Linnæus University
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Master's Thesis

The Republic of Kosovo, awaited Member State in the European Union or a false illusion?

"Europe is our continent, and the EU is of our destiny"

- The Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo

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Table of Contents

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Faleminderit për mbeshtetjen dhe inkurajimin Sarë, je e mrekullueshem.

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Benjamin Shehu

Schmitten im Taunus, Germany

24th of May 2022

Abstract

The EU has taken a major role in The Republic of Kosovo, creating a new future for the country via the EU office in Kosovo with its role in implementing EU norms in Kosovo. Kosovo is a potential candidate state for the EU and has declared its interest in becoming an EU member state.

Kosovo has implemented crucial reforms and shows commitment to advancing on its European path. Kosovo does not fulfil the general requirements for the accession based on the Copenhagen criteria yet, and there remain major internal and external hindrances to its membership. The rule of law, despite the progress made in adapting the legal framework, Kosovo needs to step up its efforts to strengthen the independence of the judiciary. Additionally, Kosovo must fight corrupted structures and organised crime by building strong and independent institutions. Furthermore, reforms in the economic area are needed to tackle Kosovo's informal economy and unemployment. Despite, the Copenhagen Criteria, the main hindrances are the five non-recognizers in the EU and the required normalization process with Serbia. Kosovo must get its independence recognized by the five non-recognizers in the EU and stabilize its relations with Serbia before focusing on the accession to the EU.

Keywords: European Union, The Republic of Kosovo, Copenhagen criteria, accession, normative power, international relations.

List of abbreviations

Central and East European countries: CEEC

Civil society organisations: CSOs

Directorates-General: DGs

European Coal and Steel Community: ESCS

European Commission: COM

European Union Council: EU Council

Europe for Citizens: EFC

European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo: EULEX

European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights: EIDHR

European Security and Defence Policy: ESDP

European Union Special Representative: EUSR

European Parliament: EP

European Union: EU

Foreign Policy Instruments: FPI

Gross domestic product: GDP

International Court of Justice: ICJ

Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace: IcSP

International Monetary Fund: IMF

International relations: IR

Minor Field Studies: MFS

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe: OSCE

Provisional Institutions of Self-Government: PISG

Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: SFR Yugoslavia

Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty): TEU

The Republic of Kosovo: Kosovo

The Republic of Serbia: Serbia

The Stabilisation and Association Agreement: SAA

The Stabilisation and Association Process: SAP

The Stabilisation and Association Process Dialogue: SAPD

The Technical Assistance and Information Exchange: TAIEX

United Nations: UN

United Kingdom: UK

United Nations Mission in Kosovo: UNMIK

World Trade Organization: WTO

1. Introduction

On February 17th, 2008, after a two-year status proceeding inspected by the United Nations (UN), The Republic of Kosovo (Kosovo) finally declared its independence. Kosovo was rapidly recognized by the United States (US) and other western states, such as Germany, France, Sweden, the United Kingdom (UK), Canada, and Japan. At the same time, Serbia, China, and Russia strongly rejected Kosovo's sovereignty. Considerably, the view of Kosovo's status was also reflected within the European Union (EU); the majority of the member states recognized Kosovo as an independent state in the upcoming months, while five-member states did not; Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain. Still, they have not recognized Kosovo's independence[1].

Today, Kosovo is one of Europe's poorest countries, with a large part of the population dependent on social benefits and support from relatives abroad.[2] Despite a welfare system, it is still undeveloped with limited social services and provides low financial compensation to citizens. Furthermore, Kosovo's political and judicial institutions are relatively weak, with limited accountability, transparency, and high corruption. After the declaration of independence, the EU has repeated its willingness to assist Kosovo's economic and political development. The Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA), which entered into force on April 1st, 2016, connects the EU and Kosovo. The purpose behind the SAA is to initiate a promised relationship that claims mutual rights and obligations and covers many of the institutions; the EU will support the implementation of improved laws and give Kosovo the chance to get closer to the EU.[3]

The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, met the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo, Albin Kurti, on September 29th, 2021, in a press conference named EU-Western Balkans in Pristina,[4] where Kurti emphasized the value that EU investments

[1] Ioannis, Armakolas. James Ker-Lindsay (eds.) *The politics of Recognition and Engagement – EU Member State Relations with Kosovo*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, pp. 2.
[2] Britannica. *Self-declared independence*. https://www.britannica.com/place/Kosovo/Self-declared-independence (Retrieved: 2022.01.29)
[3] European Commission. *Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Union and Kosovo enters into force*. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news/stabilisation-and-association-agreement-between-european-union-and-kosovo-enters-force-2016-04-01_en (Retrieved: 2022.01.29)
[4] European Commission. 2021. *Press conference by President von der Leyen and Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti*. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZXd7IC1pGM&ab_channel=EuropeanCommission%2 (Retrieved: 2022.03.26)

have contributed to Kosovo. Kurti also declared that: "Kosovo wants to be a part of EU, Kosovo is in Europe and belongs to EU"[5].

Von der Leyen answered with "And we want a future where Kosovo and all the Western Balkans are part of the European Union. That is what we are working for. It is a long way to go. We have come a long way. We have made a lot of progress. We never lose sight of the goal: That is all Western Balkans, Kosovo, part of the European Union. That is what we want. And I think we owe it to the children that we have seen here that we have met here in the kindergarten. We owe it to the children because it is their future and we want them to have a European future, indeed, as you said, based on values – that is how the European Union has been founded – and living and thriving on economic success".[6]

Both the President of the Commission and the Prime Minister of Kosovo have shared visions of Kosovo being a member state in the EU through their speeches in Pristina. The will to include Kosovo in the EU seems to be present on both sides, so how come Kosovo is still not part of the EU?

1.1 Problem formulation, purpose, and research question

Kosovo is a potential candidate state to the EU[7] and has, over the years, as a sovereign state, declared its interest in becoming an EU member state. The EU has also stated how the Union is open to including countries in the Balkan region but that the membership must be preceded by political, economic, and judicial domestic reforms. Kosovo must develop a peaceful and inclusive society based on the EU's promoted membership criteria in democratic governance, the rule of law and market economic principles. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to explore whether Kosovo fulfils the requirements for an EU accession.

The study will be explored through the following research question:

- Does The Republic of Kosovo fulfil the general requirements for the accession to the EU based on the Copenhagen criteria? If not, what are the remaining hindrances?

[5] Ibid.
[6] European Commission. *Statement by President von der Leyen on the occasion of her official visit to Kosovo*. 2021. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news/statement-president-von-der-leyen-occasion-her-official-visit-kosovo-2021-09-29_en (Retrieved: 2022.02.23)
[7] European Commission. *Negotiations status*. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/negotiations-status_en (Retrieved: 2022.02.23)

1.2 Disposition

The first part of the thesis introduces the relationship between the EU and Kosovo, where the problem formulation, purpose, and the research question are presented.

The second part includes the theoretical and analytical framework. The theoretical part of this thesis derives from liberalism, liberal beliefs, and liberalism in IR, while the analytical framework is Ian Manners' explanation of normative power, the Copenhagen Criteria, and the Special process for Western Balkans.

The third part presents previous research beginning with Kosovo's recognition engagements, the EU's support and interference in Kosovo, EU assistance in Kosovo, and the relation normalization between Kosovo-Serbia.

The fourth presents the case selection, methodological awareness, validity, delimitations, material, evaluation of sources, interviews, the Minor Field Studies scholarship and finally, alternative approaches.

The fifth part presents the result and analysis of the study, including the answers from the individual interviews conducted during the research in Kosovo.

The sixth part presents the conclusions and answers the study's research question and shares possible future research on the topic.

2. Theoretical and analytical framework

The theoretical part of this thesis derives from liberalism, liberal beliefs, and liberalism in IR. The analytical framework is Ian Manners' explanation of normative power, the Copenhagen Criteria, and the Special process for Western Balkans. A summarisation of the theory is presented in the end.

2.1 Liberalism and liberal beliefs

Liberalism is the ideology of the industrialised West, imbued with liberal beliefs such as political, economic, and cultural life. Liberalism supports transparency, discussions, self-determination, and as well moral drive. The most essential moral and ideological attitudes of liberalism are incorporated into values and beliefs, such as individualism, freedom, reason, justice, and toleration[8]. The concept of the individual has been of essential political importance after feudal times, where families, localities, collectives, or social classes were identified by groups having common interests and identities. However, as feudalism shifted to progressively market-based societies, people were offered a broader scope of alternatives and opportunities. People were urged to think for themselves in personal conditions. For instance, a servant whose family worked and lived in the same land and ground became "free" and obtained the capacity to choose their workplace or even totally leave the land and look for alternative villages, towns, or cities.[9] The firm belief in the significance of the individual brings the condition of individual freedom.

Individual liberty is, for liberals, in several ways crucial political value that unites the principles of the liberal belief. Early liberals would suppose that liberty is a natural right, an essential need for human life. Liberal values also allow people to follow their interests, such as choosing where to live, where to work or what to purchase.[10] With liberal belief, the faith increased in the individual and freedom to the degree that people are rational, thinking human beings who can define and pursue what is best for their interests[11]. In contrast, justice implies a specific consideration of moral judgement, particularly the spread of rewards and punishment. In short, justice can be explained as what each individual is "due", as the author explains. The limited thought of social justice relates to the spread of material benefits in

[8] Heywood, Andrew. *Political Theory : an Introduction*. Seven ed., Palgrave Macmillan, 2021, pp. 23.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid, pp. 24.
[11] Ibid.

societies, such as salaries, profits, accommodations, health care and welfare advantages[12]. The liberal idea of justice is the belief in the equality of different sorts. Primarily, individualism suggests a commitment to fundamental equality. Individuals are viewed to be born equal, and each individual is of equal moral value as part of the idea of natural rights. The norm of natural rights or human rights exceeds the standard of state sovereignty, and liberals are prone to think of ideas as global justice and decolonisation.[13] The liberal social moral is marked by the readiness to agree and, in some matters, honour moral, cultural and political variety. Diversity is ingrained in the principle of individualism and the hypothesis that individuals are separate and extraordinary creatures.

Nevertheless, the liberal priority for variety has been related to tolerance. Tolerance and freedom of speech are moral ideals and social principles. In this regard, the objective of personal autonomy is portrayed, and so is the set of norms regarding how individuals must behave towards each other.

For instance, the first liberal instance of tolerance appeared in the seventeenth century by John Milton and John Locke, who defended religious freedom. Locke claimed that the correct function of government is to protect life, liberty, and property[14]. Tolerance must be extended to all issues considered private, such as religion, even if there are moral concerns that must be left to the individual.[15]

2.2 Liberalism in international relations (IR)

The liberal thoughts and values of individualism, freedom, reason, justice, and tolerance combined with doing good for helping others are analysed in the context of liberalism in international relations (IR). Liberalism as a model of government has been incredibly successful, with more than 75 liberal democracies in the world, which is the dominant regime-type. Liberal democracies dominate Europe and the Americas and increase in parts of Africa and Asia.[16]

[12] Ibid, pp. 27.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid, pp. 29.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Baylis, John, et al. *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*. Eight ed., Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. 104.

The Harvard scholar Stanley Hoffmann once claimed that "international affairs have been the nemesis of Liberalism"[17], continuing with "the essence of Liberalism is self-restraint, moderation, compromise and peace"[18], whereas "the essence of international politics is exactly the opposite: troubled peace, at best, or the state of war"[19]. Liberal internationalists trust that power politics are outcomes of ideas, and necessarily, ideas can change with time. Even if IR has been uninviting considering liberal ideas of continuous changes, it does not mean that the international cannot be reconstructed in the liberalism's self-concept[20]. Intellectual liberals believed that the problem of war could be resolved through international rules and laws, requiring the state's self-interest. Additionally, they believe that trade and other border-crossing movements would ease the peace in IR.[21] An alternative interpretation of this democratic peace is that liberal states tend to be wealthy and have more to lose by engaging in conflicts than poorer authoritarian states. The explanation is that liberal states are likely to have friendly relations with other liberal states. For instance, a war between Canada and the United States (USA) is not imaginable, not due to their liberal democratic constitutions, but rather because both countries share similar economic and political relations approaches.[22]

As mentioned before, liberalism is based on the individual's right to liberty, life, and property. Therefore, liberals underline the welfare of the individual as the essential element in the political system. Political systems such as monarchy or tyranny cannot secure and protect individuals' life and liberty. Thus, the primary concern of liberalism is to form institutions that protect individual liberty and freedom by restricting power and controlling political influence[23]. Even if the elements are of domestic matters, the domain of IR is also significant since states interfering abroad can firmly affect liberty domestically. Liberals are especially disturbed by foreign military politics because states must build their military power to go into war, and the power can be used to start a war against other states. Therefore, political systems ingrained in liberalism are more likely to limit military power and ensure that civilians have

[17] Hoffmann, S. Janus, and Minerva: *Essays in the Theory and Practice of International Politics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987, pp. 396
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Baylis, John, et al, 2019, pp. 104.
[21] Ibid, pp. 106.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Jeffrey W. Meiser in *International Relations Theory.* Stephen McGlinchey, Rosie Walters and Christian Scheinpflug (eds) E-international Relations Publishing, 2018. https://www.e-ir.info/publication/international-relations-theory/ (Retrieved: 2022.04.13)

control over the military. The central issue for liberals is to develop political systems where states are permitted to protect themselves from other states or threatening actors without undermining individual freedom.[24] The first institutional check around power would be that elections are free and fair so that citizens can remove their political leaders from power, thereby securing an essential assessment of government conduct. The second important check would be the limit of political power; the power is spread at levels of government, for instance, parliamentary power, legal power, and executive power, which secures the balance of power. Therefore, democratic states are not likely to go to war; as mentioned; democratic states have a constraint on their ability. Democratic states also see each other as legitimate and non-threatening, making it easier to collaborate than non-democratic states[25].

The author points out that the growth of democracy is a pretty recent phenomenon in human history, meaning that there are very few cases where democratic states have had the opportunity to go to war with each other, and democracy might not only contribute to peace, but other factors linked with democracy have roots of peace, such as power, culture, economics, and alliances[26]. However, some scholars suppose that even if democratic states do not go to war, they are likely to be offensive towards non-democratic states, for instance, when the USA went to war with Iraq in 2003. International institutions, organizations, and norms of the world are built and formed based on the domestic liberal institutions and standards to restrict states' capacity to use violence. Still, power is more thinly spread internationally compared to power within states. For instance, according to international law, wars of hostility are forbidden, even if there is no international police enforcement to enforce this law. An eventual invader or attacker knows that if it breaks the law, it endangers its position in the international community. For instance, states can themselves impose sanctions, but international organizations, such as the UN, can intervene with military force. The violent conditions can also be excluded from international trade, foreign aid, or diplomatic recognition[27]. International organizations ratify international law and agreements to form an international system that exceeds states; one example would be the UN, which has set goals for climate, ensured diplomacy among states, and gives member states opportunities through speeches to impact the international community[28].

[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid, pp. 2.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.

2.3 The concept of Ian Manners' Normative Power

One known researcher within liberalism in IR focusing on the EU, Europe, and its security arrangement is Ian Manners', whose view of normative power is going to be presented in this thesis.

The concept of normative power is a try to assume that the EU is not only formed on normative fundamentals but also acts in a normative way in world politics, according to Manners'. For example, he's claiming that the EU's international role is not what the EU does or says but what it is. The EU can be conceptualised as an actor that can change the norms in the international system. The EU should act to enlarge its norm in the international system, where he considers the EU a normative power.[29] The significance of a transnational European Parliament (EP), the conditions of democracy, and the striving toward human rights, by stopping the death penalty are attributed; they also constitute norms of policies for states and IR. According to Manners', various norms, and approaches, which the EU goes after, are a part of what can be expected in IR. The fundamental idea of Manners' discussion considering the EU's international role as a power of norms, with the state focus of concern; came from the developments of the 1990s in IR invoked to revaluating the ideas of military power and civilian power in the sequence considering EU's normative power in world politics.[30] Civilian power includes the centrality of economic power to achieve national goals, the importance of diplomatic cooperation to solve international problems, and the willingness to use legally-binding supranational institutions to achieve international progress[31]. Manners' states that "Europe's attainment is normative rather than empirical …. It is perhaps a paradox to note that the continent which once ruled the world through the physical impositions of imperialism is now coming to set world standards in normative terms"[32]. The quote from Rosecrance's says that Europe's accomplishment might be more normative than empirical. In this regard, the questions are raised on how the international role of the EU can be better understood? Manners' argues that by focusing away from the debate over both civilian and military power, it is more feasible to think of the abstract effect of the EU's international role as appear for normative power.[33]

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[29] Manners, Ian. *Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?*. Journal of Common Market Studies, vol. 40, no. 2, 2002, pp. 253.
[30] Ibid, pp. 235–236.
[31] Ibid, pp. 236–237.
[32] Rosecrance, R. 'The European Union: A New Type of International Actor. In Zielonka, J. (ed.) *Paradoxes of European Foreign Policy* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International), 1998, pp. 15–23.
[33] Manner, Ian. 2002, pp. 239.

Manners' view of power is something that is sustainable, something that lasts on the latest military intervention; according to him, one needs to listen and think of what power is; Manners' defines normative power as "normative power is empowering actions in concert for the planetary good. Actions include recognition, sharing, and reconciliation"[34]. He further illustrated power through the table below and raised the question, who is the power for? He exemplifies hard and soft power as the "self", meaning "us", for instance, the US. However, normative power must be shared; it is about achieving something together. Manners' claims that power definitions tend to talk about power and international power, as "If the power A gets B to do what A wants"[35]. Power is the power of the self over others; it is getting what you want from somebody else. Power in Manners' understanding and the normative power understanding is about not "self over but with the other". Hard power forces people to do what they would not do otherwise, whether it's economic sanctions, military interventions, or diplomatic pressure. While soft power goes along with what is good for you is as well suitable for the other actors, for instance, to liberalise one state's economy and open it up to international products, investors, and companies.[36]

Table 2.1: Manners' explanation of power

	Hard power	Soft power	Normative power
Who is the power for?	Self	Self	shared
What is power?	Self over others	Self over others	Self with other
What form of power?	Coercion	Hegemony	Empower
Descriptions of power?	Tactics	Persuasion	Action
Examples of power?	Military payment sanctions	Culture government engagement	Recognition sharing reconciliation

Source: Ian, Manners. *European Union, Normative Power, and Planetary Politics*, 2021.

[34] Ian, Manners. Region Europe. 2021. *European Union, Normative Power, and Planetary Politics* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWuquXW8ixw (Retrieved 2022.03.20)
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.

The ability to describe what is *normal* in politics is the most significant power of all.[37] Manners' explains that countries in Europe have a history that has resulted in common norms, values, peace, and solidarity. The history in Europe has formed a new kind of power, where norms and values are protected; they symbolise common values in IR, which is the power itself. The normative power is integrated into liberal states within, for instance, political, economic, and cultural life, focusing on common norms and values. Even if normative power doesn't contain military capacity, the liberal sharing of views, thoughts, and values creates power. In this matter, the world could be influenced without military power because the common values are the actual power.

One interesting metaphor would be that the EU is a big family with common values, and if one gets in trouble with one member of the family, you'll need to fight the whole family. If you fight with one member state, you have challenged the entire EU.

Based on the normative power, the EU relations towards other countries are based on the previous mentioned specific norms; to collaborate with the EU, these norms need to be accepted and absorbed by other countries.

2.4 The accession criteria for EU membership (Copenhagen Criteria)

The Copenhagen criteria were established by the European Council in 1993 in Copenhagen and strengthened by the Madrid European Council in 1995[38]. The Treaty on EU sets out conditions (Article 49 TEU). It claims that "Any European State which respects the values referred to in Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union. The European Parliament and national Parliaments shall be notified of this application. The applicant State shall address its application to the Council, which shall act unanimously after consulting the Commission and after receiving the consent of the European Parliament, which shall act by a majority of its component members. The conditions of eligibility agreed upon by the European Council shall be considered. The conditions of admission and the adjustments to the Treaties on which the Union is founded, which such admission entails, shall be the subject of an agreement between the Member States and the applicant State. This agreement shall be submitted for ratification by all the contracting States

[37] Ibid, pp. 254.
[38] EUR-Lex. *Accession criteria (Copenhagen Criteria)*. 2022. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/accession_criteria_copenhague.html?locale=en (Retrieved: 2022.02.13)

following their respective constitutional requirements"[39]. As well, principles (Article 6 TEU)[40] claim that every country wishing to become a member of the EU must meet:

1) "The Union recognises the rights, freedoms, and principles set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union of 7 December 2000, as adapted at Strasbourg, on 12 December 2007, which shall have the same legal value as the Treaties. The provisions of the Charter shall not extend the competencies of the Union as defined in the Treaties. The rights, freedoms and principles in the Charter shall be interpreted following the general provisions in Title VII of the Charter governing its interpretation and application and with due regard to the explanations referred to in the Charter that set out the sources of those provisions."[41]

2) "The Union shall accede to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Such accession shall not affect the Union's competences as defined in the Treaties."[42]

3) "Fundamental rights, as guaranteed by the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and as they result from the constitutional traditions common to the Member States, shall constitute general principles of the Union's law."[43]

All candidate countries must meet the accession criteria (Copenhagen criteria) before becoming a member state in the EU[44]. The criteria are following: "political criteria: stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protection of minorities;

[39] European Union. Official Journal of the European Union. *Article 49*. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:12016M049&from=HR (Retrieved: 2022.02.13)
[40] European Union. Official Journal of the European Union. *Article 6*. http://publications.europa.eu/resource/cellar/d406be9e-55ae-4851-a1de-c8d0cb29527d.0005.01/DOC_1 (Retrieved: 2022.02.13)
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] EUR-Lex. *Accession criteria (Copenhagen Criteria).* 2022.

economic criteria: a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competition and market forces;

administrative and institutional capacity to effectively implement the acquis and ability to take on the obligations of membership."[45] It is crucial for the EU, while taking new member states in, to keep the drive of European integration. Only the EU decides when the candidate country has met the Copenhagen Criteria, and only the EU decides when it's ready to welcome the state into the EU as a new member state[46].

2.4.1 Acquis Communautaire of EU

The EU's acquis is the core of mutual rights and obligations binding all member states in the EU, containing principles and political objectives of the Treaties. Legislation implemented in the application of the treaties and the case-law of the Court of Justice of the EU, statements and resolutions implemented by the EU, proceedings linked with common foreign and security policy, proceedings related with the justice and home affairs, international accordance assumed by the EU and assumed by the member states among themselves in different EU pursuits. The country applying for an EU membership must accept all acquis before they are ready to join the EU; exceptions from the acquis are only permitted in extraordinary situations and restricted in extent. Therefore, the country must adopt the acquis in the national legal order before the date of the accession into the EU and are inserted under an obligation from the date[47]. The chapters of the acquis are divided into 35 parts [48].

2.4.2 Steps for joining the EU

The proceeding for the country to join the EU contains three steps:

1) Just as soon as the country is ready to become an official candidate for membership, the formal talks have started.
2) The country progressed to formal membership talks, a proceeding that demands the acquiring of the EU law, appeal and adapt judiciary, administrative, economic, and other amendments for the country to fulfil the order for joining.

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[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] EUR-Lex. *Acquis*. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/acquis.html (Retrieved: 2022.02.13)
[48] European Commission. European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations. *Chapter of the acquis*. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/conditions-membership/chapters-acquis_en (Retrieved: 2022.02.13)

3) After the talks and the adapted reforms that have been finished by both the EU and the country in the matter, the country can join the EU.[49]

It must be underlined that the membership talks are not possible if not all EU governments agree, through a unanimous decision by the EU Council, to the frame for negotiations with the country on the matter and the talks between ministers and ambassadors of the national governments.

Talks are under every chapter based on factors:[50]

1) In the screening report, the Commission accomplishes a comprehensive paper along with the country in all policy fields to demonstrate how competently the country has taken the necessary steps. The report's outcome is either recommendation from the Commission to start talks immediately or demand some steps; opening *benchmarks* is the first factor to be fulfilled.
2) Conclude positions, before the talks can start, the country must give in its position, while the EU must adopt a similar position. The EU will place closing benchmarks in the position, which the country must fulfil before the talks in the policy field can be finalised.

How fast or how slow the talks develop hangs on the reforms with EU laws in the country; starting the discussions simultaneously as another candidate country does not mean that both countries will complete the negotiations at the same time.[51] First, no talk or chapter is concluded until every EU government is pleased with the candidate country's progression. The talks are completed and closed when every chapter and its process are finalised.[52]

The documents are the country's membership of the EU, containing comprehensive subjects and conditions considering the membership, all the arrangements and limits, besides the elements of financial dispositions and the protection articles. For the treaty to be binding, it must be supported by the EP, EU Council and the COM; the treaty must be signed by all the EU countries and the candidate country and is ratified by the candidate country and all of the

[49] European Commission. *Steps towards joining*. 2022. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/steps-towards-joining_en (Retrieved: 2022.02.13)
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.

EU member states, as maintained by the constitutional rules such as the legislate votes and referendum.[53] When the treaty is signed, the candidate country becomes an acceding country, which means that the country will become an entire EU member state on the date specified in the treaty. Meanwhile, the country profit from the adaptions and can remark on drafts of EU proposals, communications, and capabilities as "active observer status" in the EU. However, the country is allowed to speak but is not allowed to vote.[54]

2.5 Special process for Western Balkans

There is a special procedure for the Western Balkans; the relations between the EU and countries in the Western Balkans go down to a distinct framework called the stabilisation and association process. The process contains three sights:

"1) stabilising the countries politically and encouraging their swift transition to a market economy

2) promoting regional cooperation

3) eventual membership of the EU"[55].

2.6 Theory summarised

Liberalism is the ideology of the industrialised West, imbued with liberal beliefs such as individualism, freedom, reason, justice, and toleration. Liberalism supports transparency, discussions, self-determination, and moral drive. The government must establish conditions for the people to enable them to do good for themselves, for instance, setting and implementing private possession conditions for the economy in the market to function and highlight the economic way of thinking. Liberalism as a model of government has been incredibly successful, with more than 75 liberal democracies in the world, which is the dominant regime-type. Intellectual liberals believed that the problem of war could be resolved through international rules and laws, requiring the state's self-interest.

Additionally, they believe that trade and other border-crossing movements would ease the peace in IR. The concept of normative power assumes that the EU is not only formed on normative fundamentals but rather that it acts in a normative way in world politics. Manners'

[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.

claims that the EU is formed in an essential observation concerning its forming in the international role of the EU; not what the EU does or says, but instead what it is. The EU can also be conceptualised as an actor that can change the norms in the international system. The country that becomes a member state in the EU must adopt the entire framework of the EU rules; TEU sets out the conditions for an EU accession. The EU's acquis is the essence of mutual rights and obligations that are binding for all member states in the EU, progressing and containing the Treaties' pleasing principles and political objectives. All candidate countries must meet the accession criteria (Copenhagen criteria) before becoming a member state in the EU. Also, there is a special procedure for the Western Balkans; the relations between the EU and countries in the Western Balkans go down to a distinct framework.

3. Previous research

The previous research part of the thesis focuses on the independence recognition of Kosovo, the EU's support and interference in Kosovo, the EU's assistance in Kosovo, and the relations and normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia. The aim of the chosen previous research is to deeper understand the relations between Kosovo and the EU. However, many previous books and articles considering Kosovo, in general, refer one way or another to the war between Kosovo and Serbia. Therefore, the focus of the thesis has purpose not been to focus too much on the war since there is a large amount of research available already regarding that topic.

3.1 The independence recognition of Kosovo

The international community is divided considering Kosovo in two ways, the recognisers, and the non-recognisers, which set the standards for Kosovo's relations with the world. With the recognisers, the relations are good, firm, and fruitful. In the meantime, the non-recognisers reject Kosovo's sovereignty and keep their distance. The author also mentions that there are a few states that are between those two categories. For instance, among recognisers, some states have formed strong relations with Kosovo in various political areas, and states have even been on the frontline of helping Kosovo in the international arena. On the other edge, the non-recognising countries contradicted Kosovo's independence and refused to cooperate; some countries even tried to stop Kosovo from being recognised by other states and from joining other international bodies.[56] However, the difference between recognisers and non-recognisers is not enough; even if recognition is essential, the broader cooperation and interaction among states continue, while the recognition is only a starting point. The political, economic, and cultural establishment is more persistent among countries. Therefore, recognition does not necessarily mean involvement. Time has revealed that countries that have recognised Kosovo but still have, if any interaction at all, were diplomatic relations or broader economic relations. The past decade has also demonstrated that the non-recognition countries do not naturally prevent from having interactions; there are a few countries that have not recognised Kosovo but still have an advanced range of relations, including usual contacts among officials[57]. The degree of recognition and involvement in the international arena is identical with the member states in the EU; member states that have great relations with Pristina have little to do with if Kosovo is recognised or not by the

[56] Ioannis, Armakolas. James Ker-Lindsay (eds.) *The politics of Recognition and Engagement – EU Member State Relations with Kosovo*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, pp. 2.
[57] Ibid, pp. 2–3.

country in the matter. The strong recognisers in the European context are the United Kingdom (UK) and Germany; the UK appeared to be one of the strongest supporters of Kosovo's independence and at the front line of the international arena to secure Kosovo's acceptance by the international community. Germany has as well been a strong supporter of Kosovo, but the route to recognition was more slowly. The hard non-recognisers in the EU are Cyprus and Spain, both taking entirely unbending status about Kosovo. Since 2008 there has been limited contact between Nicosia and Pristina, while Spain has a different approach, with no contact at all. The officials in Spain avoid both direct and indirect contact with officials from Kosovo.[58]

The author also claims that among the two poles of strong recognisers and hard non-recognisers, there are examples of both weak recognisers and soft non-recognisers. For instance, the Czech Republic has recognised Kosovo's independence and established diplomatic relations but does not have an ambassador in Pristina[59]. Meanwhile, Poland also recognised Kosovo's independence but has not yet established diplomatic relations with Pristina. In this sense, in both cases, the interactions with Kosovo are limited.[60] However, there are three other member states the in EU that have not recognised Kosovo but have even so had considerable contact with Pristina. Greece has been one of these countries; Athens keeps friendly bilateral relations with Pristina. In reality, the involvements have been so broad that Greece recognises Kosovo in all except the name. As well, Slovakia has built up links with Kosovo[61], which has given the supposition that Slovakia would be the first of the five non-recognisers to change its status and recognise Kosovo, even if it might appear imaginable now. Last is Romania[62], which had the least contact with Kosovo, and the author categorises Romania as the country between soft and hard non-recognisers. Romania has

[58] Ibid, pp. 3–4.
[59] Embassy of the Czech Republic in Pristina. *About the Embassy*. https://www.mzv.cz/pristina (Retrieved 2022.04.19)
[60] Ioannis, Armakolas. James Ker-Lindsay (eds.), 2020, pp. 4–5.
[61] Republic of Kosovo, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora. *Minister Gërvalla hosted in a meeting the Head of Liaison Office of the Slovak Republic*. https://www.mfa-ks.net/en/single_lajmi/4370 (Retrieved: 2022.05.19)
[62] Radu, Marinas. Richard, Williams. Reuters. *Romania will not recognize Kosovo independence*. 2008. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kosovo-romania-idUSL18447620080218 (Retrieved: 2022.05.19)

been prepared to interact with Kosovo compared with Cyprus[63] and Spain,[64] which have been totally against it.[65]

Various member states have reacted differently towards Kosovo and can give knowledge of how the EU's foreign policy is developed and implemented in cases where different views occur among the states. The EU acts by unity considering foreign policy, while the common foreign and security policy stands in dimensions where each member state has the right to a veto. If an agreement cannot be reached within all the member states, or at least the "constructive abstention' of dissenting members, the EU is unable to act"[66].

Table 3.1: Categorisation of EU member state relations with Kosovo

Policies towards Kosovo (country cases)	Recognition	Non-recognition
Engaged	"Strong recognisers"	"Soft non-recognisers"
	United Kingdom, Germany	Greece, Slovakia, Romania
Not engaged	"Weak recognisers" Czech Republic Poland	"Hard non-recognisers" Cyprus Spain

Source: Ioannis, Armakolas. James Ker-Lindsay (eds.), 2020, pp. 2.

The author explains that even if Kosovo is not as a significant matter for the EU as other topics, for instance, the conflict in Ukraine or Iran's nuclear program[67], the matter has been notable in EU foreign policy in the past years. The Kosovo topic is an important issue for the

[63] Republic of Cyprus, Ministry of foreign Affairs. *Cyprus expresses grief on UDI of Kosovo*. www.mfa.gov.cy/mfa/Embassies/Embassy_Warsaw.nsf/All/88E2B5608E91E3F3C12573FE0035F8F8/$file/Cyprus%20expresses%20grief%20on%20UDI%20of%20Kosovo.pdf (Retrieved 2022.04.11)
[64] Agon, Demjaha. Pol, Vila Sarriá. European Western Balkans. *Spain's Impact on Kosovo's Accession Process into the EU*. 2021. https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2021/05/25/spains-impact-on-kosovos-accession-process-into-the-eu/ (Retrieved: 2022.03.15)
[65] Ioannis, Armakolas. James Ker-Lindsay (eds.), 2020, pp. 4–5.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid, pp. 6.

EU because the Western Balkans is viewed as the Union's "backyard"[68]. Albania, North Macedonia, Kosovo, The Republic of Serbia (Serbia) and Bosnia and Hercegovina are assumed to be likely to be future EU members. Although the differences in status considering Kosovo, the EU has been capable of leading and shaping a common position. After Kosovo's declaration in 2008, the EU established EULEX with the mission of establishing the rule of law in Kosovo. The member states also find a way to allow EC to mark the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Kosovo, a move which is practically understood as the first move toward a future membership in the EU.[69]

3.2 The EU support and interference in Kosovo

After eight years under UN administration functioning under Security Council Resolution 1244/199, Kosovo demonstrated to the international community both political and judicial challenges. The EU has, since 1999 in the Kosovo war, been nearly concerned with all views of governance and has frequently established dedication to all Western Balkan states' membership in the EU. The announcement of sovereignty through the political and economic territory disguises challenges. However, the EU's being in the area is strong; United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was fundamentally a coalition between the EU, the UN, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), with its role in international politics[70] according to the author, while the COM's interference in Kosovo is "unchartered and not without contention"[71]. Although there are various international agencies in Kosovo, the EU is the primary actor and donor in post-independence Kosovo; the difficulty for the EU has been its register is tough to unravel from the general international interference[72].

Nevertheless, the representation of the EU has, in addition, experienced effects on Kosovo's economy, where the COM provided responsibility as part of the UNMIK coalition. In accordance with the COM's statistics, 37 % of the population in Kosovo lives in poverty; in 2005, the Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita was the lowest in the Western Balkan, even though the EU's work to support growth and investing[73]. While it is surely the case that

[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid, pp. 6.
[70] Bretherton, C. and Vogler, J. *The European Union as Global Actor* (2nd edition), New York: Routledge, 2006.
[71] Fagan, Adam. *Europe's Balkan Dilemma*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010, pp. 160.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid, 160–161.

the economic restoration is the key to Kosovo's stability and eventually its control, the critique of the EU's role must be positioned in the circumstances, any progress in the economy is hindered by the failure of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG), the state or the governmental system that was settled in 2002, but now governs Kosovo. The failure of the PISG was an effect of the undecided status of the province before 2008, and even if the duty for the economic failure cannot totally be placed on the EU.[74] Nevertheless, such critiques and problems must be recognised that the providence of assistance to Kosovo has been the maximum comprehensive and challenging foreign policy and external mission for the EU so far. The primary focus of the COM's post-independence interference was structuring the judiciary of the new state, which practically meant involving enormously time-consuming proceedings of experts from member states in the EU tailing regional judges, law enforcement organizations and officials[75]. The most evident difference with other intercessions in the Western Balkans considers democratisation and democracy advancement is insufficient and has been subjected to a predominant focus on the rule of law, state capability, effectiveness and most crucial possibly, local ownerships. The COM is the territory's major single aid donor, with more than €2 billion from 1999 to 2007 and €60 million endued in 2008, as a part of the "annual program for vital infrastructure projects"[76]. Even though the broad source dedication to the final price has not been approximate and clear around Kosovo's capability to fulfil the term of EU requirements, the COM remnant is firmly dedicated to Kosovo's European standpoint.[77]

More than any other candidate or potential candidate country in the Western Balkans, Kosovo will be conducted and supported membership by the COM itself. Whereas it is not in any sense guarantee of initial entrance or "extenuation with regard to meeting the strict criteria"[78], meaning that the state building, governance, and the rule of law have inseparably leapt to the EU accession in a procedure that has not been seen somewhere else in the region. Eventually, it is only a membership in the EU for Kosovo that will indicate the success of EU support and interference. The relations between the EU and Kosovo are thereby rather primary so far as the author explains with "corrective powers a reformulation of the role of the international

[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid, pp. 161.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.

community – with the rigidities of conditionality"[79]. While the COM's dedication to Kosovo seems firm, there are some severe restrictions on progress toward the European view; the main hindrance is the scope in which Kosovo can fulfil the rigorous Copenhagen criteria, as well other political, economic, and social commitments, and requirements[80].

Yet, the primary display of the EU's existence in Kosovo EULEX, as described by the COM; "the largest civilian mission ever launched under the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)', the role of EULEX is not to govern Kosovo – it is not an EU version of the Office of the High Representative in BiH – but 'to assist and support the Kosovo authorities in the rule of law… specifically (with regard to reform of) police, judiciary and customs, to establish sustainable and accountable law enforcement agencies within the new state, and create a 'multi-ethnic police and customs service, ensuring that these institutions are free from political interference and adhere to internationally recognised standards and European best practices"[81]. In the supply of its support and monitoring for the judiciary authority and law enforcement bodies, EULEX includes three elements: the customs, the courts, and the police; however, while the objective of the mission is to mainly give technical support and guidance for all views of the legislations service and authorities, which also keeps limited executive powers[82].

3.3 EU assistance

The scheduling and delivery of EU assistance for Kosovo are finished in the circumstances of the "centralised de-concentrated management",[83] which in practice means that the government in Kosovo does not still have the ability to control and manage EU assistance; therefore, the COM is instantly involved in the allocation of aid. In requirements of identifying preferences or support, the COM rests on the Agency for Co-ordination of Development and European Integration in Pristina.[84] In the procedure, the agency work is a part of the Prime Minister's office and has crucial administrator responsibilities. The agency has an important role considering coordinating and helping to plan the assistance. In accordance with the broad aims traced in the European Partnership for Kosovo, the agency works with all ministries in the governments and state institutions to distinguish progress for

[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid, pp. 162.
[81] Ibid, pp. 164.
[82] Ibid, pp. 164.
[83] Ibid, pp. 169.
[84] Ibid.

EU funding and possible plan proposals. The then agreed proposals are delivered to COM in Brussels for verification and valuation. The Com will reach all the appropriate Directorates-General (DGs) to see if the proposals fit in the general progress program for Kosovo, as well finding alternative opinions of member states in the EU considering the investing interests or possibilities for dividing information. The discussion continues with the World Bank, the UN and other development agencies in Kosovo.[85]

3.4 The relation and normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia

The procedure of the decay of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) at the beginning of the 1990s was attended by military disputes and conflicts in severe places in Kosovo, dredging up major political conflicts and disagreements. Even if the crisis in SFR Yugoslavia was marked by a mixture of factors that involved identity politics, awareness of federalism, and economic differences, rather a firm economic growth and ideological commonality had achieved and secured peace in Yugoslavia for a period[86]. The author argues that speculations were brought up considering the economic growth and ideological commonality would result in "former Yugoslavia into a supranational structure"[87], where the states would be able to secure long-lasting peace. The speculations were just speculations; the reality was different, and the Yugoslav wars were a fact[88]. Although the proceeding of countries in Western Balkans accession in EU has been confronted with several difficulties, obviously aiming that the involved states must appropriately be resolved before memberships in the EU is imaginable. Unfortunately, history indicates that states in the Balkans are not capable of resolving conflicts without engagement from the international community. The issue of political geography has been of essential importance for the political progress in the Balkans, forming circumstances where a single international actor could never be effective, considering intermediation of the political conflicts. There were feasible periods of peace, but the period was not continual and stable but rather limited[89].

The separation of conflicts and their impact initiated new viewpoints on the connection between various ethnicities in Yugoslavia; conflicts and revolts were seen through "the ethnic

[85] Ibid.
[86] Mehmeti, Leandrit I. Radeljić, Branislav. (eds). *Kosovo and Serbia: Contested Options and Shared Consequences. Pittsburgh,* University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016. pp. 216.
[87] Ibid.
[88] International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. *The Conflicts*. https://www.icty.org/en/about/what-former-yugoslavia/conflicts (Retrieved: 25.03.2022.)
[89] Mehmeti, Leandrit I. Radeljić, Branislav, et al, 2016, pp. 216.

lenses"[90] by international observers and the general media, who delineated a simple way to clarify the war's nature without considering the political, economic, and national complications. At the same time, the incidents of ethnicities of polity in the former Yugoslavia do not make way for different restrictions of the conflicts. The established clarifications regarding complaints associated with members of an ethnic group that triggered the ethnic conflicts appear to control such labelling[91]. Still, the effects of the conflicts completed the extended list of problems that various states of former Yugoslavia continue to come to conditions with the purpose of normalising the relations; the normalisation of relations is frequently relied on intermediation by the international communities.

For instance, the EU has many times led the way by opening the perspective for the EU integration proceedings and targeting its transformational and civilian powers that have already been used in CEEC. Due to the conflicts and wars of the Balkans countries, the EU has regulated its approach to the integration and initiated further circumstances with the purpose of "good neighbourly relations".[92] Serbia's decision to not acknowledge and recognise Kosovo's independence has made the situation tough for the EU considering both countries. However, the situation gets even more complex due to the fact that five member states in the EU have not recognised Kosovo's independence, making it more difficult to build up an ordinary policy regarding the issue, and set conditions, which could cause formal demand for recognition of Kosovo's independence from Serbia. The matter is something that Serbia can utilise up to a point but can rebound as a formal hindrance to its EU membership because only states with determined international territory and borders can join the EU.[93] The relations between Kosovo and Serbia are overall marked by an age-old course of political conflicts, challenges, and disagreements, but also a time of economic and cultural growth in the 1970s, which was by many Kosovo Albanians considered a golden time. The growth and development secured quite peaceful relations between Albanian and Serbian localities in Kosovo, which brought completely different circumstances in the 1980s; the decade was marked by continual failed efforts by the political elite in Kosovo to initiate dialogue with the authorities in Serbia, intermediated by the international communities. However, in late 1996, Ibrahim Rugova and Slobodan Milošević achieved agreements on the normalisation of education that was mediated by the Catholic Community of Sant'Egidio. Although, the

[90] Ibid, pp. 217.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.

agreement was never implemented, which resulted in students protesting in 1997, increasing the already strained and tense situations that caused the war from 1998 to 1999. The war in Kosovo has led to other circumstances of relations between Kosovo–Serbia and differentiated the situations for the population in Kosovo.[94]

Ever since, Kosovo and Serbia have been two divided actors concerning the normalisation of relations containing challenges, issues, and risks. According to the author, the actors cannot continue to disregard the strained relations; rather, they should expect to find shared similarities resulting in a mutual acceptance of the relations, that kind of agreement would for sure secure peace that both communities and countries would please and take advantage of. Meanwhile, the real situation is complex, with many challenges included, not due the normalisation of the relation is not possible but rather if there is a true desire to make normalisation a reality[95]. The actuality is that two different communities do not see each other with compassion but are rather both affected by conflicting history built up by their politicians and political elite.

The political elites that are in good positions in the society and hold some rights direct the communities and determine their national interests through persistent conflicts instead of collaboration within them. However, the hopeful perspective is that they have initiated the normalisation of the relations as part of the EU integration proceeding.[96] The statement of independence of Kosovo in 2008 amended the existing situation and placed the end of UNMIK, while the authorities in Serbia went against the declaration and determined to use all its legal and diplomatic resources to block Kosovo's independence. Moreover, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) published its advisory view in 2010, stating that Kosovo's declaration of independence was not breaking international law. The EU kept demanding dialogue between Belgrade–Pristina under the EU's support, where the administration in Brussels took the key role in the normalisation proceeding[97].

[94] Ibid, pp. 218–219.
[95] Ibid, pp. 219.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid, pp. 219–220.

4. Method and material

4.1 Case selection

The study is conducted as a case study, and the characteristics and focus of the case study is Kosovo. With the background that both the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo, Albin Kurti, shared the willingness of Kosovo to be a part of the EU, I choose Kosovo as the case study.

Case studies focus on qualitative research strategies such as interviews and analyses of documents. The easiest way of explaining the case study method is that the case study focuses on one specific case, where the purpose is to have a deeper understanding. The focus must also be on why things occur; the relations in a society are essential.

It is more often possible to generalise within the research field through the case study method[98]. General case studies are stable, whereas statistical techniques and formal models are fragile. The authors pick out advantages of case methods that make them valuable in theory assumptions and especially advantageous for assumption development. The potential for acquiring high validity, strong plans for advancing new presumptions, and their values a functional to similarly examine the thought role of causal mechanisms in the circumstances of individual cases and its capability for directing causal complexity.[99]

Generalising the results of case studies is not an easy purpose of the number of cases that are studied, researchers can study different cases that turn out to have no common design, and in that regard, only special historical explanations of each case are feasible. On the other hand, a researcher can study a few cases or one case and reveal a new causal mechanism proving the purpose of a wide range of cases. However, the authors claim that single cases can moreover result disbelieve in theories throughout a broad of circumstances. The extremes taking into consideration of a complete capability to generalise from a single case and a demand for wide generalisations from single cases that are somewhat unusual[100].

[98] George, Alexander L., et al. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. MIT, 2005, pp. 57.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid, pp. 263.

4.2 Methodological awareness

The research method is of qualitative type, where almost the same questions were asked to all the interviewed individuals. The interview guide was divided into three parts, introducing questions, main questions and ending questions.

Some individuals were much harder to get to interview due to their busy schedules and time limits. Therefore, I had to make the questions as concrete and specified as possible due to the time limit, although I had one general interview guide for all individuals, which can be found in the appendix.

Depending on who the interviewed individual was, I changed the introduction questions. For instance, I thought it would be unnecessary to ask the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo, "what is your profession"? or "have you been dealing with politics". As well, to ask the parliamentarians in the EP, "have you been dealing with politics? Instead, I did not ask the Prime Minister the "unnecessary" questions but instead "why do you become a politician?" and "how long have been you been dealing with politics?" to the parliamentarians. I would say that those small changes are a must for making the interviews as natural as possible.

4.3 Validity

The validity is dependent on the choice of the case study, which requires it to be well informed; if the case study is randomly chosen, then the validity will be inadequate. In this regard, the validity of the case study is limited to if the researcher is well informed and can therefore decide whether the case study fits or not[101].

In the previous phrase, I've been focusing on what is interesting for Kosovo and its future; it was very clear that the EU collaboration is something to focus on. The advantage of case study methods, among others, is that it allows the researcher to focus on one or a few examples, which makes room for studying more complex situations. The case study method makes it possible to understand relations and social processes, which for instance, is not the same as survey methods. It creates the possibility to analyse the comprehensive view instead

[101] Denscombe, Martyn. *The Good Research Guide : For Small-Scale Social Research Projects Maidenhead*, 2014. https://www.researchgate.net/file.PostFileLoader.html?id=582a0dbf217e20276533f5a5&assetKey=AS:428404664213506@1479151039119 (Retrieved 2022.03.06)

of focusing on specific factors; another advantage is that the case study method encourages the researcher to use various research methods to come up with results, with the reasoning of understanding complex realities in a fair way, and automatically more resources are added to the study. Case studies have got critiqued for their lack of the amount of data in comparison to "usual" studies got; in this sense, the case study method can be more suitable for focusing on a process rather than a measurable final product.

4.4 Delimitations

For the delimitation reasons, the study will not limit only to Kosovo but specifically to Kosovo's relations with the EU, which is the studied phenomenon. The main reason behind the delimitation is that otherwise, the study would have been too broad and not structured.

During the months I stayed in Kosovo, it was clear that accession to the EU is something that the people want, whether you talk to an official, professor, student, police officer, tailor, or pensioner. The EU is viewed as an actor that can help Kosovo with its struggles, such as low unemployment, corruption, and universities with low credibility.

4.5 Material, evaluation of sources and interviews

The materials were conducted from OneSearch (Linnaeus university library's printed books and e-books); I used books primarily but also articles when needed. Except for OneSearch, needed literature was borrowed from local libraries. The tension between Kosovo and Serbia is ongoing, and therefore, I tried to avoid using literature either from Albanian authors or Serbian authors. The aim of the chosen literature was to reach objectivity and minimise biases in the literature.

It can be difficult for case study researchers to get access to all information and data that is required for the study because, in some cases, ethical problems can arise, such as the use of personal data. Before the interview started, I clarified to the interviewed individuals that the recordings and the answers they gave would only be used for this thesis and nothing else.

The semi-structured interview option was chosen due to its flexibility of depending on questions of the interviewee, which allows me to ask the same questions during the interview to all interviewees. Still, the follow-up questions can differ depending on the response of the interview. The semi-structured method also provided me with the opportunity to compare the answers between the interviews. The same interview-guide temple will be used for all interviews. Questions beginning with who, what, why, how, and when inviting the

interviewed individuals to give tell and develop their answers[102], which I thought of when forming the ideal interview guide for this study.

While an unstructured interview seems too chaotic, with no prepared questions before the interview, and a structured interview is too strict with no follow-up questions, the semi-structured interview technique seems ideal for this study. During the interviews, I tried to pause some extra seconds between the questions, which gave the interviewed individual more time to think before responding. If I would be too fast asking questions, the possibility of missing out on important information can occur; in that matter, it is better to "wait out".

The interview guide was first available in both English and Albanian because I thought that the interviewed individuals probably primarily speak Albanian. However, the language in the interviews was not an issue because, in the end, all interviews were conducted in English for practical reasons.

The interviews gave interesting material and perspectives to the thesis; some individuals were or are still in direct contact with either the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo or the Government of the Republic of Kosovo and could give me their point of view. At the same time, the parliamentarians in the EP came up with ideas and concepts of what Kosovo could do to fill the gap and become a member state of the EU. All the interviewed individuals drew attention to the point that the relations with Serbia were an issue before coming closer to the EU. The chosen individuals to interview came naturally as a snowball effect, starting with one person and continuing through suggestions to others. The most challenging interview to arrange was interview 6, which I was prepared for before. I arrived in Kosovo in March, but I tried to explore the opportunities of interviewing the Prime Minister from the beginning of January 2022, and in April, the opportunity came.

I found the sources relevant and important because all the eight interviewed individuals are in one way or another connected or linked with either the EU or Kosovo. The law professor worked in exile during the war 1998–1999 and illustrated the development in Kosovo before and after the war. The Dutch citizen had lived in Kosovo since 2012 and shared his views on how it is to live in Kosovo compared with the Netherlands. The Executive Director served as ambassador of Kosovo in Scandinavia and worked in a private university, and could share his

[102] Almvide, Sara. ADDQ. *Intervjuteknik - att effektivt använda intervjuer vid kravinsamling.* https://www.addq.se/inspiration-och-kunskap/intervjuteknik-att-effektivt-anvanda-intervjuer-vid-kravinsamling (Retrieved: 2022.03.07)

views and thoughts on hindrances Kosovo struggles with. Both the parliamentarians in the EP shared their views on what Kosovo must do to get closer to the EU. The Prime Minister of Kosovo shared thoughts about why the five recognisers have not recognised the independence of Kosovo and that the stand of the point is related to the domestic politics and not Kosovo. The professor and Head of the Political Science Department enriched the thesis by sharing the challenges Kosovo have, comparing Kosovo with Bulgaria and Romania before they joined the EU. Finally, the Head of Mission EULEX Kosovo shared the EULEX missions in Kosovo and its monitoring work.

4.6 Minor Field Studies scholarship (MFS)

For this thesis, I was granted Minor Field Studies (MFS), which is a scholarship for gathering material for the thesis in a developing country. I was in Kosovo between the 5th of March 2022 and the 5th of May 2022, where I met and tried to find individuals to interview who I thought would be able to contribute to this thesis. The International Office at the university also provided me with a Certificate of participation in the Scholarship Programme, which made it easier to conduct the interviews since I attached the certificate in e-mails when I contacted potential interview candidates. The interviews were recorded through a voice tracer (Philips VoiceTracer Audio recorder DVT4110). In total, eight individuals were interviewed.

4.7 Alternative approaches

An alternative method approach would be to choose a quantitative research method, but in that regard, it would not be possible to conduct interviews but rather surveys. There are both positive and negative sides to choosing the quantitative research method; the positive part would be that I would have much more individuals involved in the study since surveys are easy and quick to make. For example, I could print out surveys and ask people in the middle of Pristina to answer questions regarding Kosovo-EU relations. However, the research question in this thesis cannot be answered through surveys.

Another wonder would be, should I, in that case, write the surveys in Albanian or English? Or both? If both languages are used, are the words chosen accurate enough towards each other? And I would not be able to ask follow-up questions to individuals since follow-up questions are possible in surveys.

I see those factors as disadvantages of the quantitate research method and decided that the quantitative method option was not ideal for this thesis since follow-up questions and a deeper understanding of the interviews were essential. By choosing a survey, I would reach

the citizens of Kosovo, but the relations between the EU and Kosovo are rather political and requires answers from individuals in the right positions. Individuals have insights into what Kosovo has reformed related to the Copenhagen Criteria and what it has not reformed. The current research questions would not answer by a broad survey of citizens since the ordinary citizen supposedly do not have the knowledge and understanding of the Copenhagen criteria.

5. Result and analysis

5.1 Normative Power

The EU has taken a major role in the international community to create a new future for Kosovo and its citizens since 1999. Kosovo has an evident European view in the broader Western Balkans region[103]. The EU office in Kosovo has a significant role considering implementing the EU norms in Kosovo. The EU office makes sure there is a lasting political and professional dialogue between Kosovo and other EU institutions. Despite the EU office in Kosovo, the EU is also working through Special Representative (EUSR)[104] in Kosovo, offering the Government of Kosovo council help, and encouraging human rights and basic freedoms.[105] Moreover, the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)[106] offers help to appropriate the rule of law authorities in Kosovo and their road towards greater capability, multi-ethnic society, responsibility and without political disturbance.[107] Despite the actors mentioned, the EU is also represented in Kosovo through the member state's embassies.[108] This could be understood by the context of institutions being built and formed on the basics of the EU norms; in this regard, the EU is ensuring that Kosovo restricts its capacity to use violence and encourage cooperation with the EU and international organisations.

The member states in the EU and the EU with its institutions have an essential part in the rebuilding of the development in Kosovo; the EU is considerably the largest contributor offering support to Kosovo and the Western Balkan region. From 2007 to 2020, as part of EU instruments, the EU has invested more than €1.5 billion in rebuilding, state administration reform, the rule of law, sustainable economic reform, education, farming, agriculture, community development, civil society, media, and other major areas in Kosovo[109]. Initially, the EU focused concentrated on emergency aid and rebuilding, while the EU now focuses on supporting Kosovo's authorities, sustainable financial development, and Kosovo's future in

[103] European Union Office in Kosovo, European Union Special Representative in Kosovo. *The European Union and Kosovo*. 2021. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/kosovo/eu-and-kosovo_en (Retrieved: 2022.03.31)
[104] European Union External Action. *About us*. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/call-contribution-eusr-kosovo-post-head-communication-sectionspokesperson-and-legal-adviser_en (Retrieved: 2022.04.23)
[105] European Union Office in Kosovo, European Union Special Representative in Kosovo. *The European Union and Kosovo*. 2021.
[106] Federal Foreign Office. *The European Security and Defence Policy*. 2009. https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/1337496/ed8676e37515e39486ba8fe1f562c2b3/the-european-security-and-defense-policy-data.pdf (Retrieved: 2022.03.13)
[107] European Union Office in Kosovo, European Union Special Representative in Kosovo. *The European Union and Kosovo*. 2021.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid.

Europe. The EU Office in Kosovo works in cooperation with thirteen EU member states embassies in Kosovo, while four other EU member states have representative offices in Kosovo. A lot of non-governmental organisations from EU member states are working in Kosovo. In the framework of SAP, which works to make Kosovo along with European norms, the EU has various ways to support economic development, for instance, through trade tenures and agreement as SAA[110].

However, by taking a major role in creating a new future for Kosovo, the working through EUSR, offering the government help, and encouraging human rights and basic freedoms in Kosovo, the EU forms normative fundamentals; through its power, the EU can set norms in the international system but as well in Kosovo. As Manners' states that various norms and various policies, which the EU goes after, are a part of what can be normal in IR and, in this case, specifically Kosovo, encouraging freedom, stability, peace and justice.

5.2 Copenhagen Criteria

It is crucial for the EU, while taking new member states in, to keep the drive of European integration. Only the EU decides when the candidate country has met the Copenhagen Criteria, and only the EU decides when it's ready to welcome the state into the EU as a new member state.

5.2.1 Political criteria: stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protection of minorities

The EU's political support and funding in Kosovo is two folded; the EU offers support to fulfil Kosovo's institutional framework requirements and economic and social growth, which is an important contribution provided to the international engagement in Kosovo. The funding and technological support towards Kosovo accumulate the institution's capabilities through the accession proceedings, ensuring certain developments. Between 2014 and 2020, €11.7 billion were considered for" Pre-Accession Assistance II" for Western Balkans and Turkey, while IPA III will bring another €14.5 billion for above mentioned countries.[111]

[110] Council of the European Union. *Stabilisation and Association agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and Kosovo*, of the other part*. 2015. https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10728-2015-REV-1/en/pdf (Retrieved: 2022.03.21)
[111] European Union Office in Kosovo, European Union Special Representative in Kosovo. *The European Union and Kosovo*. 2021.

IPA III provides a firm policy based method, with both a tactical and ever changing distribution of support where the rule of law increases democracy within institutions, spreading economic governance and supporting competitive capacity[112]. Kosovo also takes advantage of instruments such as the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX), the international partnership European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI), and other EU programs such as Erasmus Program, Europe's program for small and medium-sized enterprises COSME, Europe for Citizens (EFC), Creative Europe, and Fiscalis program[113].

Civil society organisations (CSOs**)** have an essential role in the reforms conducted for future member states in the EU; their work can demonstrate essential in deciding the step and attribute of the accession proceedings, as well as resulting the support from the people for the EU accession, the EU values CSOs by interacting with transparency with them and share promptness considering the essential "values of peace, freedom, equal rights and human dignity"[114]. Therefore, the EU supports the civil society organisations in Kosovo, going along with the condition "Fundamental rights, as guaranteed by the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. As the result of the constitutional traditions common to the Member States, which shall constitute general principles of the Union's law"[115], in practice means that every country for becoming a member of the EU must fulfil.

The EUSR provides guidance and help to the Government of Kosovo by political means, offers general collaboration for the EU missions in Kosovo and helps the development and strengthening of human rights and basic freedoms in Kosovo.[116]
Along with the EUSR's command, institutions in Kosovo are offered guidance and help considering the political proceedings and controlling Kosovo's advance in various political areas. The section as well offers the economic growth of Kosovo by offering political help and recommendations to economic institutions in Kosovo, for example, the market economy

[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.

and the ability to deal with market competitiveness.[117] Moreover, the section arranges the EU attendance in Kosovo and provides local political direction to the EULEX, despite cooperating with the EU-facilitated dialogue with the EUSR for the Belgrade-Pristina-Dialogue and as well other Western Balkans matters.[118]

The Austrian Member of the EP states that the negotiations, talks, and dialogues must start at the same time for both Kosovo and Serbia; both must cooperate as friendly partners. This has to be done from both sides:

"I have to recommend from the bottom of the heart both has to be done, Serbia remains neighbour country of Kosovo, it remains there, even in 100 or 500 years, Serbia will be next to Kosovo or the other way around".

There is no other way around the solution; both Kosovo and Serbia must collaborate with each other, in the interest of the future, of both countries. There was a time when both France and Germany were enemies, but today both countries are in the EU and friendly partners, acting jointly, exchanging goods and services. Peacefully, people are travelling from one place to another, no matter what. This was not imaginable for Germans and Frenchmen, but the same thing could also happen with Kosovo and Serbia.

"It can. History has proved it; this optimism has driven us forward, Kosovo also needs dialogue with Serbia, which is still hard to discuss after decades, but there is no alternative to that."

It is important the EU facilitated dialogue starts, and the restart can only be achieved if you really try and try hard; of course, on the Serbian side, it is even more in the scope when it comes to the question if there is progress or not. Both sides would have to contribute to the atmosphere and the terms of the content to each side, The domestic and the internationally are connected to the youth, the education, and professional training, for digitalisation. Today, already a lot of young Kosovars who remain in Kosovo work for international companies in the field of software architecture, and related areas, which must be supported. Kosovo can be the Silicon Valley of Europe. That is the overall picture. It is a long way to go to come there,

[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.

but it's worth trying; small steps forward, the message should be spread that these opportunities are there, according to the Austrian Member of the EP.

The Prime Minister of Kosovo mentions that new relations between Kosovo and Serbia must occur, and the new relations should be centred on mutual recognition. Serbia does not recognise Kosova, but as well Kosovo does not recognise Serbia. Mutual recognition is the centre piece of the normalisation of relations via legally binding agreements.

"I think in the last couple of years to Belgrade was clearer than ever before; there is no way around recognising the independence of Kosova. I'm not saying that that is the only issue that should be dealing with in relation to Serbia, but I think it is the main one."

Belgrade does not recognise crimes of the past, which were committed in Kosovo, and does not recognise Kosovo's independence on the one hand and not recognising crimes from the past, namely the war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide, are not two separate or that different things. They are very closely interlinked, says The Prime Minister. Serbia would need to be facing their own past; there would be a sort of dealing with the past in order to not have the entire nation responsible for a certain regime and its elements within state structures.

Except for the relation with Serbia, the Prime Minister points out the five non-recognisers as an obstacle for Kosovo, claiming that the reasons why the five non-recognisers do not recognise Kosovo is due to some misunderstandings regarding the issue of Kosovo, involving the propaganda by Serbia where they try to compare Kosovo with other cases. In 2008 and 2009, when other EU countries recognised Kosovo, Kosovo had this unfortunate event where five countries did not recognise Kosovo, and then other governments there did not change their opinion, and the reasons why it is so, is because of Serbian propaganda and certain political factors within these countries, who at the time, 2008–2009 wrongly linked Kosova issue with some of their internal problems. Kosovo has nothing to do with Northern Cyprus, Kosovo has nothing to do with Hungarians and Slovakians, Kosovo is dissimilar from Catalonia, and Kosovo has nothing to do with Transylvania in Romania.

The Head of Mission EULEX Kosovo suggests that both Serbia and Kosovo need to work on their mutual and bilateral relations; there is still this unresolved kind of dispute, which is an

ongoing conflict but fortunately not an armed conflict, even if there are sometimes incidents. There is the dialogue, where the European Union have been mandated by the UN Security Council to facilitate a dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia or Pristina and Belgrade, as some countries say because they do not recognise Kosovo as an independent state. The Head of Mission's thoughts goes in line with what other interviewees have supposed, that Kosovo needs to work on its relations with Serbia.

Membership in the European Union is tied to clear accession criteria; with the background of current developments, it needs to be emphasised that there is no fast-track procedure for either Kosovo or any other candidate country. The war in Ukraine can under no circumstances be exploited to expect unrealistic concessions from the EU in the slipstream of aggression. It is clear that Kosovo has already implemented important reforms and shows continued commitment to advancing on its European path. Currently, this is expressed by Kosovo's alignment of foreign policies with the EU Members States with regard to Russia and its condemnation of Putin's war of aggression against Ukraine, says the German Member of the EU. Kosovo does not yet meet all the criteria to join the EU, and there remain major internal and external hindrances to its membership. When it comes to the rule of law, despite all the progress made in adapting the legal framework, Kosovo needs to step up its efforts to strengthen the independence of the judiciary. Moreover, there are long overdue reforms in electoral law. When it comes to democratic representation and anti-discrimination, Kosovo must work on the greater inclusion of ethnic minorities as well as women. Despite its increased efforts to tackle corruption, Kosovo needs to step up its fight against corrupt structures and organised crime by building strong and independent institutions. Moreover, reforms in the economic area are needed to tackle Kosovo's informal economy and unemployment. The German Member of the EP also adds, "In addition to the adoption of necessary reforms, however, it is just as much about the effective implementation of the already existing legal framework and programmes to make sure that they do not remain just words on paper. Broad legal protection of human, minority and fundamental rights is simply not enough, but they need to be implemented to have a concrete, tangible impact on the everyday life of people in Kosovo. Therefore, strengthening administrative and institutional capacities are key."

The normalisation of relations with Serbia through a binding legal agreement is a necessary precondition for Kosovo to advance on its European path and eventually meet membership criteria.

The Professor and the Head of the Political Science Department states that even theoretically, Kosovo cannot join the EU because it is not recognised by the five non-recognisers. That is the realistic approach. "Kosovo is a small country with huge potential; if you led this potential in the right direction, I think within a very short period of time, Kosovo could make progress and as well fulfil the criteria. A political will is needed from all parties involved, including the EU itself," according to the professor.

5.2.2 Economic criteria: a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competition and market forces

Considering the economic criteria, Kosovo has made little progress and is in the initial stage of progressing to a functioning market economy. The economic market was in recession in 2020 but tended to reverse in 2021. The structural difficulties such as insufficiency of economic diversity and the dependency on the financial movements from the diaspora have made Kosovo unprotected during the lockdowns and travel limitations.[119] In relation to the covid-19 crisis, the authorities in Kosovo postponed the fiscal rule and approved two fiscal packages; rises in expenses and decreasing tax revenues caused a budget deficiency in 2020, but the recovery in tax revenue helped achieve a budget excess in 2021.[120] The private sector's progress rests on the broad informal economy, ineffective judicial, high frequency of corruption and the weak rule of law. Kosovo has restricted development and is in an initial phase of capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces in the EU. However, developments have been made in the quality of education and fulfil the skill holes required in the labour market. As well, progress and improving's have been made in road infrastructure and investing in renewable but coal-based energy. The economy in Kosovo remains dependent on small firms, which cannot contend internationally, and the export remains

[119] European Commission. *Key findings of the 2021 Report on Kosovo*. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_21_5278 (Retrieved: 2022.05.04)
[120] Ibid.

restricted to only a few products, such as base metals.[121] Kosovo continues to have, in general, good market relations with Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia. There are yet no changes in the relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina, which does not recognise the independence of Kosovo. Progress has been made on the internal market, Kosovo has some grade of preparation on the free movement of goods, capital, company law and trademarks, but it is reasonable considering the movement of employees and services. In general, Kosovo needs to increase its administrative capacity and coordination throughout all the sectors to achieve efficient implementation of the EU *acquis*.[122]

The Professor and the Head of the Political Science Department insist that Kosovo needs more foreign direct investments and more political stability. Kosovo needs more innovation and investment in research and development in order to catch the step with regional and global markets.

"Kosovo could offer and easily be very successful example let' say in industries like IT, information technologies, or production, let's say in agriculture or different economic sectors. But to do so, Kosovo needs to attract more foreign investments, which is very important". Global companies coming to Kosovo and doing business are one of the key essentials for Kosovo coming closer to the EU, according to the Professor and the Head of the Political Science Department.

There are so many issues on the EU table at the same time; some problems are essential like the security, the strength, meaning strength to defend the European values such as democracy, the rule of law, freedom, and those values are strongly connected with expanding the EU to entire European territory. Sometimes officials at the European level lose the focus on that. The steps for joining the EU begin with officials on the European level, and the member states of the European Union sometimes get distracted from what the Austrian Member of the EP calls *major core priorities* for Europe's development.

[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.

Connection with Austrians and representatives officials in many different fields is needed, not only in politics but from politics to businesses and so on, to connect them to a holistic view of the overall picture, of the state of play when it comes to Kosovo and the EU.

The European Parliament has an obligation to put people in context, to make deliberation. Highlight appreciate stability in a democratic structure of Kosovo, stability on the government level but also of the local elections now, very diverse in the positive sense, in the federal level, the stability that has not been in place yet, in the beginning, years of the forming of the republic, and stability were always what the Austrian Member of the EP recommended, in order to be stronger on the European scale, and on a global scale.

Kosovo will need some things domestic and some things in European and international affairs. Domestically, mutilating Austrian or European companies to start to invest in Kosovo, to create jobs. The Austrian Member of the EP appreciate the fight for the rule of law from each and another official; then companies will invest when structures are in a proper place, that fees will be paid, and laws will be respected.

The Prime Minister of Kosovo informs that Kosovo has fulfilled all 95 criteria for visa liberalisation, and it is not happening, which is unfair to the people of Kosovo. Furthermore, he said that Kosovo fulfilled more than a half times more criteria than, let's say, North Macedonia, Albania, or Serbia, and despite us fulfilling all of them, citizens of Kosova cannot fully travel to EU countries. The Prime Minister considers the visa liberalisation before the EU accession. In 2022, Kosovo is going to apply for candidate status in the EU. The Prime Minister claims that" we are firmly committed that Europe is our continent and the EU is of our destiny". Kosovo can do better and will be doing more, with hopes of the EU understanding the general Western Balkans six more, and in particular, Kosovo should be included within the EU, says the Prime Minister. To reach the EU, Kosovo will need to have reforms in the justice sector and continue with the economic growth, which should translate itself into an increased average salary, together with an increase in employment, and the other thing is that Kosovo will need to have recognition from five remaining EU member.

5.2.3 Administrative and institutional capacity to effectively implement the acquis and ability to take on the obligations of membership

The support considering the rule of law and fundamental rights has focused on central institutional reforms and capacity development in the justice area. The EU has given support to enhance the administrative and decision-making within the Ministry of Justice with the reason of fighting corruption and organised crime.[123] As well, the Kosovo Judicial and Prosecutorial Councils were supported with the aim of creating an independent judiciary[124]

The Law professor claims that Kosovo's general requirements for the EU accession are fulfilled in the same amount Bulgaria and Romania were fulfilled when they became members.

"The level of corruption, state capture, was by far higher in Bulgaria and Romania when they were accepted, at this time of speaking, in Kosovo. This is not me saying that; it's reports, EU reports, yearly reports, and progress reports for those countries back then. It is not only the corruption level, but as well the infrastructure compared to Kosovo in those years. The same. If you go from North Macedonia to Sofia today, not from the highway that was built from the EU now, the roads and infrastructure are far worse than they are in Kosova now."

Serbia to recognise Kosovo is not possible; if the Serbs could choose between joining the EU and recognising Kosovo, Serbs would never recognise Kosovo unless there is and there is an isolation of Serbia. Like it is for Russians now, and then Serbia will be sanctioned for their behaviour, which is the only solution, but the doubt is that the West will not isolate Serbia, according to the law professor.

The interviewed German Member of the EP stresses that Kosovo must continue on its path of rapprochement with the EU and advance the implementation of necessary reforms in areas such as employment, health, education, judiciary, but also energy and climate. The overwhelming public support for European integration in Kosovo, the country with the most profound pro-European attitude in the Western Balkans, is a crucial basis for this. Furthermore, a stable majority is essential for any substantial reform and the execution of government programmes. Against this background, the clear mandate of the current government and its ambitious reform agenda should be recognised as an important

[123] European Union Office in Kosovo. *EU Projects with Kosovo*. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/kosovo/eu-projects-kosovo_en?s=321 (Retrieved: 2022.05.12)
[124] Ibid.

opportunity to seek further perspectives for a deep EU integration direction. It is necessary that the government constructively makes use of its stable majority to advance necessary reforms and to meet high expectations within society.

"I believe it is also important in this respect that the government and government officials are less suspicious of what they have inherited from previous governments and what has already been decided. This currently results in destructive obstructionism in various areas, including the normalisation process with Serbia, whose advancement is crucial for both Kosovo and Serbia to come closer to the EU."

However, it must also be clear that the government must not just rest on its majority. Instead, it must make considerable efforts to form alliances within the parliament but also beyond, to include different voices from an inclusive stance. Only then the potential of Kosovo's vibrant democracy, in which democratic debates are possible - at least for the Albanian majority - can be unlocked, remarks the German Member of the EP.

5.3 Special process for Western Balkans

The EU has a policy network named the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) for the link between the EU and the countries in Western Balkan; it is considered to be active until accession for the country. The association between the EU and the Western Balkans is a concern for all actors, encouraging freedom, stability, peace, justice and living standards[125]. The SAP policy supports the stabilisation of the market economy, regional development and collaboration and preparation for membership in the EU. The EU has carried out usual meetings with relevant institutions in Kosovo in the context of the Stabilisation and Association Process Dialogue (SAPD)[126]. On the 1st of April 2016, the initial dialogue took place within the SAA framework in several committees. The EU and the institution in Kosovo had talks on broad policy issues and approved follow-up activities; the meetings are held annually. Before every SAPD, the EU hold talks regarding the same issues with local civil society. However, the European Office in Kosovo interacts in ordinary discussions with the civil society associations[127].

[125] European Commission. *Steps towards joining*. 2022.
[126] Council of the European Union. *Stabilisation and Association agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and Kosovo*, of the other part*. 2015.
[127] Ibid.

Along with the special procedure for the Western Balkans, the relations between the EU and countries in the Western Balkans goes down to a framework, also called the stabilisation and association process to contains three parts

"1) stabilising the countries politically and encouraging their swift transition to a market economy

2) promoting regional cooperation

3) eventual membership of the EU"[128].

The country is provided with the prospect of the EU membership, meaning that the country will be offered the official candidate standing when the country is prepared. In this matter, the process before joining the EU helps countries to form their measurements and to implement EU law along with EU and international standards based on the closer partnership with the EU sharing a combination of trade permissions such as toll-free access to EU markets, financial support, support for rebuilding, growth, progress, and stabilisation. Agreements with the EU containing mutual rights and responsibilities. The country in matter moves step by step into the EU membership as the country accomplishes its obligations and stabilisation. The work and guidance the EUSR provides in Kosovo strengthens human rights and development in Kosovo, such as other the monitoring help the EULEX offers and other organisations with the purpose of stabilising the country in various political fields.

[128] European Commission. *Steps towards joining*. 2022.

6. Conclusion

In this thesis, a qualitative research method is presented, focusing on Kosovo as a case study with semi-structured interviews. The purpose of the study is to explore whether Kosovo fulfils the requirements for an EU accession through the following research question:

- Does The Republic of Kosovo fulfil the general requirements for the accession to the EU based on the Copenhagen criteria? If not, what are the remaining hindrances?

The EU has taken a major role in Kosovo since 1999, in creating a new future for the country, for instance, via the EU office in Kosovo with its role in implementing EU norms in Kosovo. As well, the EU office makes sure there is a lasting political and professional dialogue between Kosovo and other EU institutions. Except for the EU office in Kosovo, the EU is also working through EUSR in Kosovo, offering the Government support and encouraging human rights and basic freedoms. The ESDP offers help to appropriate the rule of law authorities in Kosovo and their road towards greater capability, multi-ethnic society, responsibility and without political disturbance. The EU is also represented in Kosovo through the member state's embassies. From 2007 to 2020, as part of EU instruments, the EU has invested more than €1.5 billion in rebuilding, state administration reform, the rule of law, sustainable economic reform, education, farming, agriculture, community development, civil society, media, and other major areas in Kosovo. The EU focuses now on supporting Kosovo's authorities, sustainable financial development, and Kosovo's future in Europe. In the framework of SAP, which works to make Kosovo in alignment with European norms, the EU has various ways to support economic development, for instance, through trade tenures and agreement as SAA.

In terms of the economic criteria, Kosovo has made little progress and is in the initial stage of progressing to a functioning market economy. The structural difficulties such as insufficiency of economic diverseness and the dependency on the financial movements from the diaspora have made Kosovo unprotected during the lockdowns and travel limitations. The private sector progress rests on the broad informal economy, ineffective judicial, high frequency of corruption and the weak rule of law. Kosovo has restricted development and is in an initial phase of capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces in the EU. As well, progress and improving have been made in road infrastructure and investing in renewable but coal-based energy. The economy in Kosovo remains dependent on small firms, which cannot

contend internationally, and the export remains restricted to only a few products, such as base metals. Progress has been made on the internal market, Kosovo has some grade of preparation on the free movement of goods, capital, company law and trademarks, but it is reasonable considering the movement of employees and services. In general, Kosovo needs to increase its administrative capacity and coordination throughout all the sectors to achieve an efficient implementation of the EU *acquis*. The EU has given support to enhance the administrative and decision-making within the Ministry of Justice, with the reason of fighting corruption and organised crime. The Kosovo Judicial and Prosecutorial Councils were supported with the aim of creating an independent judiciary.

Every interviewed individual mentioned either the five non-recognizers or Serbia as a hindrance or both of them for Kosovo's accession to the EU. The hindrances were related as obstacles among the Copenhagen criteria.

There was a time when France and Germany were enemies; both countries are today in the EU as friends, partners, exchanging goods and services. People are travelling from one place to the other, peacefully in France and Germany. The Austrian Member of the EP says that this can also happen for Kosovo and Serbia, since there were times that a collaboration was not imaginable for Germans and Frenchman. It can. History has proved it; optimism has driven people forward.

The law professor's perspective supposes that Serbia recognizing Kosovo is negligible. "If the Serbs choose between the EU and recognizing Kosovo, I'm sure that they would never recognize Kosovo. For sure, unless there is an isolation of Serbia. Like it is for Russians now, they will be sanctioned for their behaviour. That is the only solution, which I doubt that the West will do it".

The Prime Minister thinks that a new relation between Kosova and Serbia is needed, and the new relation should be centred on mutual recognition because, as the situation is now, Serbia does not recognize Kosova, and Kosova does not recognize Serbia. Mutual recognition is the centre piece of the normalization of relations via legally binding agreements. Concerning Belgrade, it is clearer than ever before that there is no way around, despite recognizing the independence of Kosova. "Belgrade, unfortunately, does not recognize crimes of the past, which were committed in Kosova, and not recognizing our independence on one hand and not recognizing crimes from the past, namely war crimes, crimes against humanity, and

genocide are not two separate or that different things". The Prime Minister argues that Serbia must deal with its own past before the relation with Kosovo can be strengthened.

The five non-recognizers are a hindrance, they are a huge obstacle, they are a huge challenge, not only for Kosovo but the EU as well. The position of the five non-recognizers has led to a divided EU, not having a European Union which speaks with one voice towards Kosovo; the result is that the European Union, in this regard, instead of being a part of the solution, it has become a part of the problem, a huge problem, expresses the Professor and the Head of Political Science Department.

According to the Executive Director, it is very little that Kosovo can do to join the EU. But all the five non-recognizers countries should not be placed in the same basket, Kosovo has pretty good relations with Greece even if Greece has not recognized Kosovo yet, and Greece considers that the independence of Kosovo is not illegal. In the other countries, the situation is a little bit different. Slovakia is quite engaged, but their interpretation is different from Greece, while Romania is quite a hardliner. Spain and Cyprus are the worst cases; Spain might actually be the most difficult one because they do not even recognize Kosovo's travel documents, which makes Kosovars unable to travel to Spain. The people from Kosovo can only get there with a visa for very special purposes; otherwise, it is extremely difficult to get a visa to travel to Spain, argues the Executive Director.

A stable majority is essential for any substantial reform and the execution of government programmes; it is clear that the mandate of the current government and its ambitious reform agenda should be recognized as an important opportunity to seek further perspectives for a deep EU integration direction. The German Member of the EP states that it is necessary that the government constructively makes use of its stable majority to advance necessary reforms and to meet high expectations within society. "I believe it is also important in this respect that the government and government officials are less suspicious of what they have inherited from previous governments and what has already been decided." Resulting in destructive obstructionism in various areas, including the normalization process with Serbia, whose advancement is crucial for both Kosovo and Serbia to come closer to the EU.

The membership in the EU is linked to the accession criteria; there is no fast-track procedure for either Kosovo or any other candidate country. Kosovo has implemented crucial reforms and shows continued commitment to advancing on its European path. Kosovo does not fulfil the general requirements for the accession based on the Copenhagen criteria yet, and there

remain major internal and external hindrances to its membership. The rule of law, despite all the progress made in adapting the legal framework, Kosovo needs to step up its efforts to strengthen the independence of the judiciary. Regarding democratic representation and anti-discrimination, Kosovo must work on the greater inclusion of ethnic minorities as well as women. Furthermore, Kosovo needs to step up its fight against corrupt structures and organised crime by building strong and independent institutions. In addition to that, reforms in the economic area are needed to tackle Kosovo's informal economy and unemployment. Despite the Copenhagen Criteria, the main hindrances are the five non-recognizers in the EU and the required normalization process with Serbia. Kosovo must get its independence recognized by the five non-recognizers in the EU and stabilize its relations with Serbia before focusing on the accession to the EU. The hindrances seem too comprehensive and set “a spanner in the works” for the accession of Kosovo to the EU.

Future research

The law professor from the second interview claimed that Kosovo does fulfil the general requirements for the EU in the same amount Bulgaria and Romania fulfilled before they became members. The level of corruption, and state capture, was by far higher in Bulgaria and Romania when they were accepted, at this time speaking, in Kosovo, according to him.

In that regard, one compelling option would be to dig deeper considering the level of corruption in Bulgaria and Romania before joining the EU in 2007 and compare them with the level of corruption in Kosovo.

But, as well there is still a lot to discover on this subject; another example or option would be to go further and make a comparative study, comparing Kosovo with the three latest countries joining the EU, which are Bulgaria, the Republic of Croatia, and Romania, before they joined the EU, with Kosovo now. The study could compare various fields within the countries, such as the transparency in institutions, the diplomatic relations with neighbouring countries, how developed the political economy is, compare the labour market, the environmental sector, or the climate sector.

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Interviewed individuals

Interview 1: Austrian Member of the European Parliament, via Zoom, 30 minutes interview, 17th March 2022 at 16:00.

Interview 2: Law professor, Law Faculty of the University of Pristina "Hasan Prishtina", meeting in person, in the professor's office, 24 minutes interview, 22nd of March 2022 at 11.00.

Interview 3: Dutch citizen living in Kosovo since 2012 with his family, meeting in person, in a restaurant in Pristina, 40 minutes interview, 24th of March 2022 at 9:00.

Interview 4: Executive Director, founder, and Senior Follow of Kosovar institute for policy research and development, via Zoom, 30 minutes interview, 4th of April 2022 at 11:00.

Interview 5: German Member of the European Parliament, the interview guide was sent to the individual via e-mail, and I received written answers 12th of April 2022.

Interview 6: The Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosova, meeting in person in the Prime Minister's Office, 15 minutes interview, 16th of April 2022 at 13:30.

Interview 7: Professor and the Head of Political Science Department, University of Pristina "Hasan Prishtina", meeting via WhatsApp, 32 minutes interview, 19th of April 2022 at 12:00.

Interview 8: Head of Mission EULEX Kosovo, meeting in person, in the individual's office in Pristina, 1 hour, 20th of April 2022 at 15:00.

Linnæus University
Sweden

Appendices

Certificate of participation in scholarship program

Linnæus University

Växjö 2022-02-17

Certificate of participation in scholarship program

To whom it may concern,
Every year the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida, finances scholarships for Minor Field Studies (MFS) in a developing country (as defined by the OECD DAC list). The scholarships are to provide students at Swedish universities with the opportunity to gather information and data for their bachelor or master thesis in a developing country. The scholarships are to be used during a field study of a minimum of 8 weeks and the thesis has to focus on the international development process. Students who are interested in this opportunity have to apply to their home university for funding and the scholarships are then granted based on the quality of the application.

This document is to certify that **Benjamin Shehu** has been granted a scholarship for the completion of a Minor Field Study in Kosovo. **Benjamin Shehu** is a student enrolled at Linnaeus University, Sweden, and has been granted the scholarship by said university.

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Louise Lennartsson
International Coordinator
International Office – Office of Student Affairs
Linnaeus University
Sweden

General interview guide

I'm an International affairs student from Linnaeus University in Sweden, and I'm writing my Master's thesis with the title: ***The Republic of Kosovo, awaited Member State in the European Union or a false illusion?***

Before we begin, I would like to know if I have your consent to record this interview through a voice recorder? The recording will only be used for my Master's Thesis and nothing else.

Introducing questions

- Can you share something about yourself? What have you studied? What is your profession?
- Have you been dealing with politics?
- What drives or motivates you? Professionally

Main questions

- What is your view of Kosovo right now? Is it political stable?
- What do you have to say considering the development in Kosovo? Is it a good country to be in as a student?
- What kind of resources do you think Kosovo will need to come closer to the EU?
- Kosovo gets a lot of aid from both the EU and embassies; do you think these aids are being correctly handled?
- Do you know something that the EU has done to help Kosovo? Any specific project?
- In everyday life in Kosovo, the war has left its scars on both infrastructure, people's feelings, and the future. History has shown us that even if Germany and France had wars against each other, today, they are friends. In this regard, how can the relation with Serbia be strengthened, would you say? Is it even possible?
- Cyprus, Romania, Greece, Spain, and Slovakia have not recognised Kosovo's independence, which is one of the hindrances for Kosovo to get a membership in the European Union. What can Kosovo do in this matter?
- Would you say that Kosovo fulfils the general requirements for the accession to the EU?

Ending questions

- Is it something else that you want to share? Or is it something that I have missed to ask you that you feel is important?
- Do you recommend any person to me to interview any person with knowledge within this field?

Thank you for taking the time to carry through this interview; I appreciate it a lot. I will now stop recording.