections, the Democratic Party of Serbia placed the question of Serbian EU integration in the absolute centre of its politics. The party became the main critic of the government's policy towards the EU and the main opponent of European integration. When the party adopted "Serbia has no alternative" as its motto, Koštunica stressed that "instead of disastrous politics that the EU has no alternative, it is time for the state-building politics, whose fundamental principle is that Serbia, with Kosovo as its integral part, could join the EU" (DSS 2010a). The party claimed that it is dishonest to pretend that the EU and Kosovo are allegedly separate issues. Koštunica specifically argued:

'The policy of the EU means that the EU actually does not perceive Serbia as a state and its future equal member, but as a territory which can be forcibly cut out. There is not a single European state that has given up part of its territory under pressure or has recognized a violent change of its borders. The rules that apply to all European countries must also apply to Serbia' (DSS 2010b).

The party argued that Serbia had to find an alternative for the EU because 'the EU has put aside further enlargement due to its own problems' (DSS 2010c). It advocated 'a new national policy that will have as its main objective Serbia itself and its internal development based on the best European values and standards that are in the interest of our country, with a possibility that a complete Serbia joins the EU in the future' (DSS 2010c). The party also insisted on an open dialogue with the EU in order to build 'beneficial relations based on the

mutually accepted agreement', although without elaborating on the details of such an agreement (DSS 2010c). When in July 2010 the International Court of Justice issued an advisory opinion that the declaration of the Kosovo's independence did not violate international law, this party argued that Serbia should have sued the states that recognised Kosovo and accused the government of not filing the lawsuit because Brussels threatened to slow down European integration (DSS 2010d).

In summary, the Democratic Party of Serbia supported Serbian accession to the EU until 2008. However, it has never accepted the need to cooperate with The Hague Tribunal but managed to persuade the indicted individuals to voluntary surrender in order to reopen the process of EU integration. Therefore, the party's support for Serbian EU accession could be characterized as qualified, given its principled opposition to some of the key EU accession preconditions. The Democratic Party of Serbia underwent a substantial transformation in 2008. After recognition of Kosovo by a large number of EU countries, the party has subordinated all elements of party politics to the issue of Serbian relations with the EU, attempting to emphasize the deleterious effects of joining the EU under the current conditions, i.e. as long as the EU refuses to acknowledge the borders of Serbia. Nevertheless, the party has never objected Serbian EU membership in principle. It stressed that there was a fundamental opposition between the Serbian Constitution that defined that Kosovo as an inalienable part of Serbia and the decision of 22 EU member states to 'illegally recognize a fake state of Kosovo' (DSS 2010c). Therefore, the position of the Democratic Party of Serbia since 2008 may be categorised as qualified opposition to Serbian EU accession. The party will most likely maintain this position because it has become an issue of the utmost importance and one that will decisively shape its political destiny. In addition, this party may develop elaborated Eurosceptic sentiments towards the substance of European integration in the future, given the source, scope and intensity of its objection to Serbian integration into the EU.

4.5. Serbian Progressive Party- *Unproven Europeans*

The youngest core political party, the Serbian Progressive Party, was founded by a group of moderate members who broke away from the Serbian Radical Party in September 2008. The new party adopted moderate right wing ideology. It abandoned the Serbian Radical Party concept of Great Serbia, although it proclaimed that the peaceful formation of a joint state between Serbia and the Bosnian entity of the Republika Srpska, as well as preservation of the territorial integrity of Serbia, were its main political goals (SNS 2010, p.1). The party also promoted military neutrality, social justice, implementation of fair privatization and a review of the legality of privatizations of state-owned companies (SNS 2010, p.1).

The leadership of the Serbian Progressive Party underwent a fundamental transformation regarding its attitude towards Serbian EU membership, although party leader Tomislav Nikolić argued that he has not changed its ideology and politics, since 'he has been in favour of Serbia joining the EU, although not on its knees, over the past six years' (Politika 2010). However, after leaving the Radicals in 2008, the leaders of the new party clearly abandoned

the nationalistic, anti-European rhetoric of the Serbian Radical Party and accepted pragmatic and balanced politics of cooperation with all countries in the world, including the Western countries. Specifically, one of the party's principle stated that 'Serbia can enhance its role in the world only if it is a bridge between the East and the West, and if it cooperates with all its friends, using the benefits that come from all over the world, both from the Eastern and the Western Hemisphere' (SNS 2010, p.1). The party specifically argued that Serbia can join Europe only as a whole state, with Kosovo as an integral part, but at the same time emphasised the need to develop its closest relations with the Russian Federation, China, India and other traditional friends and allies (SNS 2010, p .1). The party also advocated a proactive policy in order to improve bilateral relations and change the position of states 'whose policies have been in opposition to Serbian national interests in the last twenty years' (SNS 2010, p.1), an obvious reference to Western countries.

This shift with regard to Serbian EU membership was even more striking when compared to previously radical politics of the party leadership. It has maintained frequent contact with top EU officials since its establishment, which was in stark contrast to the lack of any contacts between EU officials and the Serbian Radical Party (Spoerri 2008). The party claimed that recognition of Kosovo's independence was not a condition for Serbian European integration. However, it also argued that 'the people of Serbia should decide at a referendum what to do, if the EU adopts policy- either the EU or Kosovo' (SNS 2010a). It also pointed out that the government led by the Democratic Party has not been successful in European integration since 'it does not understand that Serbia cannot move forward without the EU' (SNS 2010b). Moreover, the Serbian Progressive Party has conditioned cooperation with other opposition parties, particularly the Democratic Party of Serbia, by modification of their negative attitudes towards Serbian EU integration.

The party stance on Serbian EU membership appears to be primarily pragmatic. The decision of party leaders to break away from the Serbian Radical Party was clearly a strategic one, given that the Radicals could not obtain power through an anti-European stance after 2000. Nikolić specifically explained:

'The Radicals have never had a desire to come to power. The Serbian Progressive party is something else. We are pro-European party. If we stand against the EU, we will never be able to win the elections in Serbia' (SNS, 2011).

In addition, the Serbian Progressive Party primarily viewed the EU as a main economic partner that can contribute to bettering the life of ordinary people. In discussing Europeans, its vice president, Aleksandar Vučić, stated:

'I do not care for them, I just respect them. I neither love them nor they are especially dear to me, but we, as responsible people, have to take care of our country. We need a rational, realistic and serious approach to national politics in order to get the most we could for the country and to lose the least' (SNS 2010c).

There was a visible tension between the anti-European, radical past of the party leadership and their new pro-European profile. The Serbian Progressive Party had an obvious need to legitimise itself as a modern, pro-European right-wing party, although their leaders did not always feel comfortable in their new roles. Its supporters expressed similar, conflicting stances on Europe as 59% supported and 23% opposed Serbia joining the EU in September 2009 (CESID 2009a, p.4). Despite the efforts of the party leadership to position itself as a pro-European party, the issue of the EU was not a cohesive factor for its voters, and there is a clear dominance of those who were still confused and had undefined attitude (CESID 2009a, p.6).

The party has not obtained a membership of any of European party federations. Senior party official Marko Djurić (Interview 2011) argued that as a centre-right party, it sought to join the EPP. However, its potential European counterparts have expressed scepticism towards the party leaders, given their previous politics within the Serbian Radical Party. As a consequence, the party has yet to prove its European orientation and to become a legitimate centre-right party. Conversely, the party has recently started to cooperate bilaterally with similar right-wing parties in the EU, such as the Freedom Party of Austria and the Hungarian Fidesz.

The Serbian Progressive Party supported Serbian EU membership, provided the EU does not condition Serbian accession by the recognition of Kosovo as an independent state. This qualified support for Serbian EU membership has been the most important feature of the party politics since its founding due to party leaders' intention to detach themselves from the anti-EU radical policy that they had promoted for almost two decades, as well to present the new party as a credible alternative to the ruling coalition that has monopolised the pro-EU political spectrum. Therefore, this party will most likely maintain this position, even if pressured to moderate its stance on Kosovo. The party has not yet elaborated its positions on the principles of European integration.

4.6. Socialist Party of Serbia- *Emerging Europeans*

The Socialist Party of Serbia was founded in 1990 as a successor to the Serbian Communist Party. Although there was a left-wing political tradition in Serbia, and the country was faced with numerous difficulties of economic transition, a fertile ground for the emergence of left-wing parties, the social-economic left remained scarcely populated by a few very small social-democratic parties and the Socialist Party of Serbia, while the Democratic Party struggled to present itself as a social-democratic. However, the position of the Socialist Party of Serbia as a leading left-wing party has been compromised to a great degree by its nationalistic politics of the 1990s.

The Socialist Party of Serbia underwent a fundamental transformation over the last decade. Under Milošević's leadership, it was a ruling party in Serbia throughout the 1990s, when it promoted the anti-European values and politics that caused international isolation of the country and NATO military intervention in 1999. After the democratic changes of 2000, the party embarked on a slow transformation in an effort to legitimise itself as a modern social-

democratic party. The transformation reached a climax in 2008, when the Socialists helped to form a pro-European government with former political enemies of the Serbian Democratic Opposition.

In 2002, the party still strongly criticised Europe. It ‘condemned Europe because of its participation in the 1999 aggression against Yugoslavia, which was an expression of American imperialist strategy’ (Komšić 2007, p.28). The Socialists argued that ‘Europe has participated in the destruction of its own interest and universal values such as freedom, equality and humanity, by obediently and blindly following the American administration (Komšić 2007, p.28). However, at the party sixth congress in 2003, the Socialists formulated a radically new goal: the accession of Serbia into the EU. This marked a rhetoric break with the strong anti-European orientation of the 1990s, although they practically nullified this commitment through a refusal to extradite those charged with war crimes to The Hague Tribunal (Goati 2009, p.296).

Nevertheless, only 49% of the party electorate was in favour of Serbian EU membership in 2005, suggesting a difference between party leaders and the electorate (Goati 2006, p.38). That can be attributed to the fact that the Socialists’ supporters were mainly rural, poor, poorly educated, conservative, and prone to nationalism and a belief in the authoritarian role of state (Stojiljković 2007, p.141). However, 65% of its electorate supported Serbian EU accession, while 24% opposed it in 2009 (CESID 2009a, p.4).

The 2006 party programme was still consistent with the politics and values of the 1990s. It discussed the achievements of the rule of ‘one of the most important statesman of the 20th century, Slobodan Milošević’ (SPS 2008, p.2). It also objected to the results of ‘the October 2000 capitalist counter-revolution’, since ‘the Socialists saved Serbia from the transition, while those who came to power afterwards created dramatic social gaps’ (SPS 2008, p. 3). The party programme also stated that ‘every nation and every man has the right to develop freely in accordance with their traditions and needs, so the Socialists refuse to support those who impose their own beliefs and a way of life by using weapons and political violence’ (SPS 2008, p.9), an obvious reference to the Western countries and their politics towards Serbia over the last two decades. The party was ‘firmly against the cultural and spiritual degradation as a result of unconditional acceptance of the values that come from outside. Cultivation and preservation of the Serbian language and Cyrillic script should be of the utmost consideration of the national institutions’ (SPS 2009, p.9).

The party programme was cautious and sceptic, although it did not oppose the EU. The Socialists pointed to the EU’s hypocritical role in the process of separation of Serbia and Montenegro, since ‘it officially supported the survival of the state union, but on the other side imposed rules that ultimately led to its disappearance’ (SPS 2008, p.3). The Socialists also opposed any attempts to trade EU membership for the recognition of Kosovo, since ‘the West has not given up ‘the carrot and stick policy’ in its relation to Serbia’ (SPS 2009, p.44). However, they also argued that ‘it is the obligation of Serbia to join the European community

of nations in a way that it would secure its vital national interests and rapid economic development' (SPS 2009, p.44).

In 2008 election campaign, the Socialists conducted a campaign oriented towards socio-economic issues, while arguing that Kosovo must remain an integral part of Serbia at any cost. The party attitude towards the EU was rather vague and occasionally negative, given the support of main EU countries for Kosovo's independence, but it did not openly declare its position regarding the signing of the SAA with the EU. However, since it joined the pro-EU ruling coalition, the party became one of the main promoters of Serbian EU integration. The Declaration on political reconciliation and joint responsibility signed between the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Democratic Party in 2008 clearly stated that 'we have always belonged to Europe and have always shared European values. Our European identity is confirmed by our history and strategic orientation of Serbia is EU membership' (DS 2008, p.3). Furthermore, party leader and Serbian Minister of Interior Ivica Dačić decisively contributed to the EU's decision to abolish a visa regime with Serbia in December 2009 and received the prize 'The European of the year' (Politika 2011a).

Finally, the new programme, adopted in December 2010, showed the new pro-European orientation of the Socialists, since it did not contain any negative or critical stances towards the EU. It stated that the priority of Serbian foreign policy should be integration into the EU, based on close ties with countries and nations of the EU with whom Serbia shares common historical and civilization values and traditions as well as common economic interests (SPS 2011). The Socialists believed that 'Serbia should and can give a contribution to building a common European home, from the Atlantic to the Urals', and therefore they 'give full support and contribution to the negotiations on Serbia's membership in the EU' (SPS 2011).

Given its political past, the Socialists were not 'suitable' for a membership of any transnational party organisation. However, as explicitly stated in the programme, its goal is to obtain membership in the Socialist International (SI) and the Party of European Socialists (PES). So far, the Socialists have not managed to fulfil this goal, given the reluctance of some parties from former Yugoslavia and the EU to accept the new rhetoric and politics of Milošević's former party. Thus, the Socialist Party of Serbia has not yet proved its pro-European orientation to many of its European counterparts.

In summary, despite a long history of Eurosceptic attitudes, the Socialist Party of Serbia was en route to becoming a credible left-wing and pro-European party. Prior to 2008, the party resolutely rejected cooperation with The Hague Tribunal as a main precondition for Serbian EU integration, although it did not express principled opposition to it. Thus, the party position at that time could be characterised as qualified opposition. Since 2008, the party has embraced EU integration as its goal and supported all steps towards Serbian accession into the EU, provided this did not require acceptance of Kosovo's independence. Therefore, the party is characterised as a qualified supporter of Serbian EU integration. However, even the Socialists have moderated its stances on the Kosovo issue since 2010. The party leaders have specifically argued that Serbia needs to negotiate a historic agreement between Serbs and

Albanians in order to allow removal of the Kosovo issue from an agenda and cease to be a reason for constant blackmail (Politika 2011b). Party attitudes towards the substance of European integration were not elaborated, but it may be assumed that it will adopt a generally affirmative position, with some criticism of the neoliberal nature of European integration project.

4.7. Liberal Democratic Party- *There is no alternative to Europe*

The Liberal Democratic Party was founded in 2005 by members of the Democratic Party who were dissatisfied with the party politics after the assassination of the Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjić. The Liberal Democratic Party was a typical liberal party, rejecting any form of traditionalism, and advocating a secular state, multiculturalism, radical economic transition and the completion of privatization. The party believed that a state is an individual's main opponent and called for a radical reduction of state intervention and deregulation of the economy. It stood for a radical break with Serbian politics of the 1990s, a complete change of the government policy towards Kosovo and acceptance of the reality that Serbia has not had jurisdiction over Kosovo since 1999. It advocated accepting a compromise regarding Kosovo's status, one that will not insist on securing the best possible living conditions for all residents of Kosovo (Goati 2009, p.300). The party maintained close relations with liberal parties throughout Europe and the Balkans, as a member of the European Liberal Democrats (ELDR), the Liberal International as well as the LIBSEEN, a network of liberal parties from South-eastern Europe.

The party has always been the strongest proponent of Serbia's integration into Europe and was the only core party that supports Serbia's accession into NATO. It also called for a rapid and complete fulfilment of all criteria for EU integration, including cooperation with The Hague Tribunal, in order to achieve a Slovakian model of EU accession (LDP 2009, p.55), a reference to the successful overcoming of difficulties this country faced at the beginning of its EU accession. The party argued that Serbia must face its recent past and deal with the war crimes committed in the 1990s as the basis of societal modernisation (Bochsler 2010, p.107). Although an opposition party, it supported government's legislative proposals aimed at speeding up European integration of the country. In 2009, 91% of its voters favoured Serbia joining the EU, while 64% expressed significant European identity (CESID 2009a, p.4).

Given its unconditional support, this party may be categorised as the strongest proponent of EU membership among Serbian political parties. As the only core Serbian party that insisted on a new policy towards Kosovo and did not resolutely advocate that Kosovo is a part of Serbia, the Liberal Democratic Party expressed unqualified support for Serbian EU membership. The party has yet to adopt an elaborated position on the EU as such, but it may be assumed, based on its liberal ideology and politics, that party will remain the most pro-EU political force in the country.

4.8. New Serbia- There is no alternative to Serbia, but...

New Serbia was formed in 1998 as a monarchist and conservative party advocating Serbia as the state of Serbian people, the Serbian Orthodox Church as the backbone of moral and spiritual renewal and the establishment of a parliamentary monarchy (NS 2010). However, as a member of a number of ruling coalitions after 2000, the party did not insist on the creation of parliamentary monarchy, while in all other programmatic-political questions, it strongly supported the Democratic Party of Serbia (Goati 2009, p.295). The party did not have relations with any European party federations, although it has showed an interest in becoming a member of the European People's Party.

The party programme (NS 2010, p. 3) expressed the pro-European orientation of the New Serbia stating that the party believed Serbia belongs to the United Europe not only geopolitically but also because of its entire history and cultural heritage. Unlike other Serbian parties, its programme stated the party attitudes towards the substance of the European integration. It specifically argued that the party seeks to join and strengthen European institutions by supporting the transformation of the European Union from 'commercial society' to 'political society' (NS 2010, p. 3). The ultimate goal of this party was 'a federal Europe based on the solidarity and unity of nations and citizens, in which all nations would preserve their national and cultural identity' (NS 2010, p.3).

The party supported Serbian EU membership until 2008, although it occasionally opposed cooperation with The Hague Tribunal. After 2008, this party firmly opposed the signing of the SAA, accused the government of betraying national interests and announced its willingness to initiate the procedures for impeaching Serbian President Boris Tadić because of the signing of the SAA (NS 2010a). However, the party has shifted again its attitudes towards Serbian EU membership in 2010. It severed ties with the increasingly Eurosceptic Democratic Party of Serbia, and turned to the Serbian Progressive Party, with whom it agreed to a joint strategy aimed at toppling the ruling coalition and signed a coalition agreement (NS 2010b).

The New Serbia was therefore the last in a series of Serbian parties that has shifted its attitudes toward Serbian EU membership. It strategically accepted the pro-EU stance of its new and much stronger political partner due to a fear of political marginalisation, despite the fact that some senior party leaders, including a party vice-president Jovan Marić (Interview 2011), were emotionally deeply against it, given 'the negative consequences of EU policy to the Balkans'. Thus, the New Serbia's position may be temporarily characterised as belonging to both qualified opposition and qualified support for Serbian EU membership and a new example of how Serbian parties strategically and pragmatically change attitudes towards EU membership.

5. Conclusion

The working paper draws a number of tentative conclusion regarding Serbian parties' stances on EU membership, both conceptually and empirically. These conclusions are primarily

working assumptions based on the currently available data. First, the paper argues that theoretical concepts widely and successfully used in other CEE states to categorise party attitudes towards the EU are difficult to apply rigorously in the case of Serbian political parties. Specifically, the concepts developed by Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008a), Kopecky and Mudde (2002) as well as Usherwood and Flood (2007), assume that parties have clearly articulated views on the substance of European integration, and that different party positions can be classified accordingly. However, Serbian political parties have expressed elaborated attitudes towards Serbian membership in the EU only, not the substance of European integration. They appear to view the EU solely in terms of its policy towards Serbia and subsequently formed stances on EU membership. Questions such as what degree of sovereignty of EU member states is desirable, should the EU continue to enlarge or is it desirable to strengthen the role of EU institutions, have not been present in Serbian party politics since 2000. Furthermore, parties have rarely taken positions even on EU enlargement policies and exclusively perceived it as a set of political preconditions that the EU has imposed on Serbia. The Serbian case hence confirms Szczerbiak's (2008, p.240) arguments that the 'lack of data about party attitudes towards the substance of the European integration project, made categorizing parties in non-member states a particularly difficult exercise'.

Serbian parties will most likely adopt elaborated stances on the EU in the future as Serbia begins to negotiate accession conditions. Their positions will be either ideologically driven, consistent with the ideological profiles of the European party federations to which they (want to) belong, or formed based on strategic considerations. However, even then, parties may, as noticed in former CEE candidate countries, 'view EU integration almost exclusively through the prism of the accession negotiations and the kind of 'deal' that their country is likely to be offered' (Szczerbiak 2008, p.247). In addition, given the complexity of relations between Serbia and the EU, it will take a long time for Serbian parties to take a stand on the EU as such beyond the context of the country's post-Yugoslav legacy.

Second, due to the lack of data, the paper thus looks at party stances on Serbian EU membership. It maps out party positions by using an ordinal axis of party attitudes towards Serbian EU membership (Table 1). This framework covers all possible party stances, from strong support to outright opposition, and takes into account that party attitudes are dynamic categories and thus highly prone to changes. Since 2000, the majority of parties have supported or conditionally supported Serbian EU integration in principle, with the clear exception of the principled anti-Europeans, the Radicals. However, major differences arise when 'translating values into facts', especially in terms of coping with the causes and consequences of wars in the former Yugoslavia and in relation to The Hague Tribunal (Komšić 2007, p.9). The paper thus shows rather conditional support for Serbian EU membership with the Serbian political elite, particularly with the parties characterized as qualified opponents of Serbian EU integration, such as the Democratic Party of Serbia, whose conditions for Serbian EU membership practically equal an opposition to it. There is also a group of parties that are yet to fully prove their pro-EU credentials given their anti-European political heritage, primarily the Serbian Progressive Party and, to a lesser degree, the Socialist

Party of Serbia. Furthermore, Serbian parties' conflicting attitudes are reflected in their core voters' stances on this issue. More specifically, supporters of almost all parties overwhelmingly favoured Serbian EU membership, while at the same time a significant part of the electorate did not perceive the EU in a positive light or accept the key conditions for EU accession.

Third, the papers identify that, given the peculiar relationship between Serbia and the EU, Serbian parties' attitudes towards EU membership are strongly related to the issue of the status of Kosovo and the role of the EU and its member states in that respect. The key dividing line between the parties has been the dilemma of whether to proceed or not with Serbian integration into the EU after major EU countries recognised Kosovo as an independent state in 2008. What therefore makes Serbia different from other CEE countries is the fact that political debate regarding EU membership involves fundamental national issues, such as state territory and national borders, about which there has been no agreement between Serbia and the majority of EU countries. Some other eastern European and non-EU states do have similar outstanding issues, but the key difference is that their international borders have not been challenged by the EU or any of its member states.

The paper finally observes the fundamental shift in party attitudes toward this issue that has occurred over the last decade. Specifically, the parties (or their successors) that comprised the regime that was overthrown in 2000 became pro-EU parties either in power (Socialist Party of Serbia) or with a credible intention to seize power (Serbian Progressive Party). However, the most radical of them, the Serbian Radical Party, remained strongly anti-European, and, following an internal split in 2008, faces a threat of political marginalization in the near future. In addition, some parties that were in the forefront of the fight against Milošević's regime and made considerably contributions to Serbian accession into the EU, such the Democratic Party of Serbia and until recently the New Serbia, became strong critics of their former political allies' pro-European orientation and the most vocal proponents of the idea that the EU has been humiliating Serbia.

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