DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS FOR THE EU'S DEMOCRACY PROMOTION:

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION PERFORMANCES IN CROATIA, SERBIA, AND SLOVENIA

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I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

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This is to certify that I have read this thesis and that it in my opinion is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the Degree of Master of Arts in the field of International Relations at the Graduate School of Social Sciences.

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Meriç ERGÜNDÜZ

ABSTRACT

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THE EU'S DEMOCRACY PROMOTION:
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This comparative study is an inquiry into democratization reforms from selected Western Balkan countries to offer a generalizable explanation for democratic consolidation. Even though all post-Yugoslav societies have a similar background, have started their state-building processes simultaneously, and have been in contact with the EU as the agent of 'democratization promotion', their democratic consolidation performances vary. While some of them -Slovenia and Croatia- achieved a certain level of democratic consolidation in the early phase of their transition, some others are still defective democracies according to worldwide democratic governance indexes. In this regard, this study aims to find out what explains the varying democratization experience across Western Balkan countries- namely Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia. Building upon Tolstrup's (2013) analytical framework, which emphasizes the significance of gatekeeper elites' role in controlling and using the external actor's democratization influence, this research explains the variation across the selected cases and also seeks to complement the aforementioned framework as it focuses on how and under what circumstances the political elites embrace democratic reforms. By examining critical junctures in each country's historical democratization processes, the study suggests that the interests of the political elites, their connection to the pro-European agenda, features of the playing field -power distribution and institutional settings- are the dimensions that define the differences in domestic political contexts.

Keywords: Democratic Consolidation, Gatekeeper Elites, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia

ÖZ

AB'NİN DEMOKRASİ TEŞVİKİ ÖNÜNDEKİ İÇ SİYASİ KISITLAMALAR: HIRVATİSTAN, SIRBİSTAN VE SLOVENYA'DAKİ DEMOKRATİK KONSOLİDASYON PERFORMANSLARININ KARŞILAŞTIRMALI ANALİZİ

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Bu karşılaştırmalı çalışma, demokratik konsolidasyon için genelleştirilebilir bir açıklama sunmak için seçilmiş Batı Balkan ülkelerinden demokratikleşme reformları üzerine bir araştırmadır. Yugoslavya'nın dağılması sonrası ortaya çıkan devletler benzer bir geçmişe sahip olmalarına, devlet kurma süreçlerine eş zamanlı olarak başlamalarına ve "demokratikleşmeyi teşvik etme" aracısı olarak AB ile temas halinde olmalarına rağmen demokratik konsolidasyon performansları farklılık göstermektedir. Bazıları -Slovenya ve Hırvatistan- geçişlerinin ilk aşamasında belirli bir demokratik konsolidasyon düzeyine ulaşırken, diğerleri dünya çapındaki demokratik yönetişim endekslerine göre hala kusurlu demokrasilerdir. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma Batı Balkan ülkelerinde – Hırvatistan, Sırbistan ve Slovenya – farklılık gösteren demokratikleşme süreçlerinin açıklayıcısını bulmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu araştırma, Tolstrup'un (2013) dış aktörün demokratikleşme etkisini kontrol etme ve kullanmada kapı bekçisi elitlerin rolünün önemini vurgulayan analitik çerçevesini temel alarak, seçilen vakalar arasındaki varyasyonu ve aynı zamanda siyasi elitlerin hangi koşullar altında demokratik reformları benimsediğini belirleyerek açıklamaktadır. Seçilen her vakanın tarihsel demokratikleşme süreçlerindeki kritik dönemeçleri inceleyen bu çalışma, siyasi elitlerin çıkarlarının, Avrupa yanlısı gündemle olan bağlantılarının, siyasi oyun alanının özelliklerinin -güç dağılımı ve kurumsal yapı- iç siyasi bağlamlarda farklılıkları yaratan boyutlar olduğunu öne sürer.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Demokratik Konsolidasyon, Kapı Bekçisi Elitler, Hırvatistan, Sırbistan, Slovenya

To my dear mom…

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Two years ago, I left the city in which I was born and grown up and came to a new place, which I did know anywhere, anybody. However, despite the real uncertainty, Ankara made me so happy, taught me a lot, and contributed to my life to a great extent. Thus, I want to thank all people who have come across my life in the last two years and witnessed my either personal or academic development.

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ABBREVIATION LIST

BiH : Bosnia and Herzegovina
CEE : Central Eastern Europe
DEMOS : Democratic Opposition of Slovenia
DOS : Democratic Opposition of Serbia
DS : Democratic Party
DSS : Democratic Party of Serbia
EU : European Union
FRY : Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
FYROM : Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
GSS : Civic Alliance of Serbia
HDZ : Croatian Democratic Union
HND : Independent Croatian Democrats
HNS : Croatian People's Party
HSLS : Croatian Social Liberal Party
HSS : Croatian Peasant Party
ICTY : International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia
IDS : Istrian Democratic Assembly
JNA : Yugoslav's People Army
JSO : Special Operation Unit
KLA : Kosovo Liberation Army
LCS : League od Communists of Serbia
LDP : Liberal Democratic Party
LDS : Liberal Democracy of Slovenia
LS : Liberal Party
NATO : North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NS : New Serbia
SAA : Stabilization and Association Agreement
SAP : Stabilization and Accession Process
SDP : Slovenian Democratic Party
SDP : Social Democratic Party of Croatia

SKH : League of Communists of Croatia

SNS : Serbian Progressive Party

SPO : Serbian Renewal Movement

SPS : Socialist Party of Serbia

SRS : Serbian Radical Party

ULSD : United List of Social Democrats

UN : United Nations

USKOK : Croatian State Prosecutor's Office for the Suppression of Organized Crime and Corruption

WWII : World War 2

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Following the collapse of the communist bloc, most of the post-communist societies experienced the democratic transition. However, not all the new regimes developed into full-functioning democracies due to the differences in the post-transition processes. The variation of democratic consolidation performances has been very significant across the Western Balkan states. Despite the similar structural conditions of the states in the pre-transitional and post-transitional period, their democratic consolidation performances were divergent. Some political systems remained defective democracies[1]. On the other hand, others -like Slovenia and Croatia-performed better and achieved a certain level of democratic consolidation[2]. In this regard, this study aims to make a contribution to the inquiry into the divergent democratization experiences across Western Balkan countries.

Since the early 80s, both secessionist movements within the federal states and regime transition trends in post-communist space triggered the structural changes in former Yugoslavia. Especially after the death of Tito, founder of Federal Yugoslavia, the disintegration was almost inevitable since the structural, economic,

[1] Merkel's (2004) classifies democratic regimes as: embedded liberal democracies and defective democracies. In a defective democracy, one of the components of a democratic regime is missing. In contrast, an embedded liberal democracy the regime consists of "a democratic electoral regime, political rights of participation, civil rights, horizontal accountability, and the guarantee that the effective power to govern lies in the hands of democratically elected representatives." (36).

[2] Schedler's (1998) definition of positive democratic consolidation is the reference of this research. Rather than regime survival (negative consolidation) and institutionalization of the regime (neutral consolidation0, this study uses the term 'democratic consolidation' in terms of completing and deepening of the democratic regime.

social, and ideological gap between federal units became more politically salient; political elites across federal states varied in terms of their view on pluralism; and Serbia demanded a more centralized model of federalism instead of a decentralized one (Fink-Hafner 1995, 339). Thus, the divergence among federal states led to the dissolution of Yugoslavia. First, Slovenia and Croatia declared independence in 1991. Then, other federal republics followed the trend, and Federal Yugoslavia broke up in 1992.

After the disintegration in the early 90s, the post-Yugoslav states initiated their democratic transition from an authoritarian communist regime. They introduced the basic elements of a democratic regime, such as multi-party elections. Also, the region was the 'backyard of the EU', and EU's -the representative of the liberal democracy- willingness to democratize its backyard was high. In this direction, the EU aimed to promote democracy in the Western Balkans by using its linkage -historical ties, geographic proximity- and leverage -conditionality, democratic aid- mechanisms.

Even though all post-Yugoslav societies have a similar background, have started their state-building processes simultaneously, and have been in contact with the EU as the agent of 'democracy promotion', their democratic consolidation performances vary. While some of them -Slovenia and Croatia- achieved a certain level of democratic consolidation in the early phase of their transition, some others are still defective democracies according to worldwide democratic governance indexes. Regarding the democratic consolidation variation across the states, this study will compare three selected cases from Western Balkans, namely Croatia,

Serbia, and Slovenia, to offer a generalizable explanation for democratic consolidation.

Since all post-Yugoslav states have similar structural conditions, the most convenient design to compare and contrast the variation among states' consolidation performance is conducting the most similar system design (MSSD). By applying this case selection method, I eliminated the several alternative explanations in the literature and provided control across cases. First, since all post-Yugoslav states were part of the federal entity, their prior regime was the same. Therefore, theories that focus on the previous regime type and its features do not explain the consolidation differences across the states. Second, I selected Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia because all have been independent states for approximately thirty years. In these thirty years, free and fair elections were held many times, and governments changed. Even if they did not achieve the same level of democratic consolidation, all three exercised electoral democracy in their independent territory. Third, the EU is a democratic neighbor and has both linkage and leverage with all three. Also, Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia have been in contact with the EU, which has implemented conditionality for membership, for over ten years. The reason why I did not select the other Western Balkan countries was either their shorter experience of being an independent state -Montenegro- or shorter/limited dialogue with the EU -North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo-. As a result, I had three cases with similar structural conditions, representing early consolidation, Slovenia; intermediate consolidation, Croatia; and no consolidation, Serbia.

To detect the explanatory factors and mechanisms that create difference across the selected cases, I used Bengtsson and Ruonavaara's (2017) 'comparative

process tracing' method, which "combines the elements of theory, chronology, and comparison" (2017, 45). To apply this two-step methodological approach, first, I examined the historical democratization processes of each case. Then, I determined the critical junctures in the processes and compared them. The cross-case analysis allowed me to find out which theoretical framework in the literature can explain variation across Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia.

Although the theories that focus on a single variable – i.e., macroeconomic indicators, pluralism, democracy promotion from outside, etc.- fail to explain the variance across the selected cases, Tolstrup's (2013) analytical framework that highlights the gatekeeper elites' role in controlling and using the external actor's democratization influence provides plausible lenses to analyze the variation**.** According to Tolstrup, linkage and leverage mechanisms between an external actor and a target country substantially impact democratization. However, those mechanisms do not provide democratization directly. At this point, the gatekeeper elites' motivation to embrace democratic reforms imposed by the external actor plays a crucial role in the democratization process of a country. The selected cases in this research confirm the theoretical framework. For example, in Slovenia, the domestic elites were eager to split up from Yugoslavia and initiate the democratization process with the motivation of EU membership. Since the elites' interests and the EU's effort to democratize overlapped, Slovenia exercised an early democratic consolidation experience. On the other hand, after the secession in the 90s, the nationalist domestic elites dominated the political arena in Croatia until 2000. Thus, the implementation of democratic reforms demanded by the EU started when the nationalist leader, Tudjman, died. Then, both democrats and old

nationalists who reformed themselves and adopted the pro-EU approach contributed to the democratic consolidation parallel to the EU's democracy promotion. In Serbia, even though the nationalist leader, Milosevic, left the political scene, neither democrats nor the reformed elites have not facilitated democratization from outside. Since the gatekeepers blocked the EU's democracy promotion, Serbia has not achieved a consolidated democracy yet, even more despairingly it has been going through a democratic backsliding. The V-dem Liberal Democracy score drastically fell from 0.47 in 2012 to 0.24 in 2020.

Besides illustrating empirical analysis for Tolstrup's model, this study also seeks to complement the aforementioned framework as it focuses on how and under what circumstances the political elites embrace democratic reforms. In this regard, the research suggests three major dimensions which define the differences in domestic political contexts: the interests of the political elites, their connection to the pro-European agenda, features of the playing field -power distribution, and institutional settings. First, the interests were important factors for elites whether to embrace democratic reforms or not. For example, the domestic elites in Slovenia had strong motivation to liberalize the economy and democratize the regime for a deeper integration with the West. Therefore, they welcomed the EU's democracy promotion immediately after dissolution. On the other hand, in Serbia and Croatia, the nationalists had run the country for a while. Since their nationalist inclinations contradicted the EU's mindset, there was no window opportunity for the EU to democratize these states. Second, the elite's connection with the pro-European agenda was another determinant for implementing democratic reform. For instance, in Serbia, although the government had pro-European discourse after 2012, the pro-

European agenda was only in rhetoric. In contrast, the government had an authoritarian tendency to a great extent. However, in Croatia, the government, which had a pro-EU discourse, committed to the agenda, embraced democratic reforms, and consolidated the democracy in the country after 2000. Third, the features of the playing field played a crucial role in the elite's decision to apply a pro-European, democratic agenda. While Croatia changed the semi-presidential system into parliamentary democracy after 2000 in Croatia, the semi-presidential system continued in Serbia. The semi-presidential system opened too much space for political entrepreneurs and dragged democratization into gridlock in Serbia. Meanwhile, in Croatia, the absence of a dominant political party or a leader paved the way to pro-reform coalition governments. During political consolidation the HDZ was obliged to form either a minority government or a coalition government. Since they do not have enough power to dominate parliament, they stuck to the political agenda they promised to the electorate and their political partners. On the other hand, the SNS in Serbia had an absolute majority after 2012. Therefore, even if they mentioned the pro-European agenda and democratic reforms, they were free not to implement what they promised.

After I give a brief about the puzzle, research question, research design, and key findings in this introductory chapter, I will explain each component, which I mention in the introduction, in the following chapters in detail.

In Chapter 2, I will present the reference point of my research. Thus, I will discuss how democratic consolidation is conceptualized and measured in this research. Then, reviewing the broad democratic consolidation literature, I will

introduce several determinants offered by different scholars for democratic consolidation.

In Chapter 3, I will explain which method and sources I used. Also, in this chapter, I will explain how I selected cases based on the most similar system design. Then, I will discuss the level of democratic consolidation-i.e., dependent variable- for each selected case and present the variation across the selected cases.

In Chapter 4, I will elaborate on the historical democratization processes of two successful cases, Croatia and Slovenia. First, I will review the democratization process of Slovenia from the late 1980s -since the emergence of secessionist movements in Yugoslavia- to 2004 -EU membership of Slovenia. Second, I will review the democratization process of Croatia between the late 1980s and 2013 -EU membership of Croatia. Then, I will determine the critical junctures in each democratization episode and compare them. Finally, I will define the varying factors that made Croatia a latecomer for democratic consolidation at the end of this chapter.

In Chapter 5, I will examine the failed democratic consolidation process of Serbia. The initial point will be the same with Croatia and Slovenia, which is the disintegration of Yugoslavia. However, since Serbia has not achieved a certain level of democratic consolidation and become an EU member yet, the period examined will cover the period until today. In a similar vein with the other two cases, I will determine the critical junctures in Serbia's democratization which could open a window opportunity for democratization. Then comparing the critical junctures of Serbia with the other two successful two case's critical points, I will define what is missing in Serbia.

In Chapter 6, I will summarize the puzzle and key findings again. Then, I will discuss the limitations of the research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Unfortunately, not all countries achieve a fully democratic regime after transition from authoritarianism. For this reason, the broad democratization literature offers various conceptualizations to cover different stages of democratic regimes rather than only classifying them as either authoritarian or democratic. Different typologies set different requirements. While some approaches only require minimal conditions to define a regime as a democracy, others require consolidation to decide whether a regime is a democracy or not. Also, the definition of consolidation could vary depending on the political context. Whilst the term 'democratic consolidation' sometimes explains only the survival of an established regime after the transition, the concept could also refer to a completing and deepening democratization through several factors. The consolidation literature mostly focuses on 'what makes democracies work?' and tries to find out the elements that contribute to completing and deepening stages of the democratic transition. In this regard, while some scholars explain the high-level democratic performance of states with conditions within the states, others highlight external factors for democratic consolidation.

In this study, the literature review will, first, define what a consolidated liberal democracy isand discuss how the term 'democratic consolidation' could have different meanings across different political contexts. Then, it will present and categorize various factors that contribute to positive democratic consolidation, to suggest a conceptualization that is compatible with the objective of my research.

This review categorizes the factors as domestic and external. Domestic factors comprise economic, institutional, and social elements that affect democratic performance within the state. External factors cover the variables which occur beyond states' borders, such as foreign aid, geographic proximity, diffusion of norms.

As the broad literature indicates, having essential prerequisites and fundamental formal institutions of democratic governance does not guarantee a fully functioning democracy. To capture the demarcation between the cases which succeed and fail analytically, Merkel (2004) examines the concept of 'democracy' in two main sub-types: consolidated liberal democracies and defective democracies. He evaluates the democratic quality based on internal and external embeddedness. According to him, the regimes, which are not internally and externally embedded, are 'defective democracies'. By examining which component is absent, he classifies defective democracies as exclusive democracy, domain democracy, illiberal democracy, and delegative democracy. In his classification, exclusive democracy indicates the regime that a particular group is excluded from civil rights. In domain democracies, the veto power belongs to a specific privileged group. While illiberal democracies suffer from the weak judiciary, the judiciary has a limited control over the legislature and executive bodies in delegative democracies. In contrast, "an embedded, liberal democracy consists of five partial regimes: a democratic electoral regime, political rights of participation, civil rights, horizontal accountability, and the guarantee that the effective power to govern lies in the hands of democratically elected representatives." (36). Also, external embeddedness provides an environment that enables functioning those regimes with strong macro-economic

indicators, vibrant civil society, and international, regional integration. Therefore, the regimes, which have internal and external embeddedness, are considered consolidated liberal democracies.

Democratic consolidation has different meanings in different contexts. Therefore, classifying and defining types of consolidation is essential to understand this variation. When a transitional country changes its regime to democracy, the first challange that it faces is regime survival. At this point, if a scholar uses the term 'consolidation' to explain regime survival, it refers to 'negative consolidation.' On the other hand, the usage 'consolidation' concept to point out institutionalization of the regime and organizing democracy refers to 'neutral consolidation.' It adds minimum procedural requirements to the regime survival dimension (Schedler 1998). In this context, Merkel's definition of defective democracies could either be negatively consolidated or neutrally consolidated regimes. However, the embedded democracies are positively consolidated regimes. The 'positive consolidation' refers to the completion and deepening of democracies. For the completing stage, a country must have fulfilled institutional prerequisites regarding state-building and legal system. Then, for the deepening stage, a country that aims to consolidate its regime has to strengthen democratic governance with a vibrant civil society, pluralistic party system, and strong judiciary (Schedler 1998).

The literature points out several domestic and external conditions to achieve a consolidated democracy. This study categorizes domestic conditions as economic, political, and social. Since the early modernization theories, the most debated issue in the literature is the impact of the economy on politics (Lipset 1959). According to different views in the literature, economic circumstances in a country could either

undermine or contribute to democratic consolidation. Within this context, economic development plays a crucial role in democratic consolidation. Economic development contributes to the consolidation of regimes in two ways. First, the economic development generates an educated urban population and middle-income class, that new social class asks for political participation and representation to pursue their interests in the political realm at the cost of limiting the power of actual or potential autocrats. Second, economically developed countries hold a chance on their hand to distribute resources to resolve conflicts. By distributing the resources among different groups, they can end the conflict peacefully and constitutionally. However, the poor states do not have this chance. Since they do not have enough resources to distribute, they can not prevent violence. Thus, while it damages the infant democracy, it also blocks further consolidation and makes authoritarian relapse more likely (Ruhl 1996). Gasiorowski and Power (1998) statistically tested the effect of socioeconomic factors such as industry development, university attendance, and secondary school enrollment, literacy, and trade dependence over democratic consolidation for Third World countries. Their empirical analysis shows that the impact of economic development as one of the sub-categories of socioeconomic factors is positive and statistically significant among other structural variables derived from the literature.

Gasiorowski and Power (1998) do not only test socioeconomic explanatory variables in the literature. Their empirical test takes most of the literature's structural explanations into account: current economic performances, political culture, institutions, and history. Based on the analysis, another economic factor, high inflation, has a significant impact on democratic consolidation. High inflation

negatively affects democratic consolidation, but the authors find out that high inflation has undermined democratic consolidation until the 1970s. After the 1970s, there is no evidence to support this argument. As Capoccia and Ziblatt (2010) argue, based on their historically-minded approach, the emergence of democracy is not a consequence of one moment. It is a consequence of various events in different episodes of history. Therefore, the changing impact of high inflation over time is not surprising.

Another group of scholars highlights the impact of the political institutions in a country to establish consolidated democracy. Some scholars work on pre-transitional regime's and transitional period's effects on democratic consolidation. Ruhl (1996) suggests that the states governed by neo-patrimonial authoritarian regimes before the transition are less likely to become consolidated democracies due to a lack of strong institutions and civil society that provide control over the government. According to him, when the old regime's neo-patrimonial state structure is combined with the low economic development level, democratic consolidation is hard to achieve. Also, Pérez-liñán and Mainwaring (2013) discuss the impact of regime legacies in their study. They use the term regime legacy to avoid building a deterministic, path-dependent argument. Their empirical analysis supports the idea that regime legacy is an explanatory factor for democratic quality, but it is not decisive for a transition. Their empirical research also shows that the institutional weakness of a previous regime's party and judicial systems has a statistically significant effect on the democratic quality of the post-transitional regime.

Even though Pérez-liñán and Mainwaring (2013) argue that regime legacies do not determine whether transition occurs or not, it could affect how transitions occur. Ortíz (2000) emphasizes the effect of the prior regime's institutionalization on the democratic transition. The article compares Spain and Mexico's democratization and finds out that the two countries' processes differ in speed and scope. Based on the findings, countries with profoundly institutionalized authoritarian regimes in the pre-transition period experience a slow transition because deep institutionalization of the old regime provides more power for authoritarian elites and makes opposition mobilization less likely.

Regarding Ortiz's point, we can see the link between the pre-transitional and the post-transitional period. On the one hand, the old regime's institutional arrangement is influential on how democratic transition occurs. On the other hand, the way that democratic transition materializes affects democratic consolidation in the post-transition period. Munck and Leff (2016) categorize modes of transition and explain the relation between transition types and their consequences. While the countries that experience extreme processes -revolution from below or revolution from above- end up with defective democracies, other countries that transform their regime gradually or in moderation -reforms through a transaction, reform through extrication, and reforms through rupture- mostly produce more consolidated democracies. The regimes, which experience a democratic transition through radical changes, are more likely to become restrictive democracies because, in these regimes, the impact of old political elites continues in the post-transitional period. If the revolution was from below, the elite-level opposition does not become ready to build consolidated democracy. If the revolution is from above, it means that the

incumbent conducts the transition, so the opposition does not have a significant role in the transition. Due to the limited role of opposition, the competitive characteristic of political context also becomes limited. However, the regimes, which experience modest processes, are more likely to turn into consolidated democracies. In these types of transitions, the opposition becomes stronger than revolutions and has a much more playing field. It enables a competitive political environment in the state and contributes to the consolidation of the democratic regime.

Another view in the literature that focuses pre-transition phase prioritizes sequencing. Mansfield and Snyder (2007) argue that countries have to fulfill some prerequisites to change their regime into democracy, otherwise democratization turns into a harmful process due to anti-democratic actors who use democratic mechanisms to legitimize their anti-democratic actions. In response, Carothers (2007) suggests 'gradualism' instead of sequencing. He accepts the importance of the rule of law and well-functioning state institutions for democratic transition. However, he is against the idea that countries have to wait until fulfilling these criteria. In his view, establishing the rule of law and state-building takes time and moves hand in hand with other democratic reforms in a gradual manner. He believes some problematic structural factors and institutional weaknesses only make the process more challenging but not impossible.

While a group in the literature works on the features of the pre-transitional political context, another group studies the structural political conditions in the post-transitional era that impede democratic consolidation. In this regard, Carothers (2002) suggests political pluralism as an essential element of democratic consolidation. According to him, some countries that do not complete their

transition and consolidated democracies fall into the gray zone between liberal democracy and dictatorship. Those transitional countries suffer from two main syndromes that hinder democratic consolidation: 'feckless pluralism' and 'dominant power politics' (Carothers 2002). Feckless pluralism indicates the lack of political participation. If a country suffers from feckless pluralism, the political field turns into a place that is highly elite-dominated and corrupt. Another syndrome that traps transitional countries in a limbo state is dominant power politics, where a particular group dominates the political arena, and there is little space for the opposition. O'Donnell (1996) defines this problem in other words: particularism, which means a political arena that is dominated by a particular group. In his view, even though the democracy within a country institutionalizes through free-fair elections, alternation of power, etc., a high level of influence of particular groups makes the consolidation problematic.

Both lack of pluralism and dominant power politics create an accountability problem for a democracy. In feckless pluralism, the check and balance mechanisms of democracy do not work properly due to limited political participation. On the other hand, when a particular group dominates the political space, that particular group also holds the check and balance mechanisms on its hand, and the situation weakens the horizontal accountability of the regime. Therefore, even though the formal institutions are consolidated on paper as they provide legally bounded check and balance mechanisms, existing particularism and lack of horizontal accountability could undermine the democratic consolidation (O'Donnell 1996). In the long run, these transition episodes that are not followed by consolidation processes can also stabilize as hybrid regimes – that fail to meet the minimum

requirements of democratic government. In this regard, Levitsky and Way (2002) suggest a new line of theoretical inquiry into political systems beyond the democracy-autocracy dichotomy and democratic consolidation. According to them, those hybrid regimes, which are neither democratic nor authoritarian, are competitive authoritarian regimes. Based on the theoretical framework, these regimes are not transitional regimes that aim to achieve consolidated democracy. Instead, they are consolidated regimes that combine the elements of both democracy and autocracy.

In addition to scholars who offer economic and political explanations for democratic consolidation, some scholars study social determinants that affect democratic performance. This group mostly tries to understand to what extent civil society is influential over democratic performance. According to Diamond, "Civil society can, and typically must, play a significant role in building and consolidating democracy. Its role is not decisive or even the most important, at least initially. However, the more active, pluralistic, resourceful, institutionalized, and democratic is civil society, and the more effectively it balances the tensions in its relations with the state--between autonomy and cooperation, vigilance and loyalty, skepticism and trust, assertiveness and civility--the more likely it is that democracy will emerge and endure." (1994, 16). In a similar vein, Tusalem (2007) revisits Putnam's (1993) argument, which asserts a strong civil society promotes better institutional performance. He tests this argument for Third- and Fourth Wave Democracies in a large-N study and finds out that vibrant civil society has a robust and positive effect on institutional performance and accountability.

In addition to these internal mechanisms that contribute to democratic consolidation in a country, several external factors also affect democracy building and democratic consolidation. In this regard, one of the most debated issues in the literature is the aid effectiveness. Based on the explanations in the literature, foreign aid can promote democracy indirectly in various ways such as technical assistance, conditionality, or improving structural determinants of democracy such as per capita income, and education level (Knack 2004). However, when Knack (2004) tests the hypothesis empirically, he observes no significant evidence indicating that foreign aid promotes democracy. In addition to the large-N study of Knack, Grimm, and Mathis (2018) confirm that democratic assistance of the EU Commission is an ineffective tool to democratize Western Balkan states.

Also, another group discusses whether the post-Cold War international order dominated by the democratic and capitalist powers serves as a catalyst of democratization. In this regard, three camps have emerged which support the idea of 'globalization promotes democracy,' 'globalization undermines democracy,' and ' globalization does not affect democracy' (Li and Reuveny 2008). To detect the effect of economic globalization, Li and Reuveny (2008) conduct an empirical study. They examine economic globalization with four indicators: trade, foreign direct investment, portfolio investment, and diffusion. Based on empirical results, trade openness has a time constant and overall negative effect on democratic performance. The impact of FDI is positive but weakens over time. The negative effect of portfolio investment changes from time to time, but it strengthens over time. One aspect of economic globalization that affects democracy positively every time is diffusion. It means that as much as the world is globalized, a country

engages with the global markets, information, and communication networks. Eventually, globalization increases the diffusion of democratic values and contributes to the level of democracy.

As another external determinant, Gasiorowski and Power (1998) focus on the political systems in the neighbors. This study argues that the countries, which have democratic neighbors, are more likely to become consolidated democracies. Findings of their study that tests the effect of various structural arguments show that although domestic structural factors have a significant effect on democratization in a country, external political pressure to democratize the Third World, the transmission of the democratic ideas and norms are also influential factors that assist the successful democratization. In s similar vein, the 'democratic domino effect' theory emphasized the impact of the democratization process near abroad. The ' democratic domino theory' assumes that when a country democratizes near abroad, the effect spreads to other neighbors. According to Leeson and Dean's statistical analysis (2009), the impact of democratic domino theory exists, but the effect is modest compared to expected results.

Since the domino effect does not have the power to explain democratic diffusion enough, Simmons, Dobbin, and Garrett (2006) suggest alternative diffusion mechanisms and then categorize them: coercion, competition, learning, and emulation. They define the diffusion of liberal norms as an interdependent process. Thus, both domestic and international actors play a role in those processes. First, even it is contrary to the logic of democracy, coercion is an alternative to diffuse norms. By forcing to change, the international actors could impose democratic practices in third-party states. For instance, conditionality is a coercion

mechanism of the EU for its potential members. The second alternative is competition, which pushes decision-makers to implement specific policies. Even though the international actors mostly use this mechanism to enforce economic policies, the competitive environment between governments could motivate them to implement pro-democratic changes. The third mechanism is learning. By using learning, one party of the interaction learns from the other about the outcomes of the action and then can decide to implement or not based on its learnings. For example, authoritarian states could learn the benefits of democracy and transform their regime into it. The fourth one is emulation. With this mechanism, the small players follow the big player in the game and impose the same process. In other words, to achieve the best result, they imitate the 'best practice.' This mechanism could create problems if the practice does not fit into the case. For example, the democratic erosion that Eastern European EU members exercise today could be the result of democratization via emulation.

Another alternative typology of diffusion mechanisms is the impact of linkage and leverage to democratize a third-party state (Way and Levitsky 2007). The linkage between the parties of the transaction and the external actor's leverage on the transitional state is crucial for the efficiency of democratic diffusion mechanisms. While structural factors, which are economic, social, intergovernmental ties, information flows, and geographic proximity, define the linkages between external actors and domain, the effectiveness of leverage depends on the size and strength of state capacity and economy and foreign policy objectives of an external actor. According to Way and Levitsky (2007), linkage and leverage are complementary to each other, and both create domestic conditions for better

democratic performance. During the post-Cold War period, the democratic performance of post-communist countries differs. In their article, the authors try to explain democratic performance variation across the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries and the broader post-Soviet space regarding the linkage-leverage model. Even though other explanatory factors such as economic development exist, linkage and leverage are strong explanatory variables to explain the varying democratic performances of post-Soviet countries and CEEs. CEE has linkage with Western powers, and the West has leverage on CEE. However, the West has neither linkage nor leverage on post-Soviet countries. Thus, thanks to West linkage with CEE and consequently leverage on this region, external actor (West) has much more capability to transform regime in CEE compared to post-Soviet space.

Tolstrup (2013) adds one dimension to the linkage and leverage model: gatekeeper elites. In his article, Tolstrup answers the question 'when and to what degree' external actors could influence democratization. According to him, despite the substantial effect of structural conditions, the actors also have agency and play a crucial role in democratization processes. Therefore, he builds a theoretical framework, which takes domestic political elites into account. Based on his model, these elites are gatekeepers, and they do not necessarily cooperate with the external actors' democratization efforts. His model claims that both structural factors-geographical proximity, the density of ties- and gatekeepers' profit maximization; interest-based, rational; or value-driven motives contribute to linkages between an external actor and a target country. Thus, the linkages, which are conditioned by both structural factors and elites' motivation, and the leverage of external actors determine the level of democratization within the country. Tolstrup's theory is

comprehensive and illustrates how domestic and external factors interact in a democratization probe.

Other studies also investigate the effect of both domestic and external actors together. Freyburg and Richter (2015) argue that to make democracy promotion effective, rewards have to be credible; the benefits of reforms have to exceed the cost. Only in these circumstances, the domestic elites cooperate with external actors in favor of democracy. In other words, incentives by the external actor and rational calculation of the gatekeepers determine the democratic reform process. Although Freyburg and Richter give leverage on decision-making to internal actors, others see democracy promotion as a reciprocal process, where in both donor and recipient have to be active and negotiate (Poppe, Leininger, and Wolff 2019; Grimm 2019). Therefore, the outcome of democratic promotion becomes more effective.

In brief, different groups of scholars discuss the effect of different elements for democratic consolidation. Based on the map followed in this section, domestic determinants are classified as economics, political institutions, and social factors. On the other hand, there are many explanations in the literature that focus on external factors such as foreign aid, democratic neighbors, norm diffusion. Different from those explanations, more recent works on the literature take both domestic and external elements into account and try to explain how external democratization mechanisms and domestic factors interact with each other and affect democratic consolidation in a country.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Building upon Tolstrup's (2013) analytical framework, which emphasizes the significance of gatekeeper elites' role in controlling and using the external actor's democratization influence, this research explains the variation across the selected cases and also seeks to complement the aforementioned framework as it focuses on how and under what circumstances the political elites embrace democratic reforms.

In this regard, first, the study will discuss the case selection. Since this study interrogates the democratic consolidation performances in Western Balkan states, the common features of the regions- common historical background and EU conditionality for democratization- provide control across cases. Therefore, the case selection will be based on the variation across the dependent variable. The dependent variable of the study is democratic consolidation, and the level of democratic consolidation will be measured through existing indexes. While the V-dem Liberal Democracy Index provides quantitative data for measurement, the Bertelsmann Political Transformation Index will provide qualitative evaluation to detect variation across cases.

In order to explain varying democratic performances across the state, the study will conduct 'comparative process tracing' (Bengtsson and Ruonavaara, 2017) analysis. Based on this method, first, I will discuss democratization processes of each selected. Then, comparing critical junctures in the historical processes, I will detect the factors and causal mechanisms that explain the variation. By

examining processes, the secondary sources such as journal articles, reports and book chapters will provide the historical data for the research.

3.1. Case Selection

The secessionist movements in Yugoslavia started in the late 1980s. After Josip Broz Tito, the founding leader of socialist federal Yugoslavia, died in 1980, federal states' political and economic problems became visible, and the situation triggered the dissolution of former Yugoslavia. Even though former Yugoslav states united peacefully, the break-up was violent. Following a bloody war of secession fought between 1992-1995, federal republics separated. Today, there are seven independent states in the former Yugoslavian territory: Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), North Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo.

Former Yugoslavia was a multiethnic federation, and the unity was based on the communist structure of the state created by Tito. Federal Yugoslavia was formed by six federal republics and two autonomous -Kosovo and Vojvodina. However, the federal republics have demanded a more decentralized structure since the 1970s. In response, the 1974 Constitution was ratified by the Federal Republic. The new constitution introduced the 'self-management' concept, which enabled the participation of workers in political processes (Milenkovitch 1977, 57). "It is seen as an underlying principle of all political life, a means of restricting the accumulation of political power at the center, a guarantee against the abuse of power, and a device for making compatible the seemingly incompatible demands for a stable one-party state on the one hand, and for genuine democracy on the other." (Roberts 1978, 139). Also, the 'self-management' principle provided an

economic and political opportunity for the federal republics and autonomous regions to decide in favor of their interest.

The decentralized structure of decision-making processes provided greater autonomy for both federal republics and autonomous regions. Following Tito's death, the system was on the verge of collapse. In 1990, thanks to autonomy given by the 'self-management', federal republics held the first multi-party election. It led to the emergence of new political elites in most of the federal republics. In all federal states except Serbia and Montenegro, new ideas -including autonomy and even separatism- have come to the fore among new political elites. Slovenia and Croatia became the first federal republics that declared independence. Then, North Macedonia (FYROM until 2019) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) followed suit. Unlike the others, Serbs held a majority in Yugoslavia's overall population and were against secession. Instead, they claimed political control in many places to constitute Serbian supremacy by relying on the population dispersed across the territories of former Yugoslavia. Thus, the conflict between Serbs and other republics turned into war. Even though the war in Slovenia ended in ten days, the war in Croatia and Bosnia took years, and all sides of the conflict committed war crimes. Therefore, the finalization of borders between Serbia, Croatia, and BiH lasted until 1995. Even after that, the Serbian, Croat, and Muslim population in BiH and their territorial claims created political instability for the region. Montenegro and Serbia remained together until 2006. Then, Montenegro declared independence in 2006. Another bloody conflict emerged between Kosovo and Serbia in the region in 1998. Even though the hot conflict did not last long, the tension between the two political authorities continued until Kosovo's unilateral independence

declaration in 2008. Even if Kosovo's independence draws current Western Balkans borders, there are still territorial disputes between states today.

In this war-torn region, the EU is a stabilizer, democracy promoter, and economic partner in the region. The Union plays a pivotal role in the resolution of bilateral conflicts in the region. Besides, on the matter of economic integration, the EU is successful in terms of the already high and growing trade volume. When we take EU conditionality and democracy aid into account, we expect to see an increase in the democratic scores of Western Balkan countries. However, despite the EU membership motivation and prospective benefits, there is no significant democratic deepening and consolidation in some Western Balkan countries according to worldwide indexes such as the Bertelsmann Political Transformation Index, Freedom House, and V-dem in recent years. In 2020, the BTI defined Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo as defective democracies, Bosnia-Herzegovina as a highly defective democracy. On the other hand, although all post-Yugoslav societies have a similar background, have started their state-building processes simultaneously, and have been in contact with the EU as the agent of 'democratization from outside', only Slovenia and Croatia have achieved a certain level of democratic consolidation and become EU member respectively in 2004 and 2013.

	Slovenia	Croatia	Serbia	BiH	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Kosovo
Declaration of Independence	June 1991	June 1991	April 1992 as FRY	April 1992	April 1992 as FRY, June 2006 as Montenegro	September 1991	February 2008
The Date of First Multi-party Elections	April 1990	May 1990	December 1990	November 1990	December 1990	November 1990	May 1992
Application for EU Membership	June 1996	February 2003	December 2009	February 2016	December 2008	March 2004	–
Candidate State Status Granted by the EU	June 1996	June 2004	March 2012	–	December 2010	December 2005	–
The starting date of accession talks	April 1998	October 2005	January 2014	–	June 2012	March 2020	–
Member State Status Granted by the EU	May 2004	July 2013	–	–	–	–	–

Table 3.1 The Milestones of Democratization in Western Balkans

Since this study focuses on the relationship between democratic deepening and consolidation experiences in the presence of EU membership motivation, I will examine countries that initiated accession talks with the EU. Thus, I excluded Bosnia & Herzegovina and Kosovo as they are still potential candidates. The EU has not granted candidate status to BiH and Kosovo yet**.** Also, I exempted North Macedonia because the accession talks started in 2020 – that leaves us with only a year of intensive dialogue with the EU. Lastly, Montenegro is not one of this study's cases because state building and independence processes have started later than the others. Even though the accession negotiations between Montenegro and the EU opened in 2012, Montenegro declared its independence from Serbia in 2006. Thus, Montenegro does not fit the study's most similar system design approach due to the lack of shorter independent state experience.

3.2. EU's Democracy Promotion: Conditionalities and Linkages

Based on Levitsky and Way's (2007) definition of linkage and leverage, the EU has had both in the Western Balkans. For instance, different EU members' national motivations, such as the substantial Yugoslavian diaspora in Germany, business concern of Italy, or prestige for France, directed the EU's attention to the region (Ker-Lindsay et al. 2017). Since the region is geographically close to European territory, relying on the existing economic and social ties between European states and Yugoslav successors created a linkage between the EU and Western Balkans. In addition to the nation-specific motivations, there were severe regional-level security concerns such as protracted hot conflict or continuous migration inflow from the region. Thus, security concerns, economically advanced position of the EU, and membership opportunity to the EU created leverage for Europeans over Western Balkans. Even though the economic benefit of Western Balkans enlargement is small compared to other post-communist states, "EU's interest to secure and stabilize its backyard" maintained the linkage and leverage between the EU and the post-Yugoslav states (Vachudova 2019). However, the EU has acted carefully because of its previous experience with Central and Eastern European states and imposed some conditions. Through the democratic and acquis conditionality, the EU made rule transfer to the candidate countries possible (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier 2004).

Since the EU has faced challenges against its liberal democratic values by its post-communist members after 2010, the conditionality toward Western Balkans was strict. The EU has used double conditionality to promote stabilization, security, and democracy in its backyard. In normal circumstances, when the candidate

countries fulfill Copenhagen Criteria -i.e., "stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities", "a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competition and market forces" and "administrative and institutional capacity to effectively implement the acquis and ability to take on the obligations of membership" (European Council,1993)- the EU offers membership status. Additionally, the EU demanded from the potential candidates in the Western Balkans full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and good bilateral relations within the scope of the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) (Mirel, 2018).

In line with the EU conditionality, some states with conflictual relations-initiated dialogue by the EU's mediation. For example, Belgrade and Pristina came together to negotiate on the Kosovo issue in 2013. Also, the name dispute between Greece and Macedonia was resolved in 2018. Furthermore, economic integration efforts seem to be working given that the highest trade volume of Western Balkan countries is with European Union countries. Based on Eurostat statistics in 2020, 69.2% of exports and 54.1 % of Western Balkan countries' imports are with the EU-27 (Eurostat 2020). Lastly, the EU provided democracy and development assistance to ensure a well-functioning rule of law, democratic governance, and free-fair elections. Since the EU conditionality is the determinant for linkage and leverage between the EU (external actor) and the selected Western Balkan states (target countries), I will examine how it applies to each case.

3.2. a. Eu Conditionality in Slovenian Accesion

On 10 June 1996, Slovenia signed Europe Agreement with the EU and applied for EU membership on the same day. In the same year, the EU granted candidate status for Slovenia. In order to start accession negotiation, the Union expected a certain level of economic integrity, democratic development, and the adoption of EU acquis from all potential candidates to accept their applications. According to the Commission view, Slovenia fulfilled the economic criteria and showed progress in terms of democratic governance. Therefore, in 1998 the European Council decided to initiate accession negotiations. At this point, the EU stipulated to fulfill Copenhagen criteria - democracy and the rule of law and human rights and the protection of minorities; a functioning market economy; compliance with the obligations of membership- for candidates. In this regard, the Commission suggested short-term and medium-term priorities, which Slovenia could focus on and conclude the negotiation process. These short-term and medium priorities aimed to establish a privatized economy, create a business-friendly environment, increase administrative and judicial capacities, introduce environmentally friendly legislation, and combat corruption and organized crime (European Parliament).

According to a Commission report published in 1999, although the legislative and judicial processes were slow and some progress was still needed to close all chapters in acquis, Slovenia mostly accomplished political and economic Copenhagen criteria and adopted laws to implement acquis. However, Slovenia's two EU member neighbors'- Italy and Austria- imposed some specific conditions. On the one hand, Italy raised the historical border issues and the situation of Italian minorities in Slovenia. Since Yugoslavian authorities expropriated the Italian

minorities' properties, Italy claimed that Italian minorities were in poor conditions, but the Council of Europe's expert rejected the claim. Then, Italy demanded the liberalization of the real estate market in Slovenia and argued that if Slovenia made foreigners able to purchase land from Slovenia, it would be a sign of Europeanness. On the other hand, Austria imposed a condition for the closure of nuclear power plants justifying their demand with security concerns. Also, Austria demanded the minority protection issue and recognition of the German-speaking community, although their number was few (Bojinović & Urlić 2015, 122-125).

3.2. b. Eu Conditionality in Croatian Accesion

After the break-up of Yugoslavia, ruling elites in Croatia between 1990 and 2000, which did not have a pro-European orientation, and on-going war in Bosnian territory did not initiate the EU membership process. When the government change in 2000, the first step was taken for EU membership. In 2001, Croatia signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) to institutionalize the relationship between the EU and Croatia. The Stabilization and Association Process, a country-specific approach imposed by the EU, aimed to promote economic and political stability and prepare Western Balkan countries for EU integration (European Commision 2001). Then, Croatia applied for membership in 2003, and EU Council granted candidate status for Croatia in 2004. At this point, the EU demanded full cooperation with ICTY to start accession negotiations and promised to open accession in March 2005 if Croatia extradited war criminals to the court. However, since the Croatian government had not cooperated with the court to deliver war criminal Ante Gotovina until 2005, the EU delayed negotiation. Then, the first

chapter opened in 2006 when Croatia fulfill the cooperation requirement with ICTY.

Even though the EU imposed standard conditionality – Copenhagen Criteria- for Croatia, some different conditions were also imposed to accept the membership application. On the one hand, Croatia was in a war, and tensions with neighboring countries were the concern for EU. On the other hand, Croatia's accession process was held after the 5th Enlargement Wave, in which the EU enlarged its territory to post-communist space. Thus, the EU acted more carefully and set some additional conditions to prevent problems experienced before. To promote stabilization in the region, the European Council conditioned protection of minority rights and cooperation with ICTY and neighboring countries to complete the negotiation process. Also, the European Commission expected Croatia to enact an effective program for the fight against corruption and organized crime and establish an effective judicial system. Furthermore, Italy and Slovenia demanded withdrawal from the Ecological-Fishing protection zone in the Adriatic Sea. As another issue, Slovenia conditioned to find solution financial issue remained from Yugoslav succession (Bojinović & Urlić 2015, 125-128).

3. 2. c. Eu Conditionality in Serbian Accesion

Even though the other two cases in this study fulfilled the EU conditions and acquired EU membership status, Serbia has still not complete accession negotiations. Like Croatia, Serbia started to dialogue with the EU approximately ten years after independence because a nationalist and anti-European leader governed the country in this period. In 2003, EU Council identified Serbia as a potential candidate, and the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) started as EU policy

for Western Balkans. In this period, a key priority for the EU was Serbia's cooperation with ICTY. In this regard, the EU demanded the extradition of war criminal Mladic until March 2006 and indicated that if Mladic did not arrest until the due date, accession talks in the framework of SAP would be suspended. Since Mladic was not arrested in May, the EU suspended talks and conditioned Serbia to cooperate with ICTY fully (Schimmelfennig 2011, 930).

Following the government change in Serbia in 2007, Serbia cooperated more with ICTY and arrested three war criminals due to the pro-European orientation of the new government. Therefore, Serbia and the EU signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement in 2008. Finally, in 2009, Serbia applied for membership, but the EU granted candidate status for Serbia three years later, in 2012. Either as a potential candidate or a candidate state, the EU demanded meeting Copenhagen Criteria. In addition, the Union expected peaceful relations with neighboring countries, regional cooperation, and compliance with international obligations (European Commission 2010). In line with given candidate status and advancement on requirements for membership, SAA entered into force in 2013, and accession negotiations started in 2014. Although Serbia opened 18 chapters of EU acquis, only two of them were closed because Serbia has not met Copenhagen Criteria and advanced its democracy.

3. 3. Democratic Consolidation: How It Varies Across Cases

This master thesis will study Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia in the most similar system design (MSSD) to explain the variation of the democratic deepening and consolidation performance of Western Balkan countries. These three countries are similar in terms of their historical background, independent state experience,

and granted EU membership motivation. First, all three of them are post-Yugoslav states and have experienced a socialist regime. Second, they all have been sovereign states for approximately thirty years. Slovenia and Croatia are the first countries that declared independence from the former Yugoslavia in 1991. Even though Serbia's name changed due to the separation of Montenegro, Serbia was founded in 1992. Third, Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia passed certain steps for EU membership. All of them applied for EU membership, the EU granted candidate status, and the accession negotiations started. Slovenia and Croatia completed the adoption and implementation of the EU acquis (opened and then closed all chapters) and became EU members. Serbia started accession negotiations in 2015, opened eighteen chapters, closed two chapters until now. Thus, all of them made reforms for the sake of EU membership. Also, in all of these three states, there are ethnic minorities. Despite similar circumstances, their democratic transition experiences differ. While Slovenia is an example of early consolidation, Croatia is an example of intermediate consolidation, and Serbia has no democratic consolidation today.

Since this study aims to explain varying democratic consolidation performance across the selected cases, the dependent variable is democratic consolidation. To measure the dependent variable -democratic consolidation- this study will use the V-dem Liberal Democracy Index and use the Bertelsmann Political Transformation Index country reports examining the details of consolidation processes. While the V-dem Index provides quantitative data, the BTI will provide qualitative analysis to measure the dependent variable.

The BTI gives us a broad understanding of a country's political transformation since it measures democracy with various indicators. The assessment

is based on seventeen criteria for democracy, market economy and governance. Since this study's focus is the democratic transition, I will use democracy scores. Under the political transformation category in the BTI, there are five sub-criteria: stateness, political participation, the rule of law, stability of democratic institutions, and political and social integration. To measure each criterion, which affects the political transformation score, there are various indicators. Stateness is a composite of monopoly on the use of force, state identity, no interference of religious dogmas, and basic administration. Political participation is a composite of free and fair elections, effective power to govern, association/assembly rights, and freedom of expression. The rule of law is a composite of separation of power, an independent judiciary, prosecution of office abuse, and civil rights. The stability of democratic institutions is a composite of the performance of democratic institutions and commitment to democratic institutions. Political and social integration is a composite of the party system, interest groups, approval of democracy, and social capital. Since BTI provides written reports which evaluate each criterion through the years, the content is very useful to understand how democratic consolidation proceed in the selected cases. However, the reports are published every two years. Therefore, to check the democracy score in milestones of historical processes, the study will also use the V-dem Liberal Democracy Index, which has data for each year.

The V-dem Liberal Democracy Index provides data for selected cases between 1991 and 2020. The index mainly measures "To what extent is the ideal of liberal democracy achieved?" (Teorell 2011, 44). By taking "constitutionally protected civil liberties, the strict rule of law, an independent judiciary, and

effective checks and balances that, together, limit the exercise of executive power" and "the level of electoral democracy" (Teorell 2011, 44) into account, the V-dem Liberal Democracy Index creates a score for each country.

	Slovenia	Croatia	Serbia
Post-independence	0.67 (1991)	0.16 (1991)	0.15 (1992)
First multi-party elections	0.50 (1990)	– (1990)	0.15 (1990)
EU Membership Application	0.77 (1996)	0.64 (2003)	0.52 (2009)
Candidate State Status Granted by the EU	0.77 (1996)	0.61 (2004)	0.47 (2012)
The start of accesion negotiatons	0.77 (1998)	0.65 (2005)	0.33 (2014)
Member State Status Granted by the EU	0.74 (2004)	0.72 (2013)	Still candidate state in 2021 with 0.24

Table 3.3 The Liberal Democracy Scores of Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia in the Milestones of Democratization

3.3.a. Democratic Consolidation in Slovenia

As an early consolidation case in this study, Slovenia has been the most democratically consolidated country among post-Yugoslav societies. Slovenia declared independence from the former Yugoslavia on June 25, 1991. In June 1996, Slovenia applied for EU membership, and accession negotiations started in March 1998. Then, Slovenia became an EU member on May 1, 2004. From 1998 to 2003, Slovenia experienced a political transformation with the motivation of EU membership. The transition from communism to democracy and the consolidation worked out smoothly in Slovenia compared to other transitional countries. Based on

the V-dem Liberal Democracy Index, the country had a score higher than 0.70 in the whole transitional period.

According to BTI Slovenia Country Report (2003), the Slovenian state offered equal rights to all citizens and protected the minority rights – namely Serbian and Croatian minorities who live in Slovenian territory after dissolution. The constitutional arrangements guaranteed the state's secularity. Since the independence, several parliamentary, presidential, and local elections were held, and they complied with the EU standards. As a result of free and fair elections, the elected party had full capacity to govern the country. During the transitional period, the constitution ensured freedom of association, freedom of speech, and press freedom in Slovenia. By reforms, parliamentary democracy strengthened with the check and balance mechanisms. The legislative process became more efficient. Even though there are minor problems with judiciary functionality, the constitution assured judicial independence. Lastly, despite the absence of anti-corruption legislation, the state created an anti-corruption office and implemented a strategy to fight against corruption effectively.

Within post-Yugoslav countries, Slovenia is an example of smooth and early transition. In contrary to other post-Yugoslav states, Slovenia completed its democratic transition in a short period. Therefore, this study will investigate Slovenia as a success story to better explain the variation of democratic deepening and consolidation experiences across Western Balkan countries.

3.3.b. Democratic Consolidation in Croatia

Croatia is the case of intermediate consolidation. Even though Croatia's transition has not been as smooth as Slovenia's, Croatia has achieved a certain level of democratic consolidation in the period after 2000. Croatia declared independence from the former Yugoslavia on June 25, 1991, the same day as Slovenia. However, due to armed conflict between Serbian and Croatian forces, the transition to democracy and European integration was late. The continuation of the nationalist authoritarian leadership and isolation from the international institutions were other apparent reasons for the late democratic transition. In 2000, a new center-left and pro-EU-oriented government came to power in Croatia, and the new era paved the way for the transition. Since the new coalition government favored the parliamentary system over the semi-presidential one, they strengthened the parliament through constitutional amendments. Therefore, Croatia's semi-presidential regime turned into a parliamentary democracy in 2000 (BTI Croatia Country Report 2006, 5). Based on BTI Croatia Country Report (2003), Croatia improved its democracy between 2000 and 2003, but the deficiencies still existed in 2003. In February 2003, Croatia applied for EU membership. A year later, the EU accepted Croatia's membership application and granted Croatia candidate status. In 2005, the Stabilization and Association Act between the EU and Croatian entered into force. Also, the EU declared that cooperation with ICTY is the pre-condition for accession negotiations to start. In December 2005, Croatia apprehended a war criminal, Ante Gotovina, who escaped for a while. The Croatian effort to cooperate with ICTY accelerated the EU membership process (Ramet 2010, 275). The

accession talks started, and the first chapter opened in June 2006. In June 2011, Croatia closed all chapters in the EU acquis and joined the EU on July 1, 2013.

Based on the V-dem Liberal Democracy Index, the liberal democracy score of Croatia climbed up in 2000 drastically. The score of 0.28 in 1999 reached 0.63 in 2000, as a result of the government change and democratic reforms. By the motivation of EU membership, the new government enacted a series of reforms for democratic deepening. According to BTI Croatia Country Report (2006), the implemented reforms provided equal rights for each citizen. Free and fair elections have become the norm in the country. The authoritarian actors such as military officials and extremist leaders, who had veto power for any decision, were removed from the political scene. Although the constitution guaranteed the state's neutrality in religion, the Catholic Church preserved its role in identity creation. Some improvements occurred in freedom of speech and media freedom, but state oppression over the media outlets continued. Despite the constitutional arrangement to guarantee separation of power in Croatia, the judicial independence remained partial. Also, the functionality of the judicial branch was limited, and the administrative and procedural regulations were still needed for the functioning judiciary.

From 2003 to 2006, the Croatian Parliament passed and implemented many laws and bills compatible with EU standards. Based on the stable trend between 2000 and 2012 in the V-dem Liberal Democracy Index, Croatia preserved its success. Moreover, the country achieved the highest score, 0.75. in 2012. According to BTI Croatia Country Report (2012), the Croatian Parliament identified 22 ethnic minorities in the country and strengthened minorities' representation rights in 2010

with a constitutional amendment. As a consequence of the amendments, at least three representatives were granted for the minorities, which has 1.5% of the overall population. Also, the constitution offered double-voting rights and five joint representatives in the assembly for the minorities, which have less than 1.5% of the population (BTI 2012, 6). The impact of the Catholic Church remained important in society. Also, the alleged corruption network between Catholic Church and pro-Catholic HDZ constituted a threat against the state's secularity and democratic deepening. Freedom of expression and media freedom were the most controversial topics for democratic transition in Croatia because, despite the constitutional provisions, the practice was suppressive. The separation of power was well functioning since it was constitution defined the different missions of the branch clearly. By the introduction of the new system for the selection of judiciary officials in 2010, The State Judiciary Council started to make a merit-based appointment for judges. Even though the parliamentary control over the executive has been limited until 2009, the establishment of the parliamentary committee to investigate the corruption case of former prime minister, Ivo Sanader, was a significant development in 2009-10. Moreover, the Sanader case provided momentum for the anti-corruption program. The effectiveness of the anti-corruption agency, USKOK, increased through the process.

Although Croatia's transition is not as easy and successful as Slovenia’s, Croatia also made reforms in the presence of EU membership motivation, transformed its regime into a consolidated democracy. While some reforms on state capacity, political participation, the rule of law, institution stability, and political integration work well, others show less progression. However, the country keeps its

democratic consolidation status. Therefore, this master thesis will examine the Croatian transition experience to compare Croatia with a better example -Slovenia- and a less successful model -Serbia.

3.3.c. Democratic Consolidation in Serbia

Serbia is the case of no consolidation in this study. Although Serbia has many similarities with Slovenia and Croatia, the democracy in Serbia has not achieved a level of consolidation yet. Serbia became an independent state in 1992. At that time, the state had a federal structure with Montenegro, but Montenegro left in 2006. Due to the Serbian state's unwillingness to cooperate with the ICTY and gridlock in political processes in the country, the EU membership process started later than two other post-Yugoslav states. On December 22, 2009, Serbia officially applied for EU membership, and EU Commission granted Serbia's candidate status on March 1, 2012. Then, EU-Serbia Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) entered into force in 2013. In December 2015, the accession negotiations started, and the first chapter opened. Until today, eighteen chapters opened, and only two of them closed. Since the focal point of the present research is the variation of the democratic transition processes of selected post-Yugoslav countries under the EU membership motivation, the study will also examine the transitional period of Serbia.

According to the V-dem Liberal Democracy Index, the year 2000 was the most significant breaking point in the Serbian democratic transition. When the new government defeated the nationalist, war criminal, charismatic leader, Milosevic, in 2000, the democracy score jumped from 0.19 to 0.48. However, the score was still

far from the other Yugoslav successors – namely Croatia and Slovenia- which had similar conditions with Serbia.

Between 2000 and 2012, Serbia kept its score around 0.50, which is not upto the standards of a consolidated liberal democracy. During the period until 2006, different political actors' refusal to recognize Kosovo's territorial integrity, the limited authority of the judicial branch, lack of effective check and balance mechanisms, political instability due to often change of governments, and high level of corruption curtailed the development of infant Serbian democracy (BTI Serbia Country Report 2006). Even though the strengthening pro-EU consensus in the years after 2008 and more cooperation with ICTY contributed to Serbian democratic consolidation and acceleration with the dialogues with the EU, Serbian democracy still suffered from several problems (BTI Serbia Country Report 2010; BTI Serbia Country Report 2012).The 2008 Elections were compatible with the EU standards, however political parties' authority to change their list of deputies after the elections and forcing deputies to sign blank resignation letters were the two major democratic violations. In 2011, Serbia made an amendment and changed the regulations regarding the latter anti-democratic practices. In 2010, the organized crime was still a big challenge for the Serbian state. There were many mafia organizations, which involved illegal transactions. Despite the implementation of several regulations to reduce organized crime, Serbia still needed effective reforms at that point. The elected party had the power to govern, but the military had a role in governance since the government appointed military officials to control secret service and edit parliament's report on security issues and services. In 2010, the EU indicated that a civilian oversight for security issues and service is better for

functioning democracy. Although the constitution guaranteed freedom of association, LGBTI groups face restrictions. In addition, freedom of expression and media is limited. While state-owned media had substantive financial resources, others were mostly under the control of interest groups due to financial needs. Also, the international media and NGOs criticized the Constitutional Court's legal effort to strengthen media freedom in 2010 by claiming that the regulations increased self-censorship and led to the closure of media outlets. The legislative branch and judiciary are independent, but their operational inefficiencies weakened their powers. Even though the court was constitutionally independent, the clientelist networks, nepotism, and political impact impede the efficiency of the judiciary. Since 2009, Serbia has fought against corruption, but combatting has had limited effect in practice. Lastly, the Serbian party system has been weak and mostly leader-centric. Nevertheless, Serbia preserved its democracy between 2000 and 2012; there were many 'buts' about democracy in the country.

In the period after 2012, the V-dem Liberal Democracy Score of Serbia drastically went down from 0.47 (2012) to 0.24 (2020). After the victory of SNS in 2012 and power consolidation throughout the eight years as a ruling party, the Serbian party system turned into a dominant-party system (BTI Serbia Country Report 2020). Especially since the 2017 election, when prime minister Alexander Vućic became the president, the existence of government-led media outlets, weak civil society influence over political processes, and intervention of independent institutions undermined the check and balance mechanisms in Serbia to a great extent. The election was not fair enough due to limited media coverage of opposition candidates, ineffective oversight mechanisms, and pressure on voters

who have been working for state-affiliated jobs. Also, after Vućic was elected as the president, he continued to act as the party leader. Even if the presidency was more ceremonial than prime ministry, he concentrated the power in his hand. He overrode the parliament in several policy areas like the dialogue with Kosovo, change in criminal code. In time, the situation has damaged the separation power in the country. The National Assembly (legislative body) was responsible for appointing judges. However, since the legislative body controlled by the dominant party, it made National Assembly rather subservient to the executive. Consequently, the legislative and judicial branches turned into the state bodies under the control of the executive, which was also dominated by one person. Moreover, the government did not stay committed to its promise of preventing corruption. The anti-corruption program between 2008 and 2013 was ineffective. On the contrary, the government is involved in clientelist networks. For example, in 2016, the government introduced a mega construction project called Belgrade Waterfront. For the project, a private company from the United Arab Emirates invested more than 2 billion euros. The contract was not transparent at all, and it led to criticism against the government. o speed up the implementation of the project, the area was demolished by the people who wore masks on the election night in April 2016. The police did not answer the call of citizens who reported the incidents. The pro-government media remained silent (Kmezić and Bieber 2017, 49-50). The media outlets were mostly pro-government; therefore, it limited the pluralism of media. Also, the existing threats against journalists adversely affected the freedom of expression. Even though the constitution guaranteed civil rights for everyone, the LGBTQ communities faced discrimination and were attacked. From 2012, Serbian

democracy faced many challenges. Thus, it explains the downgrading trend in the liberal democracy scores of the country.

Serbia has similar conditions with Slovenia and Croatia, but it failed to consolidate its democracy. Therefore, this study will analyze Serbia as a case of no consolidation. In a comparative fashion, the study aims to explain why the democratic consolidation in the selected cases vary although all have a similar background, have started their state-building processes simultaneously, and have been in contact with the EU as the agent of 'democratization from outside'.

CHAPTER IV

TWO SUCCESSFUL DEMOCRATIZATION EPISODES FROM SUCCESSORS OF FORMER YUGOSLAVIA: THE CASES OF SLOVENIA AND CROATIA

In 1990, competitive multi-party elections were held across Yugoslavia. Henceforward, the main concern then became the stabilization of pluralism in the system, adaptation of former elites, and establishing the required institutions. While some states succeeded in making full democracy the only game in town, others failed. Even though there were success stories for democratic transition, not every state achieved the ultimate goal, democratic consolidation, at the same time. In this regard, this chapter will examine two successful democratization episodes from the successors of former Yugoslavia: the cases of Slovenia and Croatia.

4.1. Slovenia

4.1.a. The Way Through Political Pluralism in the 1980s

Among the six republics in former socialist Yugoslavia, Slovenia had a distinctive position due to its developed economy and liberal standing. Since the introduction of the 1974 constitution, which highlights the self-management of federal republics, Slovenia has taken advantage of the self-management principle, created a well-functioning economy, and contributed considerably to the total GDP and provided significant export revenue in Yugoslavia. Also, Slovenia was definitely the most liberal republic in the federation. Even though "liberalism" in

Slovenia did not have the same meaning in Western democracies, the check and balance mechanisms were more developed than other federal republics in Yugoslavia (Rizman 2006, 25).

In mid-1980s, under the influence of internal pressure and external motivations, the League of Communists of Slovenia started to question itself and the regime. On the one hand, the Republic of Serbia held an aggressive attitude against others and the Republic of Slovenia perceived it as a threat. The "Memorandum" published by the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in 1985 re-introduced the "Greater Serbia" idea that sought to establish Serbian predominance in Yugoslavia. Based on the Memorandum, the 1974 constitution and its decentralized structure, which gives self-management and self-determination rights to every republic, constituted a great risk against the integrity of Federal Yugoslavia and the Serbian nation. Therefore, the memo argued that the 1974 constitution needs to be amended. The self-determination right has to be removed from the Constitution, Kosovo and Vojvodina's autonomous status need to be abolished, and had to be only four federal republics (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, and Macedonia). Despite there is no direct threat against the Republic of Slovenia, Serbian nationalism was on the rise, and the centralization that it promoted would not serve the best interest of wealthier republics like Slovenia.

On the other hand, in addition to internal disagreement within Yugoslavia, the global politics took a different turn. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, communism faced a crisis. All communist regimes in Eastern Europe experienced a democratic transition in the late 80s and early 90s. Due to its level of economic development, Slovenia was much more integrated with the European market

compared to other federal republics. In this regard, political elites in Slovenia had a chance to observe the developmental level of Western economies and compare their economic capability with them. Consequently, they realized that despite Slovenia's vibrant economy within Yugoslavia, the country actually was behind the West in terms of infrastructure, environment-friendly production, and logistics. Considering the situation, the elites were determined to create an economy, which could compete in the European market (Rizman 2006, 43). Communism was in decline, and transition to pluralistic democracy was the only way to preserve the economic competitiveness and accelerate the seemingly inevitable global integration.

As a result of questioning the current regime in line with external and internal factors, some dynamics also changed at the national level. First, a strong and vibrant civil society emerged in the 1980s. In the late 60s and early 70s, there were Slovenian liberal intellectuals, who demanded a liberal market economy and political pluralism. Even though those liberal intellectuals tried to initiate civil society action through the youth organizations and trade unions, they did not achieve any significant success since the conservatives within the League of Communists of Slovenia prevailed and suppressed the initiatives (Rizman 2006, 39-40). However, in the middle of the 80s, the new civil society, which promotes peace, and problematizes environmental and gender issues emerged in the Republic of Slovenia. At this time, since the mindset of political elites changed in more liberal direction, they did not curtail the actions of civil society. Therefore, in the Slovenian one-party state, the civil society activism and mobilization became essential because they paved the way for pluralism by giving birth to the formally organized opposition. Moreover, critical media assisted civil society. For example,

the weekly magazine Mladina (Youth) played a crucial role. By bringing taboo issues to the public opinion such as the military, it broadened and diversified the political agenda. Another magazine, Nova Revija, opened up discussions on a democratic concept such as pluralism and national independence. Furthermore, professional associations, human rights associations, and Slovenian Writer's Society articulated ideas for civil society (Bibic 1993, 370). The rise of pluralist civil society contributed to the democratic transition to a great extent.

Second, the communist political elites' reformist wing was aware of the one-party state communist regime's problems, and of the need for pluralism. However, conservative-minded political elites still dominated the party politics. Therefore, new liberal political elites in the party had to take gradual action during the party's transformation to prevent immediate conservative backlash. In 1986, liberals within the communist party under the leadership of Milan Kučan defeated the conservative wing. Despite the conservatives' reaction to civil society, the liberals considered the civil society as legitimate stakeholders in politics. By the end of the 80s, the communist party in Slovenia turned into a party that supports democratic values such as political pluralism and freedom of political association. They amended the Constitution in that direction. In the spring of 1990, the League of Communists of Slovenia withdrew from the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. All these prove that the Slovenian communist party transformed itself into a social democratic party. (Bibic 1993, 375).

In addition to vibrant civil society and reformist political elites, some structural factors contributed to the democratization process in Slovenia. Initially, the period started in the 1980s was not Slovenia’s first-ever experience with

political pluralism. Before Tito's Yugoslavia, Slovenia was a part of the Austria-Hungarian empire and then the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovens. Back then, Slovenia had a pluralist political culture. WWII interrupted Slovenia's pluralistic experience, and then Slovenia became a part of the communist Yugoslavia. Even though communism limited the political freedom and emergence of a multi-party system, Yugoslavian socialism had a different form than Soviet communism. Since six republics established the former Yugoslavia, Yugoslavian socialism launched the "self-management. Thus, it makes the introduction of pluralism more possible (Bibic 1993, 375-376). Last, Slovenia was an ethnically homogenous federal entity, as opposed to the other federal republics with higher levels of ethno-religious diversity that made representation and national consensus rather complicated. Besides, in Slovenia, nationalist inclinations were limited thanks to homogenous ethnical structure of the society. Therefore, consensus building was easy in the absence of fragmented nationalist interests. (Rizman 2006, 25). The combination of internal and external circumstances, domestic political actors (civil society and reformist elites), and structural factors accelerate the democratization of Slovenia before the dissolution.

4.1.b. The First Multi-Party Election in 1990

Following the constitutional amendment in 1989, the Socialist Republic of Slovenia adopted a multi-party system, and the first multi-party election was held on April 8, 1990. At that time, the political arena was highly fragmented. While some of the old political organizations was reforming itself, other social movement turned into political parties. Also, some other new political parties emerged.

Seventeen parties competed in the election. No single party achieved the majority of seats. Nine parties and two minority deputies entered the parliament called Socio-Political Chamber- the first house of the legislature-. The United List of Social Democrats (ULSD, also known as Party of Democratic Renewal) and Liberal Democratic Party (LDS), former communists, got the highest vote shares respectively 17.28 % of the votes, 14 seats, and 14.49 % of the votes, 12 seats based on the election results (Fink-Hafner 2010, 242-243). Even though the social democrats and former communists got the highest vote, the new center-right parties formed the Democratic Opposition of Slovenia (DEMOS) coalition government. The coalition of six parties, DEMOS, took 47 seats in the Socio-Political Chamber out of 80. (Fink-Hafner 2006, 230).

4.1.c. Declaration of Independence and Adoption of New Constitution in 1991

Even though the Socialist Republic of Slovenia adopted a multi-party system, being a part of a communist federation under Serbian nationalist leader Milosevic was an obstacle to consolidate its infant democracy and join the Western alliance (Bebler 2002, 131). Regarding the situation, all parties in the parliament agreed to set a plebiscite to vote independence. In the referendum in December 1990, Slovenes voted for independence with a high turnout. The Socialist Republic of Slovenia declared independence on June 25, 1991. The political elites were planning to leave peacefully, but Milosevic and Yugoslavian National Army responded violently. After ten days long war, European Community intervened in the conflict, and the war ended. On the last days of the conflict, European Community officials and Slovenian ministers came together and agreed on

ceasefire. On July 7, 1991, Brioni Accord was signed by Slovenia, Croatia, and Yugoslavia under the European Community mediation, and Slovenia became a nationally sovereign state.

In December 1991, the Assembly adopted its new Constitution, emphasizing democratic rule combining liberal, socialist, and corporative traditions. The constitution indicated that the state takes its power from Slovene citizens in a democratic system. As a reflection of liberal rule, the constitution highlighted protection of human rights, separation of powers, the rule of law, church and state separation, and the protection of competition. The socialist tradition of Slovenia brought the right to strike, freedom of trade unions, rights for workers, and guarantee of housing and a clean environment by the state for its citizen into the constitution. Also, the constitution ensured the freedom of association and protection of Italian and Hungarian minorities and granted rights to the Roma people. (Borak&Borak 2004, 55-56)

4.1.d. Consolidation of Democracy between 1992 and 2004

DEMOS coalition did not survive long due to its heterogeneity. After the collapse of DEMOS coalition, the parliamentary election was held in 1992, and the Liberal Democratic Party formed a new coalition government under the leadership of Janez Drnovšek. From 1992 to 2004, even though the coalition partner changed, the coalition was dominated by the center-left Liberal Democratic Party (Liberal Democracy of Slovenia, LDS, after 1994), which has taken the highest percentage of votes. In that period, the center-right was the opposition in Slovenia. The center-

right succeed and built a coalition under the leadership of Janez Janša in 2004. In this election, Slovenian Democratic Party (SDP) took the majority of the votes first time with 29.08% (Fink-Hafner 2006, 228).

The Slovenian political arena had a bipolar structure. Since the first multi-party election, two overlapping cleavages became salient in Slovenian politics. One of them was a left-right continuum; the other one was an old-new divergence. Mostly, senior communist politicians, who continued their political career, had left leanings. From 1992 to 2004, those senior and reformed-minded politicians, who initiated the regime transition in Slovenia, got the highest percentage of the vote and became the leader of the coalitions, except short period in 2000. The coalition partners were ideologically close parties to LDP. While some of them split from the LDP, others were small new emerging parties. Those junior partners, such as the Democratic Party of Pensioners and Party of Youth Slovenia, garnered modest electoral support due to their limited reach. Still, they had seats in the parliament thanks to the electoral system that prioritize representativeness every group. Most of the new politicians who started their career in the multi-party era were members of center-right parties. By 2004, the center-right split, merged, and formed new political parties many times. (Fink-Hafner 2006, 218-220).

Between 1990 and 2000, the Slovenian party system experienced three different forms: polarized party system, moderate pluralism, and predominant party system. In the beginning, too many parties were competing. However, the number of parties in the parliament has always been less than ten. Nonetheless, there was a highly polarized party system. Over time, they merged and divided; new parties came up. The center-right parties that competed with each other started to

cooperate. As a result, the party system shuttled between a polarized party system and moderate pluralism. Then, in the 2000 parliamentary election, the LDS got approximately 40 % of the national vote and built a safe majority government. At that time, Slovenia was experiencing a predominant party system. In this way, the party system in Slovenia consolidated itself naturally. Moreover, existing electoral rules and proportional systems made the Slovenian parliament a dynamic political space that allows all parties to join decision-making (Fink-Hafner 2006, 221-223). Even though the old figures in politics still played a significant role after the transition, the timely emergence of the new opposition enabled the well-functioning democracy, providing a check and balance mechanism for the government. Furthermore, citizens could easily hold the governments accountable when they are dissatisfied with their performance, thanks to pluralistic democracy.

Despite ideological differences, all parties agreed on some common values. Those values were "respect for human rights, parliamentary democracy, the welfare state and joining the European integration process" (Fink-Hafner, 2006, 213). On the one hand, since respecting human rights, parliamentary democracy, and the welfare state are core values of democracy, all political parties contributed to the democratic consolidation in Slovenia. On the other hand, all these values have been the European Union's fundamental values and being part of European integration was the ultimate goal for Slovenia since the very beginning of the entire transformation that started with the transition to multipartism and secession from Yugoslavia. The successful transition was the pre-condition to join the EU, and Slovenia fulfilled it outstandingly. The other way around, the incentive to join the EU was a strong motivation for Slovenia's successful and early phase transition

(Potočnik&Lombarde 2004, 368). According to political elites, EU membership was a positive-sum game for Slovenia because of economic opportunities and security (Inotai&Stanovnik 2004, 355-356). Therefore, the transition accelerated the EU membership process and vice versa. On June 10, 1996, Slovenia applied for EU membership. As Slovenia has complied with two Copenhagen Criteria (guaranteeing democratic institutions and a well-functioning economy), the only need was implementing acquis. During the accession negotiations, started on March 30, 1998, Slovenia deepened its democracy by reforming its judiciary, creating new institutions, and increasing its administrative capacity. On May 1, 2004, Slovenia joined the EU as a consolidated democracy.

4.2. Croatia

4.2.a. Tudjman Era from 1990 to 2000

In response to increasing Serbian nationalism and the predictable break-up of Yugoslavia, the reformist political elites in the League of Communists of Croatia (SKH) suggested holding the first multi-party election in Croatia in 1989. There were several reasons for multipartism. First, it was a messege for the other federal state that indicated Yugoslavia's need for a political change. Second, the reformist communists thought they could garner the majority's support. They assumed that they could hold onto power almost effortlessly and they would acquire the democratic legitimacy that they need to run the country (Čular 2000, 32). These reasons show that holding a multi-party election aimed to serve the best interest of the reformist communists rather than abiding by democracy as an ideal regime. Even though the idea was benefitting reformists, the result was not in favor of them.

In the elections on May 6-7, 1990 (second round, first round on April 22-23, 1990), the right-wing opposition, Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) , won the elections. The results were shocking for the SKH, which expected to dominate the parliament also in the post-transition period.

The parliament nominated Franjo Tudjman, the president of the HDZ, as the president of Croatia in 1990. Tudjman's main focus was on the national sovereignty of Croatia. Thus, the main priority was the declaration of independence. Croatia held a referendum in May 1991 and declared independence on June 25, 1991 (the same day as Slovenia). However, due to the aggressive attitude of the Serbs, the war became inevitable. The Serbo-Croat War lasted between 1991 and 1995. Meanwhile the main goal was to preserve the borders of the Socialist Republic of Croatia from the Serbia aggression, but Tudjman also claimed the territory in Central Bosnia and Herzegovina since those regions are Croat-populated. Despite he did not achieve his goal in Bosnia, the bounded territory overlapped with the previous borders of the federal republic at the end of the war. Therefore, President Tudjman defined himself as 'the founder of the nation' due to his victory (Ramet 2010, 259).

In the situation**,** rule by 'the father', who had an authoritarian tendency, was problematic for democracy indeed. The authoritarian traits of Tudjman had reflections on several areas. First, Tudjman was a charismatic leader who had a complicated background. He was a "communist general, anti-communist historian, and nationalist politician" (Ramet 2010, 266). As a reflection of its leader's characteristics, HDZ was a catch-all party that aimed to get votes from various groups. In parallel to that, the party program was eclectic and ambiguous (Čular 2000, 35; Ramet 2010, 266). In that regard, the material incentives drove the party

members' attachment more than ideological motivations and a programmatic agenda. This in return transformed the party into a political machine that united the corrupt and clientelist networks between politics and the economy (Ćular 2000, 36-37).

Second, the only motivation that directs the party program was national sovereignty. However, some components of the national sovereignty project were challenging for constitutional democracy. In the context of Croatia, national sovereignty meant sovereignty of Croatian ethnic origins. For instance, the law enacted in 1995 limited the number of Bosnian representatives in the Croatian parliament, even they are elected (Lalović 2000, 50-51). The logic behind national sovereignty did not only affect the representation of minorities. President Tudjman used his power to remove elected officials and to block Serbs to get the control in municipalities. In 1995/96, he vetoed a mayor-elect from the opposition coalition (Ramet 2010, 260). These executive actions were detrimental to the pluralism and democratic governance.

Third, Croatia had a semi-presidential system. In this system, the constitution defined the presidency institution as the head of the state, who seeks all people's common good in Croatia. During the first phase of the war, Tudjman acted in compliance with this definition, but it did not last long. When the Serbs rebellion started in 1995 around Knin, the stronghold of the ethnic Serb rebels in Croatia, the interests of the HDZ contradicted the requirement of being the president of the Croatian Republic. The HDZ had a nationalistic orientation. On the contrary, being the president of all Croatian citizens required protecting everyone, including Serbs. Tudjman chose the interests of his party and acted in that direction (Lalović 2000,

54-56). Tudjman's policy that prioritizes his ideology over the requirements of the office as the head of state was against the constitution and an obstacle to democracy.

Fourth, during the Tudjman rule, the electoral law changed in every election. The aim was to regulate the system in favor of the incumbent. The electoral rule was not a constitutional matter, so the change was easy. It only required an absolute majority in the parliament, which HDZ has always had (Čular 2000, 33; Ramet 2010, 269). Moreover, the voting system in Croatia was majority voting instead of proportional representation. Therefore, the parliamentary majority of HDZ relied on the electoral rule, rather than a predominant majority support in the population. (Čular 2000, 33; Ramet 2010, 266)

Between 1990 and 1999, the political arena was dominated by Franjo Tudjman and his party. In 1994, Stjepan Mesić and Josip Manolić left the HDZ by referring to their disagreement with Tudjman's policies in Bosnia and established a new party, Independent Croatian Democrats (HND). Even though new parties emerged, they were always overshadowed by the existing charismatic leader in the country and changing electoral rules in favor of HDZ in every election curtailed their chances of success drastically. Under these circumstances, Croatia experienced minimal democracy that lacked genuine and fair playing field. The parties were able to compete in the multi-party election, but the dominant party was HDZ. Although the elements of the democratic transition were introduced in 1990, the competitive predominant party system under the Tudjman rule limited the deepening and consolidation of democracy (Lalović 2000, 53; Čular 2000, 31).

4.2.b. The Parliamentary and Presidential Elections in 2000

Following the death of Tudjman in 1999, both parliamentary and presidential elections were held in 2000. In the parliamentary election, HDZ did not preserve its majority in the parliament. The coalition government was formed by Ivica Račan, the president of the Social Democratic Party of Croatia (SDP). SDP was the successor of the League of Communists in Croatia and the center-left party. Other coalition partners were from both sides of the ideological spectrum: the Croatian Social Liberal Party (HSLS), the Croatian People's Party (HNS), the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS), the Liberal Party (LS), and Istrian Democratic Assembly (IDS). After a while, IDS left the coalition. In the presidential election, Stjepan Mesić, a former member of HDZ, founder of HND, and then joined HNS, won the election unexpectedly. Therefore, HDZ lost its power in both parliament and the presidency.

The aforementioned parliamentary coalition got together before the election and united around a common program. The main priorities were introducing a parliamentary system instead of a semi-presidential system, cut the linkage between politics and security forces, normalizing of civil-military relations, decentralizing the state, strengthening the privatization process, and preventing the corrupted, clientelist network (Dolenec 2008, 39). The new president, Mesić, agreed on this plan, and with several amendments in 2000 and 2001, the parliament was strengthened. Additionally, the Office of the Suppression of Corruption and Organize Crime (USKOK) was established (Ramet 2010, 269). SDP was a pro-European party and opened the way through European integration. Despite all these

successful initiatives, SDP-led coalition could not stay in power after the 2003 parliamentary election.

4.2.c. The Coalition Governments Under Reformed HDZ from 2003 to 2011: European Integration and Consolidation of Democracy

In the 2003 parliamentary election, HDZ won the highest number of seats in the parliament (66 out of 152 seats). The party formed a minority government and Ivo Sanader became the prime minister of Croatia. The new leader of the HDZ, Ivo Sanader, was a reformist. Thus, the party program was very different from the one under the Tudjman leadership. First, the ethnic-nationalist leaning of HDZ was changed. In that regard, Sanader promised to resolve the problems of Serbian refugees and cooperate with Serbian representatives (Ramet 2010, 270). Second, the ultimate goal was to join European integration, and HDZ set its political agenda accordingly (Dolenec 2008, 40). The renewed mindset of the HDZ paved the way for the EU accession.

At that time, the Croatian political arena became both competitive and cooperative. The parties were competing for seats on the one hand and built coalitions to run the country, contrary to the party politics pattern of the Tudjman rule. In other words, political pluralism started to function. Also, ideologically coherent and precise party programs substituted the ambivalent party programs of the previous era. Both center-right and center-left parties had pro-European agendas. It was a turning point for democratic consolidation in Croatia because pro-EU consensus was achieved. Until the consensus was built, regardless of how much the EU was highly motivated to democratize potential candidates, democratic

consolidation was impossible without the willingness of elites in the country. When domestic elites built the pro-EU consensus, the EU's democratization effort became efficient. (Maldini 2015, 18). Under these circumstances, Croatia was ready for Europeanization (Dolenec 2008, 40). Therefore, Croatia applied for EU membership in 2003.

The motivation for EU membership accelerated the democratization in Croatia by establishing and maintaining several institutions. The pressure on media had been high since the independence. Most of the media outlets were owned by the political elites, and the rest were not free either since they could not write freely and were under threat of being arrested. In 2003, the ownership rules of media changed in favor of domestic and foreign capital. Simultaneously, the new law was enacted to prevent monopoly for the media sector. In the following years, the criminal court minimized the threat against journalists (Ramet 2010, 274). Second, in 2005, the government introduced the Judicial Reform Strategy and the Action Plan in order to protect the rule of law, strengthen judicial independence, and improve the administrative capacity of the courts (Madir 2011, 57). Third, the government decided to fight against corruption more efficiently. In that regard, the parliament adopted the National Anti-Corruption Program for 2006-2008 (Ramet 2010, 270).

In 2007, again, HDZ won the highest number of seats (66 out of 153 seats) in the parliament again, but this time it formed a coalition government with HSS, HSLS, HSU (Croatian Party of Pensioners), and all ethnic minority representatives. Moreover, Slobodan Uzelac, an ethnic Serb, became the Deputy Minister of the cabinet. . It was a historical moment because the first time an ethnic Serb entered

the cabinet. In this way, Sanader proved his positive attitude toward the ethnic minorities one more time.

Despite all progress, Sanader unexpectedly resigned from his position in 2009 and left the country. In 2010, the investigations on corruption allegations against him started. Then, he was arrested in Austria in December 2010. In 2012, he went to trial and was sentenced to ten years in jail. The institutions established for the EU integration, like USKOK, and strengthened judiciary worked effectively to arrest, investigate and sentence him. In other words, his reforms caught him, and the entire process has been a showcase for the consolidation of democratic institutions before the EU membership (Bieber 2020, 79-80).

Meanwhile, the accession negotiations that started in 2005 were underway, and all chapters closed in 2011. In 2012, a referendum was held in Croatia to vote for EU membership. Then, Croatia became an EU member in 2013.

4.3. Comparison of Two Successful Cases

Even though the democratization processes in both Slovenia and Croatia advanced differently, both of them are consolidated democracies today. While Slovenia achieved a certain level of democracy at the beginning of the 2000s, Croatia came late and consolidated its democracy ten years later. Based on the assessment of these two democratization episodes, two main reasons underlie Slovenia and Croatia's varying performances. Those reasons are the late introduction of functioning pluralism, and elite consensus on EU integration.

First, the first multi-party elections were held in the same year in both Slovenia and Croatia. However, while the political parties were fairly competing in

Slovenia, Croatia had experienced a predominant party system for ten years under the Tudjman rule. Tudjman was a leader with authoritarian tendencies. Thus, he dominated the political arena by blocking fair competition for electoral office. In the 2000 elections, after his death, democratic pluralism was almost reintroduced into the political field with a new understanding of politics. The political parties started to compete fairly. The semi-presidential system turned into a parliamentary democracy. Since pluralism is the vital element of democracy, the consolidation phase started in Croatia at that time.

Second, the incentive given by the European Union to democratize the states started to work only after all political elites achieved a consensus in both countries. Since the accession process limits elites' actions by imposing acquis, the will of political elites was essential to accelerate the process. It was the early phase in Slovenia's transition, because one of Slovenian elites' main motivations for democratic transition was joining the Western alliance for further market integration. The reformist elites came to power before the secession and started to transform the communist structure in the country before 1990. Therefore, in Slovenia, the democratic transition and democratic consolidation went hand in hand. However, in Croatia, Tudjman's party was ruling the country and did not have a pro-European party agenda until 2000. Even though certain essential elements of the democracy like multi-party elections were initiated in the Croatian transition in early 1990s, ten year-long authoritarian experience under Tudjman interrupted democratization and made Croatia a latecomer (Fink Hafner&Hafner Fink 2009, 1612-1613). After the death of Tudjman, all parties adopted pro-European agenda, achieved a consensus, made democratic reforms in 2000s. The

pro-EU consensus increased the effectiveness of the EU influence and conditionalities for democratization. The establishment of democratic institutions and check and balance mechanisms helped accomplishment of the transition while consolidating the Croatian democracy simultaneously.

CHAPTER V

FAILED DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION: THE CASE OF SERBIA

5.1. Serbia

5.1.a. The Break-Up of Former Yugoslavia: Pre-Milosevic Era of Serbian Republic

After the death of Tito, the change in the political landscape in former Yugoslavia made the disintegration inevitable for several reasons. First, in the 1980s, the structural, economic, social, and ideological gap between federal units increased. Second, political elites across federal states varied in terms of their view on pluralism. Third, some federal states demanded a more centralized model of federalism instead of a decentralized one (Fink-Hafner 1995, 339). Although Serbia supported the unity of Yugoslavia, it contributed to the changing political landscape to a great extent due to the idea of Greater Serbia – that gave birth to several territorial disputes with Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina, and Kosovo.

Before the introduction of the 1974 constitution, there were constitutional debates at an elite level. While Serbian authorities favored centralized federal Yugoslavia, other federal republics agreed on a decentralized federal structure. Federal republics withdrew the idea of centralized Yugoslavia because of the gap between ideologies, social and economic conditions. For example, Slovenia and Croatia had wealthier econoies than others. So, they wanted to build a more integrative market economy. Additionally, especially Slovenia was in favor of functioning pluralistic democracy and multi-party system rather than one-party rule

communism. On the other hand, Kosovo and Vojvodina (Serbian provinces) were demanding more autonomy. The 1974 Constitution included decentralization as an option and gave the right to Kosovo and Vojvodina to make a constitution and regulate their economy autonomously under Serbian rule. However, autonomy that was granted to these two Serbian provinces by the 1974 Constitution guaranteed for which, bothered Serbian elites and intellectuals, since it was argued to limit the Serbian political power and sovereignty in the autonomous regions. Despite the constitutional amendments passed, nationalistic views became visible, especially among Serbian intellectuals. They argued that the amendments emphasizing decentralization split Yugoslavian unity, transform federal states into nation-states, and exclude Serbia from the process (Guzina 2003, 95-98). In 1981, the Kosovar Albanian students rioted and demanded 'federal republic' status independent from Serbia (Reuters 1981). The riots escalated the nationalist tendencies more, and the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts issued a memorandum in 1986. The document evaluated the Serbian people's position within Yugoslavia as problematic due to economic backwardness compared to Slovenia and Croatia, limiting the right to exercise power in two Serbian provinces, and Kosovar Albanians' discriminatory attitude against Kosovar Serbs (Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences 1986; Guzina 2003, 100-102). The main message of the memorandum was Serbian exclusion within Yugoslavia, and the solution was Serbian dominance based on the widespread Serb population around Yugoslavia. According to 1991 census data -the most recent census to Memorandum-, Serbs had the biggest population in Yugoslavia with 36.2 %. Although most of them lived in Serbian Republic, Serbian diasporas were significant in Bosnia with 31.4% of total Republic of Bosnia and

Herzegovina's population and in Croatia with 12.2% of total Republic of Croatia's population (Coggins 2014, 108). At that time, the president of the Serbian Republic, Ivan Stambolic, was not a nationalist and pursued a moderate program to find a balance between the nationalist and liberal demands. Thus, Slobodan Milosevic made a coup in the League of Communists of Serbia (LCS) and became the party's president with a commitment to prioritize Serbia's interests at the federal level.

5.1.b. Milosevic Era in 1990s

After Milosevic took charge of the LCS, he adopted nationalist rhetoric by using historical elements. For instance, on June 28, 1989, he mobilized the people and gave them a dramatic speech in Gazimestan Plain in Kosovo, where an important Serbian figure, Prince Lazar, was killed by the Ottomans. According to his nationalist narrative, Serbs were the landowners but had been suffering for centuries, and they should now have the right to exercise power in their territory. The message echoed the 1986 Memorandum, but the impact was wider. It attracted the attention of Serbs living in Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. By this strategy, Milosevic gained enormous popular support (Pavlaković 2005, 13).

Since Milosevic had popular support, he easily accepted the idea of conducting multi-party elections. Thus, like in all other cases, which experienced the collapse of the communist regime, the first multi-party elections were held in Serbia in December 1990. Both parliamentary and presidential elections resulted in the victory of Milosevic and his party Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), which was the new name of LCS (Ramet 2010, 290; Zakošek 2008, 593). However, even though Milosevic used democratic practices like multi-party elections, on the one hand; he used anti-democratic tools to achieve his goal too. Increasing the central

government's and, therefore, the Serbian majority's power was a top priority. Earlier in 1990, a referendum to abolish the autonomy of Serbian provinces was held, and the constitutional amendment was accepted with 97.25% as a result of the referendum. This is how Milosevic tried to increase the repression on the Kosovo issue by using the democratic tool and popular will. Following Slovenia's and Croatia's declaration of independence, the Yugoslav People's Army, which had a multi-ethnic character, turned into a Serbian force, which served for the 'Greater Serbia' idea. After a ten-day war in Slovenia, the JNA's main mission became to organize Serbian forces in Croatia and Bosnia. Therefore, the political centralization-decentralization debate turned into an independence war for each federal state.

Following the ten-day war in Slovenia, War in Croatia and Bosnia started respectively in 1991 and 1992. Both of them lasted until 1995. During this period, in response to the separation of other federal states, Serbia and Montenegro established a new state, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), in 1992. Although the wars took place out of the FRY territory, they affected the country. First, FRY had to experience adverse economic conditions -shortages, high inflation rates, lower pensions, and wages- due to Milosevic's financial support for the Croatian Serb Army and the Army of the Bosnian Serbs in addition to the military spending of the FRY. Besides, the economic sanctions – including the UN embargo- against the FRY generated a black-market economy, a high level of corruption, and increased organized crime rates (Ramet 2010, 291). Second, even though the war created a huge burden on the FRY's economy, it contributed to Milosevic's power due to nationalist leanings in the society. The opposition parties

supported the war and also the Serbian nationalist program (Ramet 2010, 291; Zakošek 2008, 595). Third, many educated young people left the country due to the ongoing hardships of war (Ramet 2010, 292).

Even though the war and Milosevic's nationalistic program got support, the war was costly and came with serious consequences: an incomplete state-building project that sought the preservation of the integrity and the unity of Yugoslavia under Serb domination. Besides, populist inclinations of the regime blocked both democratic transition and potential political stability under a pre-dominant party rule simultaneously. After 1990, Milosevic's party did not win the absolute majority in the parliament and formed coalitions with the right-wing nationalist Serbian Radical Party (SRS). Until 2000, two marginal parties -left-wing (SPS) and right-wing (SRS)- dominated the Serbian parliament (Zakošek 2008, 596). On the other hand, Milosevic was in favor of a semi-authoritarian rule as the president of Serbia. In 1996, three opposition parties – Serbian Renewal Movement, Democratic Party, and Civic Alliance of Serbia- built the Zajedno (Together) coalition and won fourteen municipalities across Serbia, including Belgrade in the local elections. However, Milosevic refused to accept the results and imposed a rerun. In response, many people gathered in Belgrade and protested Milosevic for more than ten weeks. The government used force against protesters, closed down independent radio stations, and arrested journalists to end demonstrations (Perlez 1996; Hedges, 1996). In the end, Milosevic accepted the defeat and realized that his popularity was in decline. Also, his term as the president of Serbia expired, and he had no right to be re-elected due to the constitutional term limits. Thus, he found a way to continue his political career and became the president of the FRY (federal republic including

Serbia and Montenegro) in 1997 because Milosevic did not want to give up his power. Previously, the presidency of the FRY was ceremonial. However, with a constitutional amendment, Milosevic arranged the position in his favor and transferred all power he gained during his term as the president of Serbia (Ramet 2010, 293).

The main focus of the politics was the Kosovo issue between 1998 and 2000. As in the past, Kosovar Albanians sought independence again. However, Milosevic, who failed his 'Greater Serbia' project in Croatia and Bosnia, insisted on Kosovo. As a result, the tension between the FRY army and Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) climbed up. At this point, even Montenegro, which was a constituent of federal state, demanded from NATO to end Milosevic rule due to his authoritarian actions (Ramet 2010, 293-294). In 1999, NATO bombed Serbia and ended up the conflict between Serbia and Kosovo. Also, the incident contributed to the end of the Milosevic era in 2000.

Until 2000, the opposition parties did not present any significant success except winning some municipalities in 1996 due to several reasons. First, the opposition was highly fragmented. Many parties split because of party officials' power-seeking behavior rather than gathering around the common or at least similar policy positions. Second, the lack of democratic tradition in the country has also a reflection in political parties. Whenever party members found themselves excluded from decision-making processes and key positions, they left their parties to form a new one. Third, ideologically speaking, the existing parties were not distant from the regime, and they cooperated with the government during the 1990s. Fourth, most opposition parties supported nationalistic policies and war. Thus, they allowed

the government to promote security and stability as a 'national question'. That is why they could not be active in the political field. Their general support and approval for the regime and the political elite curtailed the political arena and tilted the playing field in favor of the ruling elite. Fifth, until 1996, the opposition had no concrete political success. Therefore, their organizational and governing skills were a mystery until then; they could grow stronger only after the success in 1996, which served as a turning point (Bieber 2003, 80-81).

In the early 1990s, the opposition split into three groups: extreme-nationalist parties, nationalist and democratic parties, and reform-oriented parties. The extreme nationalist parties were Vuk Draškovic's Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO) and Vojislav Šešelj's Serbian Radical Party (SRS). They overemphasized the resolution of the 'national question' and overlooked democratization. The nationalist and democratic party was the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), led by Vojislav Koštunica. Although this group highlighted the importance of democratization, it supported the war in Bosnia and adopted the nationalist program. The reform-oriented group, which included the Civic Alliance of Serbia (GSS), the Social Democratic Union, and the Social Democratic League of Vojvodina, was against the nationalist policies. However, their impact was limited in the political arena. Between 1997 and 2000, while SPO was ready to cooperate with the regime, the nationalist-democratic opposition group was against cooperating with Milosevic even if they have a similar nationalist program. Hence, they agreed on nominating a presidential candidate, Koštunica, from DSS. Even though the group criticized the authoritarian features of the Milosevic regime, Koštunica also emphasized the 'national question' in his speeches (Bieber 2003, 75-78).

A major dimension, which led to the fall of Milosevic, was the influence of civil society. Since the beginning of the Milosevic rule, there were people, NGOs, and intellectuals against the war and nationalist policies. Although they organized several protests, their impact on government policies was limited because the opposition could not challenge the regime by using mass support. At some point, people lost all their confidence in the opposition parties. Consequently, it led to the emergence of a vibrant civil society, which mobilized people, provided information, suggested alternatives, and unified opposition (Bieber 2003, 85-86). The most influential civil society organization, Otpor (Resistance), demanded regime change and pushed the opposition not to cooperate with Milosevic. Despite the brutal police force against the protesters, Otpor has continued its operation for two years (1998-2000) and escalated a mass movement (Bieber 2003, 84-85; Erlanger 2000). Besides Otpor, the Center for Free Elections and Democracy conducted its operation on monitoring elections and preventing electoral fraud. Also, economists, who opposed government policies, founded G17 as a think tank, which worked on economic and social reforms. The organization suggested financial plans for the degraded economy of Serbia, such as 'schools for democracy' (Bieber 2003, 85).

By the impact of all these factors, the Milosevic rule ended in 2000. Koštunica, as the united candidate of the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS), became the new president of FRY. However, the presidential election in 2000 occurred in the shadow of an anti-democratic environment. Few weeks before the election, the constitutional amendment that allowed re-election of the incumbent was passed. Hence, Milosevic could become a candidate. Then, former president Ivan Stambolic was killed, and assassination attempts against the opposition leader,

Vuk Draskovic, occurred. On the election day, fraud was widespread, according to observers' reports. In the first round, the electoral commission declared that the second round would be held. However, the DOS coalition objected to this decision based on exit polls, which indicated that Koštunica won 56.82% of the total vote. Finally, after a series of protests, the electoral commission accepted the results, and the ten-year-long Milosevic rule came to an end (Ramet 2010, 294-295; Klačar 2020).

Even though the authoritarian Milosevic rule ended, Serbia did not complete its democratic transition in the following years. The vibrant civil society lost its enthusiasm and disappeared. Many civil society activists joined political organizations. Also, the new political elites sustained their national inclinations on their policies. The nationalist program of the new parties became an obstacle in building relations with the international community. Due to all these reasons, institutional weaknesses in the country continued in the post-Milosevic era. Therefore, Serbia did not experience significant progress on democratization.

5.1.c. Post-Milosevic Era: The DOS Coalition

The DOS coalition, which defeated Milosevic, was founded as a consensus of eighteen political parties, except SOP, led by Vuk Draškovic. In 2000, the DOS coalition achieved a victory against the charismatic leader of Serbia, Milosevic. As a result, DOS coalition officials came to power in both federal presidential and parliamentary elections: Vojislav Koštunica of the DSS was elected the new president, and Zoran Djindic of DS was sworn in as the prime minister.

The triumph of the opposition coalition triggered the revolutionary feelings of some coalition members. In that regard, they wanted to implement a reform

program, pass new laws and remove the legacy of the old regime as soon as possible. The new prime minister of the Serbian Republic, Djindic, supported these policies that followed shortcuts even if they were not compatible with the ethical standards of doing politics. On the contrary, the new president of the FRY, Koštunica, did not agree with this approach. First, by claiming to preserve the state, he preferred to carry out reforms incrementally and slowly by taking state institutions' laws and integrity into account. In his speeches, he prioritized the 'state' instead of democratic institutions and the rule of law. He argued that statehood is a prerequisite to establish democracy. Even though his end goal was establishing a democratic state, his emphasis on 'preserving state' was very similar to Tito and Milosevic. Thus, it was problematic for Serbian democracy. Second, he worried that DOS elites could conceal their corrupted network behind a rapid and abrupt reform initiative, so he preferred deliberation and a more inclusionary approach. Last, he associated the revolutionary spirit of other DOS elite with Tito's communist victory. Since he was an anti-communist during his whole life, he distanced himself from a revolutionary way of doing politics, affiliated himself with nationalist Chetniks and others with communist Partisans in WWII. In that sense, the left-right division in the society, which had been invisible in the Milosevic era, reemerged (Kesić 2005, 102-106).

The different approaches of Djindic and Koštunica turned into a power struggle and gridlock in time. They put the blame on each other and harmed the infant democracy in the country. For example, one of the issue areas which Djindic and Koštunica contested was the control of the police. When Djindic appointed his ally, Dusan Mihajlovic, as the minister of Internal Affairs in 2001 and then

announced that he would be in charge of the ‘Council for State Security’ temporarily, he defeated Koštunica in some way. Consequently, the prime minister had more control over security executives than the president. However, it was problematic since the DOS coalition's promise for parliamentary control on security issues. In this way, an executive body (the government) controlled another executive (the secret police department) without parliamentary oversight. Also, Djindic’s attitude, ignoring the parliament, was very similar to Milosevic. Considering the DOS coalition's promise of changing the practices in the Milosevic era and promoting democracy in Serbia, Djindic's action was a threat to Serbian democracy. In response, Koštunica delayed implementing crucial reform about the army and did not remove generals from the Milosevic regime in order to prove his power on decisions about the military. Moreover, while both leaders were attacking each other, both police and army officials used the inter-elite conflict to avoid the investigation of ICTY (Pribicevic 2004, 108-109).

In the post-Milosevic era, FRY became a member of many international organizations such as the UN. However, even though the country opened itself a lot compared to the Milosevic era, cooperation with the international community was another dispute between the two leaders. For instance, Djndic did not problematize the Kosovo issue because his main priority was the democratization and Europeanization of Serbia. However, Koštunica refused to talk about Kosovo's independence with the international community (Radeljić 2014, 245). During the DOS rule, ICTY charged Milosevic being a war criminal. While Koštunica thought he had to be on trial in FRY, Djindic supported cooperating with the international community (Ramet 2010, 295).

When Djindic removed 21 deputies of DSS from the assembly, claiming that they did not regularly attend parliamentary meetings, the tension between the two leaders drastically increased. Since he removed the elected MPs, he put the democratization process at risk. Also, following actions of the Constitutional Court made the situation more anti-democratic. First, the court declared that Djindic's decision illegal and decided MP's return to the assembly. Then, the Administrative Commission of the Serbian Assembly decided that 45 deputies of the DSS will be removed from the parliament. The incident was not only against the political will of the electorate, it also overrode the decision by the supreme judicial body. Thus, it subverted the judicial authority, which has already been very weak. Also, all laws passed by the legislature authority became shady. Last, DSS lost their confidence in the coalition and started to consider early elections as an option, which Djindic did not want at all (Pribicevic 2004, 111).

Changing state structure added a more profound and fundamental matter of disagreement between two leaders. In February 2003, the FRY turned into the Republic of Serbia and Montenegro. The new state adopted a more confederal approach by this transformation rather than a federal one (Noutcheva & Huysseune 2004, 13). Since the FRY did not exist anymore, the position of the FRY presidency also was abolished. Thus, Koštunica ran for the position of president of Serbia. However, because of the majority rule, which was left from the Milosevic era and was not changed by Djindic to curtail Koštunica's power, he could not become the president of Serbia (Simpson 2003). Therefore, until 2004, Serbia did not elect any president.

In March 2003, prime minister Djindic was assassinated by Zvezdan Jovanovic, who had been a commander in JSO -Special Operation Unit was established by Milosevic. The Serbian mafia organization, Zemun Clan, and the former paramilitary commander, Milorad Ulemek, gave the assassination order. The perpetrator said that “For me, this is a political killing to prevent further sending of warriors to the Hague… I think the Hague is the biggest disgrace” (Reuters, 2003). This loss brought the end of the DOS coalition a few months later. Even though both Koštunica and Djindic aimed to democratize and Europeanize the country, their way of achieving their goals was different. While Koštunica was in favor of state integrity and slow reforms, Djindic wanted to implement rapid reforms even if they contradicted democracy in itself. Also, both leaders' power-seeking behavior played an essential role in their fight. Even if the DOS coalition was a chance to build a democratic regime in Serbia after its remarkable victory over Milosevic, the opportunity was disappeared due to the political elites who prioritized their personal interests and maximized their political power.

5.1.d. Tadic Era from 2004 to 2012

The assassination of Djindic was a shock for both the political elites and the entire society. In response, the DOS coalition declared a state of emergency, and Zoran Zivković became the country's prime minister. During the one-month-long state of emergency, both coalition leaders and the new prime minister took serious actions called Operation Saber to find the murderer of Djindic. However, the popular support behind the DOS coalition was in decline, and this operation fell short of reversing the trend. As a consequence of declining support for the DOS coalition, SRS, led by Tomislav Nikolić, got the highest support in the presidential

election (46.2%) and the parliamentary elections (27.7%) in 2003. However, since a 50% majority is needed to elect president, Nikolić did not become the president. By the way, the former leader of the SRS, Vojislav Šešelj, was on trial in Hague as a war criminal. Thus, the rise of a nationalist party was another threat to problematic Serbian democracy (Kesić 2005, 114-115).

In November 2003, the parliamentary election was held in Serbia. Even though Nikolic's SRS got the highest vote (27.7%), other parties did not form a coalition with nationalist SRS. On the other hand, the former president, Koštunica, run for the election and got 18%. It was a chance for Koštunica to regain its power and find a place in the political sphere. By forming a minority government with SPO, NS, and G17+, Koštunica became the prime minister. Meanwhile, Serbia did not have a president yet. In the first round of the election, presidential candidate Nikolic was the frontrunner. However, since he could not go beyond 50%, the second round was held in 2014, and the new leader of DS, Boris Tadić, won the presidential election. Thus, eight years period of Tadić's presidency started.

During the first period of Tadić's presidency, three main issues dominated the political agenda: cooperation with ICTY, the Kosovo problem, and the EU integration. Although Tadić was a pro-European leader, Koštunica's nationalist impact became visible on every aspect of the political agenda. First, for cooperation with ICTY, the Koštunica followed his old nationalist attitude and acted slowly**.** Even though the Hague Tribunal judged several war criminals until 2008, four prominent Serbian criminals were not arrested. In April 2006, the Serbian government ensured that one of the criminals, Mladić, would be turned over to the court in a month but, he was not even after six months. In response to government

failure, the coalition partner of Koštunica, the liberal party, G17+, left the coalition. Moreover, the Serbian government accepted that, within Koštunica's knowledge, Miladić was under the protection of the military until 2002 and received a pension until 2005 (Ramet 2010, 299).

Second, Koštunica kept his nationalist attitude in the Kosovo issue. When Montenegro declared its independence in 2006, Koštunica criticized it, claiming that it could be a precedent for Kosovo (Wood 2006). Despite his criticism, the Serbian government did not have much leverage to stop the disintegration of Montenegro due to Montenegro's federal republic status and the confederal structure adopted in 2003. However, the government continued to claim right over Kosovo. Therefore, in 2006 the Serbia parliament approved a new constitution that defined Kosovo as an "integral" part of Serbia despite the international community's effort to resolve the conflict between Kosovo and Serbia. In response to the uncooperative attitude of Serbia, Kosovo declared independence unliterally in 2008. At this point, the international community was on the side of Kosovo. Many European countries and the US recognized Kosovo's independence. During the whole process, Koštunica presented a nationalist stance and emphasized that Kosovo was part of Serbia. On the other hand, Tadić's priority was the EU integration and accepted that the resolution of the Kosovo problem was a pre-condition of EU integration. However, even though he had a different mindset than Koštunica, he did not take a firm stand in parallel to his view. On the contrary, he demanded more negotiations from the international community to change their decision about Kosovo, even if they had made the final decision. In that regard, he differed from the previous leader of DS, Djindic, because Djindic was able to

perceive the inclination of the West and implement policy based on their inclinations. According to Djindic, the only alternative for Serbia was the EU integration. For this reason, he was always in a conflict with Koštunica. However, Tadić did not read the EU's position well and was under the influence of Koštunica. Thus, it adversely influenced the EU integration of Serbia. As a result of not cooperating with ICTY and the international community in Kosovo's independence, the EU suspended the Stabilization and Association Agreement negotiations in 2006. Until 2007, the victory of the Tadić's party, DS, the negotiations remained close (Radeljić 2014, 248).

In both parliamentary and presidential elections in 2008, Tadić's party won the highest amount. Therefore, Tadić became the president of the Republic of Serbia for the second term. Since Koštunica's approach highly diverged from the pro-European agenda, DS did not form a coalition with DSS after 2008. Instead, DS gathered with liberal G17+ with the 'For a European Serbia' slogan. Mirko Cvetkovic, former finance minister, and a pro-European technocrat, was sworn into office as the new prime minister

Following the 2008 parliamentary election, the Vojislav Šešelj's party SRS split up. Moderates, such as Tomislav Nikolić and Aleksandar Vučic, formed the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS). The most significant difference between moderate-reformists and radicals was the pro-European stance of SNS. They argued that Serbia could develop a relationship with the West and East as long as the ties served Serbia's interest. However, they also highlighted that they did not recognize independent Kosovo. By this pragmatic approach, SNS distanced itself from SRS and increased its chance to come to power based on opinion polls (Stojic 2011, 29-

31). On the other hand, SPS, which followed a nationalist party program since 1990 under Milosevic's leadership, shifted its policy in a pro-European way between 2008 and 2010 gradually. Moreover, Ivica Dačic, who was the leader of the SPS and Interior Affairs Minister of Serbia, played a significant role in the free visa regime with the EU in 2009 (Stojic 2011, 33).

In the period after the 2008 elections, three main characteristics dominated the Serbian political sphere. First, the establishment of SNS and the pro-European shift of SPS strengthened the pro-EU block. Thus, the government could implement more EU-oriented policies. Thanks to these reforms, Serbia consolidated its democracy to some extent, and the EU confirmed Serbia's candidate status in March 2012. Second, the two-party system took the place of the fragmented party system. Since 1990, Serbia has had a multi-party system. Even if in the Milosevic era, SPS was in coalition in the parliament. After the break-up of the DOS coalition, three main parties dominated the political field. In that regard, DS represented the democrats; SRS represented the nationalist, and DSS represented the middle ground, reflected both democratic and nationalist views. Finally, after the foundation of SNS, the radical block weakened. Therefore, DS became the representative of the center-left, SNS became the representative of the center-right, and two moderate parties began to dominate the political field. Third, after the second victory of president Tadić, the political system turned from a semi-presidential system to a presidential system informally. In a standard semi-presidential system, the presidency and government are two executive branches, with different people in charge. Also, in Serbia, until Tadić's parliamentary and presidential victory in 2008, different parties were in charge of these two branches.

However, since Tadić's party, DS, was the incumbent in both executive branches of Serbia, the system was similar to a presidential system, which has one executive branch. Moreover, the parties had control over their deputies. They had the right to change the party list, which voters choose. To function this mechanism, signing a blank resignation letter was mandatory for all elected officials before starting the work. It gave party leaders extensive power because they were able to choose whoever they want. Even though the DS used its extensive power in the parliament and presidency for democratically desired and acceptable ends, like reforms for EU integration and democratic consolidation, the democratic credentials of the processes were problematic because of the limited check and balance mechanism within the system. Since judicial and legislature branches were not indepedent from the executive's influence as a result of indirectly presidentialization of the regime, they did not properly check and balance the executive's decision. Also, the lack of the rule of law, rampant corruption, executive control over media and judiciary restricted the democratic consolidation in Serbia (Teokarevic 2011, 62-69).

5.1.d. The SNS Rule from 2012 to Present

Even though SRS became the frontrunner of the parliamentary elections in 2003, 2007, and 2008, the party had limited capacity to form a coalition with others because of its extreme nationalist stance and isolationist attitude toward the international community. For this reason, any politician of SRS could not come to power until 2012. In response to the situation, the popular members of the party (Nikolić and Vućic) left SRS and established a new party called SNS (Serbian Progressive Party). The new party adopted a pro-European program due to pragmatic reasons, aiming to obtain power (Konitzer 2011, 1880). Therefore, the

party distanced itself from its predecessor and increased its chance to come into power.

In 2012, poor economic conditions and authoritarian tendencies of Tadic's regime were reflected on the ballot. In the presidential election, the leader of SNS, Tomislav Nikolić, defeated Tadić. Also, the SNS gained the highest percentage (24.04% of the total vote, 73 parliamentary seats) in the parliamentary election in 2012. However, since SNS's vote was not enough to form a government on its own, it formed a coalition with SPS, Milosevic's party, and the United Regions of Serbia, the old G17+. The leader of the SPS, Ivica Daćić, became the prime minister (Simić 2013, 5). As a result, two major parties of the parliament were SPS and SNS, which had a Euroskeptic background but adopted a pro-European attitude later. Also, the transformation of SPS and SNS created a pro-European consensus among the parties in the parliament, except Koštunica's DSS (6.99% of the total vote).

While many people expected divergence from pro-European policies when SNS and SPS started to rule due to the leaders' Euroskeptic background, the new president, Nikolić, indicated that Serbia would follow the European integration. In this regard, he initially resigned from his position as a party leader by claiming that in order to make Serbia more democratic and civilized, he had to be the president of all Serbs (Tanjug 2012). Thus, Aleksandar Vućic became the new leader of the SNS in 2012. On the other hand, despite the pro-European discourse of the brand new SNS, the president, Nikolić, organized his first official visit to Russia, which is the historical ally of Serbia due to their Slav ethnic roots.

In the first two years, the government followed a pro-European policy strictly. Surprisingly, despite its hard nationalist background, the new government

sat on the negotiations table with the Kosovo government in 2013. Even though Serbia still refused to recognize Kosovo's independence, certain steps were taken on the Serbian population in Kosovo and their integration into Kosovo's society. Consequently, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, remarked that both Serbia and Kosovo were close to the EU thanks to negotiations (Bilefsky 2013). In response to the cooperative attitude of Serbia in the Kosovo issue, EU-Serbia Stabilization and Association Agreement entered into force in September 2013. Following the EU-Serbia Intergovernmental Conference, the accession negotiations started in 2014. In addition, in 2013, the coalition government initiated the National Anti-corruption Strategy and arrested tycoons and old government officials, who were engaged in corrupted networks. The aim was to create a business-friendly environment. Also, other neo-liberal reforms were implemented for the sake of EU membership. However, the process was selective. For example, while the government privatized state-owned enterprises in parallel to the EU free market economy principle, but they also decreased the pensions and salaries, weakened the worker's right contrary to the EU's social policy view (Günay&Dzihic 2016, 536).

The pro-EU strategy, including dialogue with Pristina, privatization of public enterprises, and combatting corruption, created a good image for the SNS in the public's eyes. Then, in order to consolidate SNS's power, the snap parliamentary election was held in 2014. In this election, SNS got the highest support with 48% of the total vote. Even though SNS won the majority of the seats in the parliament (158 out of 250), the party maintained the existing coalition with SPS. However, the prime ministery switched to Vućic, as the leader of SNS (Spasojević 2019, 133-

134). Also, the 2014 parliamentary election strengthened the pro-EU consensus in the parliament because any anti-EU party could win a seat due to the electoral threshold (Ristić 2014, 81-82).

In terms of party program and ideology, the SNS adopted a similar program of its former rival. Even if the SNS performed better than DS in the EU membership process, the party also followed some of DS's practices that undermined democratic governance, such as controlling media, using clientelism, and bypassing check and balance mechanisms (Ristić 2014, 84). According to Günay and Dzihic (2014), the SNS government legitimized its anti-democratic practices through the three mechanisms. First, the government used pro-EU reforms to legitimize its power. Also, thanks to neoliberal reforms like privatization and infrastructure development projects, the government increased its financial accumulation (536). Second, the government used its financial capacity, which was derived by neo-liberal reforms, to distribute to several groups. Thus, the financial distribution created groups who were loyal to the state, and the situation strengthened the hegemonic position of the government (539). Third, the government created a populist narrative based on the 'us' vs.' them' divide to consolidate its hegemonic position. This narrative defined 'others' as previous elites who were corrupted. On the other hand, it described SNS as the representative of 'real Serbs' who were excluded financially and promoted the SNS as the saver of this group from the old regime's clientelist networks. (540). In this way, they aimed to legitimize their pro-EU strategy and action against corruption. However, since they were also engaged in clientelist, pro-government networks while re-distributing the financial sources, they did not differentiate themselves from the previous political elites.

Especially after 2014, the clear parliamentary victory of the SNS, the populist character of the party became visible. In this period, as a common feature of many populist governments, SNS intervened in the check and balance mechanism needed for a functioning democratic regime. For instance, the SNS attacked the Serbian Ombudsman, civil society representatives, and independent media that challenged the government with democratic mechanisms. Moreover, the government crafted an artificial civil society and media outlets that favored the government and discredited the opposition (Spasojević 2019, 135). Also, the pro-government media played a significant role in creating an ambivalent discourse for the various addressees. Even though the SNS did not directly turn back to the nationalist policies of the SRS, some nationalist rhetoric that served the populist narrative of the government emerged in the discursive environment of Serbia. While prime minister Vućic produced pro-EU discourse for the international community, the media outlets, which Vućic controlled, used nationalist rhetoric. For example, most of the media outlets in Serbia were in control of Vućic since he selected the editors. One of these media outlets, Informer, published an article that claimed that the EU and the US aim to exploit and conquer Serbia (Jovanović 2019, 161-162). In this way, the government-led media aimed to pump nationalist views and strengthen its populist narrative. On the other hand, prime minister Vućic continued to use pro-EU rhetoric in front of the international community. However, his discourse did not match with the reforms in Serbia (Dempsey 2016). In brief, the pro-European attitude of the SNS was a pragmatic strategy than internalized reform movement. Even though the EU had a valuable carrot, the membership perspective, the SNS

only aimed to hold power on its hand, but they did not implement pro-European policies in real.

In 2017, the charismatic leader, Alexander Vućic, became the president of Serbia. He has consolidated his power through several mechanisms like controlling media, undermining opposition, creating a populist narrative, and using clientelist networks since 2012. Even if he seemed like a pro-European leader considering his cooperative attitude in Kosovo and his pro-EU discourse, his anti-democratic populist actions, and hypocrite discourse weakened the infant Serbian democracy more.

5.2. Failed Democratic Consolidation in Serbia

As discussed in the previous chapter, Slovenia and Croatia, two successors of the former Yugoslavia, consolidated their democracies when political pluralism was introduced, and the political elites built pro-EU consensus. In Slovenia, the reform-minded, liberal political elites gained power in the communist party before the break-up of former Yugoslavia. Thus, the democratic transition started earlier than other federal republics. The new elites introduced parliamentary democracy and political pluralism with a competitive multi-party election in 1990. Also, they built pro-EU consensus since they were highly motivated for EU membership. In this regard, they implemented democratic reforms and consolidated Slovenian democracy. On the other hand, even though Croatia has conducted multi-party elections in the first stage of its democratic transition since 1990, the country experienced a ten-year-long authoritarian rule by the nationalist leader Tudjman until 2000. When Tudjman died in 2000, the incumbent political elites changed in

Croatia. The new elites strengthened the parliament, competed fairly for office, and achieved a consensus on the pro-EU agenda of the country. While the incumbent changes provided a window opportunity for democratization in Slovenia and Croatia, they did not in Serbia.

In Serbia, two major changes happened. First, in 2000, the DOS coalition, which had a pro-European orientation, defeated the strong leader Milosevic and came to power. Second, in 2012, SNS -a party left from the extreme nationalist party and proclaimed pro-EU agenda- came to power. Even though Serbia seemed to have political pluralism and pro-European parties in the incumbent seat since 2000, change of political elites either in 2000 or in 2012 did not provide window opportunity for democratic consolidation due to interests of the political elites, their connection to the pro-European agenda, features of the playing field -power distribution and institutional settings-.

The first critical juncture for the democratization process happened when DOS coalition joint candidate, Koštunica, defeated the strong figure in Serbian politics, Milosevic, in 2000. After that, democrats stayed in power until 2012 one way or another. However, Serbia could not consolidate its democracy throughout this period. In the initial phase, although Djindic and Koštunica seemed to agree on a pro-EU agenda, their way of doing politics and implementing reforms was the opposite. While Koštunica prioritized national dignity and statehood in his program, Djindic was very eager to enact pro-EU reform regardless of nationalist concern. The difference created a power struggle between the president, Koštunica, and the prime minister, Djindic. Since Serbia has had a semi-presidential system, in which both the prime minister and the president had significant political authority, the

institutional setting provided too much space for political entrepreneurs to maneuver. As a result, it led to gridlock in the democratization process. In the second phase, after the assassination of Djindic, since either extreme nationalist, SRS, got the highest vote in the three elections -2003, 2007, and 2008- or Koštunica's shift to the nationalist side, the pro-EU consensus was even weaker than 2000-2003 period. Due to fragile pro-EU consensus, the political elites did not embrace the democratic reforms, which the EU conditioned to initiate negotiations. On the contrary, when the authoritarian leader Tudjman died in Croatia, the pro-EU consensus strengthened. Also, the new political elites enhanced the power of parliament. Thus, the semi-presidential system turned into a parliamentary democracy, which has not granted two strong political offices for political entrepreneurs. Both conditions accelerated the democratic consolidation in Croatia in the period right after the authoritarian leader's death.

The second critical juncture for democratic consolidation in Serbia was the victory of SNS, founded by moderates in the extreme nationalist party, SRS. Despite party leaders' previous radical nationalist party affiliation, the new party adopted the pro-EU approach as a pragmatic move in order to join a coalition with other pro-Europeans and come in power. However, SNS also failed to consolidate Serbian democracy. In the first two years, the party did not obtain a simple majority in the parliament. Therefore, it shared its power with another reformed party, Milosevic's SPS. Between 2012 and 2014, thanks to two reformed parties and pro-EU-oriented parties in the parliament, it seemed that Serbia reached the pro-European political consensus. In this regard, the new elites initiated several reforms in response to the EU democratization effort to the country. However, in 2014, once

the SNS won the simple majority in the parliament, the dynamics changed in Serbia. The pro-EU approach turned into a strategic elite discourse rather than being a genuine democratizer. Furthermore, the SNS showed authoritarian tendencies such as creating a populist narrative, controlling media, and building clientelist networks, and it highly damaged the Serbian democracy. The process in Serbia since 2012 presented some similarities with Croatia. Also, Ivo Sanader came to power as a reformed elite of the nationalist party in Croatia. He pragmatically adopted a pro-EU program and initiated reform. Then, by following a similar pattern with Vućic, the leader of SNS, he engaged with clientelist networks. However, the Sanader's corrupted behavior and pragmatic commitment to the EU did not interrupt the democratization process in Croatia because while Vućic holds the political power on his hand in Serbia, the power was dispersed between incumbent elites, coalition partners, and independent institutions in Croatia (Bieber 2020, 46).

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In this last chapter of the thesis, I will first summarize the puzzle, the research question, and the key findings of this research. Then, I will touch upon the two possible limitations of this research.

This thesis is an inquiry into various democratic consolidation performances across the Western Balkan states. At the beginning of the 1990s, Yugoslavia was dissolved, and the successors of Yugoslavia transformed their old communist regime into a democratic one. However, even though all initiated the democratic transition processes and have been in contact with the EU as a democracy promotion agent', all of them did not achieve the ultimate goal, democratic consolidation. Therefore, in this research, I mainly focus on a simple question: “How democratic consolidation experiences vary across states with similar conditions?".

Based on the most similar system design analysis, I selected Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia, which had a similar background, started their state-building processes simultaneously, and have been under the influence of EU democracy promotion for a while. Despite similar conditions, the dependent variable of this research, democratic consolidationvaries across these cases. While Slovenia and Croatia have been successful democratic consolidation examples, Serbia has still a defective democracy.

Among many explanations in the literature, Tolstrup's (2013) theoretical framework, which emphasizes the gatekeeper elites' role in controlling and using

external actor's democracy promotion effort, offers a plausible explanation for the variation across the selected empirical cases. When I examined each case's historical democratization processes, I found out that political elites' change creates window of opportunities for implementing democratic reforms that external actors push. However, whenever elites change in a country, the new elites do not always pursue a reform agenda. In this situation, as Tolstrup indicates, elites' interests and motivations determine whether external democracy promotion works or not. Based on the analysis across cases, the elites' pro-democracy stance and its duration depends on the domestic political context. Thus, besides suggesting empirical evidence for Tolstrup's theoretical framework, this thesis complements the theoretical framework as it detects the domestic political dimensions that make political elites embrace democratic reforms.

By comparing each democratization processes' critical junctures, this research finds out three domestic political dimensions that define political elites' handling of the democratic reforms. First, the interests of the political elite determine the implementation of democratic reforms. For example, while Slovenian elites' motivation to integrate West accelerated the country's democratization process, the nationalist tendencies in Croatia and Serbia slowed down the process. Second, political elites' commitment to pro-European agenda affects democratic consolidation in a country. For instance, since the pro-EU agenda was only in rhetoric in Serbia, the democratic consolidation did not occur. Third, the political playing field is influential for democratization. For the selected cases, institutional settings and power distribution are the two determinants of the playing field. In Serbia, first, the continuation of the semi-presidentialism in the Post-Milosevic era

and then the emergence of a dominant party system affected the elite interactions significantly and curtailed the chances of democratic consolidation.

Even though this thesis eliminates several explanations in the literature with the most similar system design and suggests plausible lenses for the variation across the selected cases with Tolstrup's theoretical framework, this study has still some possible limitations that I need to discuss and clarify.

First, various scholars offer different explanations into democratic consolidation in transitional countries in the literature. One of them is economic factors (see Chapter 1). This research does not eliminate the impact of economic performance on democratization since Slovenia and Croatia have shown better economic performance than Serbia. I have a clarification for this point. Although Slovenia and Croatia performed better than Serbia when Yugoslavia broke up, the economic differences across states were not as significant as today. The actual point in which the gap increased was the way toward EU membership. During this period, Slovenia and Croatia developed their economies and became compatible with the West. It means the economic differences across cases became visible after the democratic consolidation was achieved in some cases. Therefore, the economic differences could not be the factor that explains variation across democratic consolidation by itself. On the other hand, the study does not argue that role of gatekeeper elites is the only determinant for either successful or failed democratic consolidation. Accepting that economic or other structural variables impact the democratic consolidation in each country, this comparative research sheds light on democratic consolidation processes. By examining historical democratization processes, this thesis tried to understand 'how democratization processes differ

across the cases?' rather than 'why some countries' democratic performances are unsatisfactory?'.

Second, since Slovenia has had an ethnically homogenous population, nationalism has not had a powerful impact on the political agenda in Slovenia. On the contrary, the nationalism was a significant obstacle for Croatian and Serbian democratic consolidation processes, especially in the first ten years after the independence. Between 1990 and 2000, both countries were ruled by nationalist leaders who had isolationist policies and irridentist claims beyond their territories. Consequently, these nationalist political agendas interrupted the democratic transition in both countries. However, following the independence, Slovenia was ruled by moderate leaders who sought to integrate the West and transform the regime into democracy.

Third, related to the significance of nationalism in politics, the EU imposed some extra conditions for Croatia and Serbia, such as good neighborly relations and cooperation with ICTY. Since Slovenia did not engage in the war as much as Croatia and Serbia, the EU imposed more standard conditionality during the Slovenia accession.

When we take some structural differences into accounts, such as economic differences, the impact of nationalism, and the EU's extra demands to offer membership status, Slovenia is separated to some extent from Croatia and Serbia. This situation could raise the question, 'Is this research still an MSSD?'. In this regard, I want to clarify how I design my research. Despite some small structural differences, these cases still have major commonalities, such as being part of the same entity and subject to EU democracy promotion. In terms of variation of the

dependent variable (democratic consolidation), Slovenia is the reference case in this research that shows us how a perfect scenario works. Also, studying Slovenia shows what is needed for democratic consolidation in the post-Yugoslav structure. Then, observing Slovenia's processes, I determined what was missing in Croatia until the consolidation and what is still missing in Serbia for consolidation. In other words, the role of the Slovenia case in this study is to detect what it takes to achieve a consolidated democracy in the post-Yugoslav states. What makes Slovenia totally incomparable with the other cases stems from the European integration and democratic consolidation to a great extent. This is the reason why the analysis of the Slovenian case ends once the success story is explained. In this regard, this research is not a snapshot MSSD that focuses on a particular moment or equal and synchronic democratic consolidation episodes, but it is still an MSSD research that studies common patterns in three cases based on the pre-transition similarities.

Another possible limitation of the research is a recently debated issue in the literature, the EU's unwillingness for democracy promotion outside. Following the Brexit and Global Financial Crisis, problems emerged in the EU territory. Many new members suffered from economic hardship, and authoritarian tendencies increased within the EU. This situation made old members skeptical about new members and created 'Enlargement Fatigue' (O'Brennan 2014). In response, the candidate countries' commitment to the EU agenda diminished. Even though the EU's attitude is a concrete argument in the literature and could adversely affect democratic consolidation in a country, it does not hold a solid argument for his research because the 'Enlargement Fatigue' is a concept emerged after 2008. However, the rule of populist autocratic leaders' rule ends in Croatia and Serbia in

2000, earlier than the enlargement fatigue that is argued to limit the EU's democracy promotion capabilities. Even though this change created a window opportunity for both countries, only Croatia used this chance and consolidated its democracy. Therefore, the EU's changing attitude does not explain variation across the cases.

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