



Universiteit Leiden

The Political Shift of Tomislav Nikolić and Aleksandar Vučić and the Logics of Action

Motives for the Adoption of a pro-European Foreign Policy Orientation



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Master of International Relations: International Studies
Master Thesis
July 2014

Word count: 10689 (excl. Bibliography)

Table of Content

List of abbreviations	3
Introduction	4
I. Chapter	
1.1 Literature Review.....	7
1.2 Theoretical Framework.....	9
1.3 Methodology.....	12
II. Chapter	
2.1 Background information.....	15
2.2 Political Shift of Tomislav Nikolić and Aleksandar Vučić.....	16
1.2.1 Serbian Radical Party (SRS).....	17
1.2.2 Serbian Progressive Party (SNS).....	19
2.3 Media discourse related to the political shift.....	22
III. Chapter	
3.1 Potential motivation of the decision-makers.....	24
3.2 Analysis of the motives on the particular policy areas and situations.....	27
3.2.1 Circumstances of the Split of the SRS.....	27
3.2.2 Continuity of a pro-European Policy.....	30
3.2.3 Economic gain as a motivation.....	31
Conclusion	34
Appendix	37
Bibliography	38

List of Abbreviation

DSS	Democratic Party of Serbia (Demokratska Stranka Srbije)
DS	Democratic Party (Demokratska Stranka)
EEAS	European External Action Service
EU	European Union
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
SAA	Stabilisation and Association Agreement
SNS	Serbian Progressive Party (Srpska Napredna Stranka)
SPS	Serbian Socialist Party (Socialistička Partija Srbije)
SRS	Serbian Radical Party (Srpska Radikalna Stranka)

Introduction

“Contemporary political discussion in Serbia sometimes reads like a history book of Serbia in the 20th century.” (Stojarová and Emerson, 2010, p.99)

Only fourteen years ago The Republic of Serbia experienced a great political shift. The first democratic elections in 2000 set the “West course” for the foreign policy of Serbia, which is currently heading for its membership in the European Union. However, the speed of the negotiations with the EU strongly depends on the foreign policy priorities of the ruling elites, which are frequently changing.¹

The Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) was successful in the May 2012 elections; its then leader Tomislav Nikolić became the new president and his political party won the parliamentary elections. Nikolić handed over the leadership of SNS to Aleksandar Vučić who became Prime Minister of Serbia in the early parliamentary elections of 2014, after the Progressives won an absolute majority in the National Assembly.

Nikolić and Vučić, currently the two most influential politicians in the Republic of Serbia, are former members of the Serbian Radical Party (SRS). As the members of the SRS Nikolić and Vučić promoted anti-Western foreign policy, an ideology of anti-globalism, and the idea for the creation of ‘Great Serbia’². The turning point in the policy of Nikolić and Vučić came in 2008 when they split from the Radicals, reportedly due to policy differences over the question of EU membership. Subsequently, they established a new political party: the center-right Serbian Progressive Party. The Progressives distance themselves from the isolationist policy of the Radicals and declare a strong pro-European foreign policy orientation.

¹ Since 2000 Serbia had six parliamentary elections (in 2000, 2003, 2007, 2008, 2012, 2014)

² Creation of the single Balkan state unifying all Serbs which entails the “annexation of Republika Srpska and Republika Srpska Krajina” (Stojarová, 2010, p.47).

The fundamental nature of this policy shift of Serbia's two most influential politicians, as well as its short time-span, raises critical questions about its motivation and authenticity. One could assume that the decision makers were driven by self-interest, in the knowledge that a pro-European political party might be more appealing to voters. The objective of this thesis is to analyze the circumstances and motives for this turn in the policy of Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić and Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić. The choice to analyze the decision-making of these individuals rather than of the political party as a unit arises from the fact that the presidency in Serbian party politics has extensive control over the orientation of the party and therefore the decisions of these principal figures influence the policy course of the party. In order to evaluate the motives for a policy shift of the two decision-makers this thesis employs a theoretical framework of social constructivism, in particular of the concept of the logics of expected behavior formulated by political scientists James G. March and John P. Olsen.

The thesis will focus on answering the following research question: *Was the political shift in the foreign policy preferences of Tomislav Nikolić and Aleksandar Vučić driven by the logic of appropriateness or logic of consequences?*

The scope of the thesis is threefold. Firstly, it provides insights into the circumstances of the political shift of Nikolić and Vučić. Secondly, it analyzes the motives for this foreign policy transformation. Lastly, this thesis highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the theoretical framework of March and Olsen by using this particular case to evaluate its explanatory power. The empirical part of the thesis makes use of qualitative research methods. The motives for the shift in the foreign policy priorities of a decision-maker are demonstrated in the case study. Furthermore, this thesis makes use of a discourse analysis in order to evaluate primary sources, including political party programs. Due to the lack of academic literature regarding the foreign policy orientation of Nikolić and Vučić, the critical assessment is focused primarily on media sources.

The first chapter of this thesis introduces the scholarly debate on the topic, followed by the theoretical framework based on the concepts of the Logic of Appropriateness and the

Logic of Consequences, leading to the research hypothesis. An overview of the methodology is also included in this chapter. The second chapter presents the empirical research on background information, the party programs and the comparison of the Serbian Radical Party and Serbian Progressive Party, as well as local media opinion regarding the motives of the decision-makers. This provides a foundation for the third chapter of the thesis, which examines the motives for the foreign policy shift of the two statesmen and also highlights the limitations of the theoretical framework. After the summarization of the findings the thesis concludes.

I. CHAPTER

1.1 Literature review

The Republic of Serbia, as the biggest country of the Western Balkans, plays an important role in contributing to the stability, economic development and prosperity of the region. As Tim Judah argues, Serbia's foreign policy orientation and the priorities of its ruling elite "matter because what it does now and in the next few years will be crucial for everyone in the region" (Petritsch, Svilanović, Soliz ed., 2009, p.: 13).

As already mentioned in the introduction, the foreign policy course of the country depends on the elites in power and therefore the analysis of the motives of their political decision is crucial for comprehension of the current political situation in Serbia. Only after one understands the motives for the sudden establishment of a pro-European orientation can one possibly predict durability of this decision and with that the future course of the country. The foreign policy preferences of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) are crucial in this context given that President Nikolić and Prime Minister Vučić are respectively former and current leader of the SNS. However, the vast majority of the academic literature addressing Serbian party politics and foreign policy (Knezević ed., 2008; McConell, 2009; Gross, 2012; Stojarová and Emerson ed., 2010) has a very broad scope and therefore does not provide answers for specific question regarding the motives of the shift in Nikolić's and Vučić's foreign policy orientation.

Nikola Petrović and Igor Novaković (2013) addressed the topic of the strategic orientation of Serbian foreign policy in general. According to these authors, in Serbia there is "a lack of harmonized and balanced foreign policy strategy that would be based on pre-established general social consensus" (ibid. p.5). Moreover, "the process of foreign policy decision-making is one of the least transparent processes of policy implementation in the Republic of Serbia"; it is primarily a matter of political elites and therefore leads to public disengagement with the orientation of the country (ibid.). However, this premise of the authors neglects the possibility that the foreign policy

priorities of ruling elites in fact reflect the perception of the European Union in Serbia.³ As Petritsch, Svilanović and Sliz ed. (2009) claim and Appendix 1 illustrates, the Serbian public supports the country's membership in the European Union.

On the other hand, McConnell (2009) and Knezević ed. (2008) claim that Serbian society is divided over the issue of foreign policy, which indicates their connection with the subject. This thesis builds on the assumption that the efforts of any ruling elite in Serbia to balance between two competing objectives, the preservation of sovereignty over Kosovo⁴ and further integration into European institutions, reflects divided society in Serbia and proves the influence and direct connection between the foreign policy and the citizens. Such influence could be considered as one of the motives for the political elites to implement pro-European orientation as one of their priorities in order to gain popular support.

Stojarová and Emerson ed. (2010) provide a lucid account on the party politics in the Western Balkans. In their chapter on Serbia, the authors argue that the Serbian political parties are roughly divided into two groups: nationalist and modernist. The Serbian Progressive Party however represents center-right nationalist politics combined with modernist ambitions and therefore cannot be categorized on the basis of such a division. Moreover, despite the fact that they argue that a party leader holds the most important position in the party as he has great influence over its political orientation and over the other members, throughout their volume it is the party as a unit and not its leader that they treat as an agent. However, the leader is an agent by himself, influencing the party to such extent that the shift in his policy preference influences the preference of the whole party. The authors neglect the 'strength' of this individual agency and therefore do not analyze the policy shift as a result of the personal decision of its leader. This thesis, however, takes the leader's agency into account and builds on the assumption that the preference of the party in fact represents the preference of its leader.

³ For perception of the EU in Serbia see Appendix 1.

⁴ Serbia-Kosovo relationship is problematic due to long-term ethnic tensions that resulted into Kosovo War in 1999. In February 2008, Kosovo unilaterally declared independence. The normalization of the relations between Belgrade and Pristina is a precondition for the integration in the EU.

Furthermore, numerous authors provide a misleading account of the circumstances leading to the split of the Serbian Radical Party. The scholars claim that the disagreement around signing the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU was a primary cause of Nikolić's resignation from the SRS (Radović, 2008a; Stojarová and Emerson ed., 2010). Such an account suggests that the EU played a crucial role in Nikolić's decision to leave the party and that he already strongly inclined towards the EU before he established the Serbian Progressive Party. However, the analysis of the split offered in the empirical part of this thesis will show that this account is incomplete and that in fact the split of the Radicals was a result of longer lasting disputes in the party leadership.

To sum up, the main weakness of the literature is its rather general scope. Furthermore, the academic literature focuses on the party politics instead of the individual decision-makers, which in fact play a crucial role in Serbian politics. Finally, the literature neglects the fact that foreign policy implementation is strongly related to the public perception of the EU in Serbia. This dynamic topic is constantly evolving and requires a specific approach to the analysis, which takes current events into consideration and relies on the most up to date information.

The review of the literature available on the topic led the author to the conclusion that there is a gap in the literature. The Republic of Serbia, an important political actor in the Balkans, undergoes dynamic changes and its development is hardly predictable. Therefore, further research and an up-to-date academic paper providing comprehensive insight into the motives for a shift in the foreign policy priority of the current political elites will be beneficial to the academic community.

1.2 Theoretical framework

The analysis of the motives behind the foreign policy shift of Nikolić and Vučić is grounded in the theoretical framework of social constructivism; the thesis makes particular use of the concepts of the logic of appropriateness and the logic of

consequences. The two logics are based on different theoretical positions on how to interpret human behavior.

According to Adler (2002) constructivism is not just another “ism”. He argues that constructivism represents “a three layered understanding” (ibid. p.96). Such multiple understanding of social constructivism triggers scholarly debate and allows the existence of a plurality of constructivist schools of thought.⁵ Detailed analysis of the evolution of constructivism and the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches within this school of thought would be beyond the scope of this thesis. In this work, constructivism is seen as an analytical approach and its concept of the logic of appropriateness and consequences serve as a tool for empirical inquiry assisting to demonstrate the motives for the shift in the foreign policy priority of particular decision-makers.

“Constructivism is about human consciousness and its role in international life” (Bartnett, 2011, p.155). It is based on social ontology, which stresses the importance of normative structures which shape the identity and interest of actors, and therefore their political action. Furthermore, constructivism assumes that the relationship between agents (human beings) and structures (social environment) is mutually constitutive (Adler, 2002; Risse, 2004; Reus-Smit, 2005). The theoretical concept used as a base for the empirical research in this thesis distinguishes between two logics of action driving human behavior in an institutional environment introduced by political scientists James G. March and Johan P. Olsen.

The logic of consequence understands human actions as driven by an actor’s will to fulfill his subjective or collective goals, which derive from his interest and preferences. The actor’s behavior is influenced by the expectation about consequences; that is, conscious decision and the rational calculation of benefits and losses in a particular situation (March and Olsen 1989, 1998). In the interpretation of international political life an understanding that human behavior is driven by such logic of action prevails (ibid.,

⁵ For division of constructivist schools of thought see for example: Checkel (2006), Reus-Smith (2001) or Adler (2002).

1998). Nevertheless, the logic of consequences is not able to sufficiently explain human behavior in all situations; it dismisses the importance and influence of norms, rules and identities of the actors (ibid.).⁶

The logic of appropriateness, on the other hand, assumes that human behavior is influenced and determined by identities, norms, values and rules. If the agent follows rules and his behavior is driven by the logic of appropriateness, it is more stable and easier to predict. The actions of the agents are determined by a rule-based search for legitimate or appropriate behavior in a particular situation and the role that the agent fulfills (ibid 1989; 1989). The concept of the logic of appropriateness represents an alternative to rational behavior and provides an explanation of the situations where actors do not act according to the logic of consequences, but are instead influenced by the rules and norms of the society in which they live. Decision-making on the basis of the logic of appropriateness can be also characterized by the decision to act in accordance with the actor's understanding of what is the "true, reasonable, natural, right and good" thing to do (ibid. 2006, p.690).

Based on the characteristics of the two logics of action is the assumption that the values and identity of human beings (political actors) are rather stable and it takes a longer time to change them (Worcester, 2013). Nikolić and Vučić fundamentally changed their foreign policy orientation in a relatively short time span, which indicates that strategic calculation rather than a norms-driven motivation for the adoption of a pro-European policy played a role in their decision. Subsequently, the author formulated following hypothesis: *The political shift from anti-Western to pro-European preferences in Tomislav Nikolić's and Aleksandar Vučić's foreign policy was primarily driven by the logic of consequences.*

However, it is important to keep in mind that the two logics of action are not mutually exclusive; political actions are often driven by both. Political actors are frequently

⁶ In this thesis norms are understood as "collective expectations for proper behavior of actors with a given identity [...] norms thus either define identities or prescribe behavior, or they do both." (Katzenstein 1996, p.5)

influenced by their interests as well as by the rules rooted in their identities. The relationship between the two logics is “often subtle”⁷ (March and Olsen, 1998, p.952-3).

Nevertheless, in this thesis, the two logics are used as tools for empirical enquiry and therefore are treated as two equal and separate categories. Goldmann (2005) claims that the logics must be separated in order “to assess the separate contribution of each factor in the explanation of action. Ideal types must be mutually excluding” (ibid., p.39). Such method seemingly allows the author to assess their individual influence on the case study, which examines the motivation for a political shift in the foreign policy of Serbian statesmen. This approach however, does not exclude the possibility that the logics overlap and that the categorization of the motives driving the decision-maker’s behavior can be difficult, and that there are therefore possible limitations to the concepts.⁸

1.3 Methodology

The empirical analysis of this thesis is based on the critical assessment of existing literature regarding the theory of social constructivism as well as of the literature focused on Serbian politics. The thesis makes use of the following qualitative research methods:

A. Case study.

In order to verify the hypothesis as outlined in the previous chapter the author executes a case study of two decision-makers in Serbian politics, in which the motives for the recent political shift of Nikolić and Vučić is examined. The author of this thesis considered case selection as appropriate given that the two policymakers are currently president and prime minister of the republic of Serbia and therefore their political decisions influence the country. Furthermore, the decision to focus on the former and current leader of the SNS as individuals, rather than on the political party as unit of analysis arises from the fact that in Serbian party politics, the party leadership hold a very strong position and

⁷ March and Olsen summarizes four main interpretations of the relationship between the logics, for more see: March and Olsen (1998).

⁸ This theoretical framework faced widespread criticism of various dimensions relating to the concepts of the two logics, for more see: Goldmann (2005), Sending (2002) or Sjöblom (1993).

influences its political direction. In this thesis preference of the party and of its leader are used interchangeably.⁹

B. Discourse analysis

In order to account for the shift in the foreign policy preferences of particular decision-makers in Serbian politics this thesis makes use of discourse analysis. Such an approach is chosen in order to provide an understanding of the current state of foreign policy in Serbia and of the motives of decision makers to pursue pro-European foreign policy. Various elements influencing these motives are analyzed from primary as well as secondary sources.

Primary sources such as transcripts of speeches and interviews with Nikolić and Vučić in the period from 2008 to 2014, as well as the party programs of the Serbian Radical Party and the Serbian Progressive Party are analyzed and compared in order to identify the shift and by doing so establish a foundation for analysis of the motives.¹⁰ Furthermore, a limited amount of existing academic literature led the author to make use of political journals and newspapers as secondary sources. In particular, articles from political journal *Helsinška Povelja* are used in the research, as well as those from the most read daily newspapers in Serbia: mainly *Blic*, *Politika*, and *Večerne Novosti*. The Western bias of *Helsinška Povelja* as well as the pro-Democratic Party (DP) bias of national newspapers is taken into account when analyzing the media discourse on the topic.¹¹

The information obtained from primary and secondary sources is used to evaluate several particular situations and areas of policy of Nikolić and Vučić which reveal the ideational factors as well as personal interest which could potentially play a role in their motivation

⁹ This premise is build on the claims of Bochsler (2010) who argues that “Political parties in Serbia have wide powers to the party presidency [...] In the case of SRS and SNS, party organs appear as fairly marginal compared to the extensive presidential powers, which include interpretation of the party program and policy decisions, as well as the nomination and dismissal of the general secretary and the four deputy presidents” (ibid., p.104-105)

¹⁰ Party Programs, as well as majority of media sources used in this thesis are originally in Serbian language and translated to English language by the author.

¹¹ “According to Serbia’s Anti-corruption council, the Democratic Party effectively controlled most of the media scene in Serbia through its patronage of advertising” (BanlkanInsight. 2012). The DP was main competitor of the Radicals and of the Progressives.

to adopt a pro-European foreign policy. This analysis allows the author to assess whether such motives were driven by the logic of appropriateness or logic of consequences and to make conclusions about the implications of the findings.

II. CHAPTER

2.1 Background information

The current president of Serbia Tomislav Nikolić and the Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić are former allies of the right wing extremist Slobodan Milosevic. Both Nikolić and Vučić pursued most of their political careers as members of the ultra-nationalist Serbian Radical Party (SRS). Nikolić became a deputy leader of the SRS in 2003 when its leader Vojislav Šešelj voluntarily surrendered to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) where he is currently charged with war crimes. Vučić held the post of secretary-general of the SRS. These two prominent figures of the SRS advocated a strong anti-Western policy and showed affinity with the Russian Federation. In 2007, Nikolić stated: “together with Russia we should stand up against the hegemony of America and the European Union” (Radio Free Europe, 2007).

In 2008, however, a major turning point occurred in Nikolić’s and Vučić’s policy orientation. In October 2008 Nikolić left the Radicals and established a new political party: the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), which proclaims a ‘pro European’ orientation. After some days of hesitation the secretary-general Vučić followed him and became deputy leader of the newly established SNS.

After three unsuccessful attempts to run for presidency since 2000, Nikolić finally won the presidential elections in May 2012 and reassigned from the post of SNS leader. In the parliamentary elections of the same year the SNS became the strongest party in the assembly and formed a coalition with the Serbian Socialist Party (SPS). As the new leader of the SNS and first deputy Prime Minister, Vučić was considered to be the most influential politician in the government (De Launey, 2014). His popularity greatly increased and he became Prime Minister after his party won an absolute majority in the assembly in the early elections in March 2014.

In sum, shortly after the political shift of Nikolić and Vučić from anti-Western to pro-European, the two politicians became the most influential statesmen in Serbia. This fact, together with several issues including their personal and political ties and their years long membership of the SRS suggests that the policy shift was interest-driven. On the other hand, however, the “First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations” with Kosovo, initiated in April 2013, as well as other political decisions of SNS members, shows that the government created after the elections in 2012 continued to cooperate with the EU in order to speed up the integration process. Such continuity in their pro-European policy even after already gaining the highest political posts might suggest that Nikolić and Vučić’s motivation to adopt a pro-European policy in 2008 was driven by the logic of appropriateness. The following chapters will shed light on this issue. In order to do so the author firstly focuses on the shift in Nikolić’s and Vučić’s policy of which comprehension is crucial for further understanding the motives which are the subject of the third chapter of this thesis.

2.2 Political Shift of Tomislav Nikolić and Aleksandar Vučić

This section analyzes a political shift of the two most influential politicians in Serbia. It includes description and the general characteristics of the two political parties in which Nikolić and Vučić held and currently hold leadership positions; the Serbian Radical Party and the Serbian Progressive Party. Furthermore, the party programs of the two parties are analyzed in order to introduce their publicly announced foreign policy objectives. Additionally, this section includes several statements made by Nikolić and Vučić as representatives of these parties, which serve to further demonstrate their policy shift. Moreover, a comparison of the two parties is provided in order to prove that the shift occurred. Such comparison is crucial because it sets the foundation for further analysis. Finally, this chapter analyses the media discourse regarding the policy shift of the two decision-makers.

2.2.1 Serbian Radical Party (SRS)

Nikolić: “Serbia would prosper more as a Russian province than as an EU member.”

(AFP, 2012)

Nikolić: “I am Eurosceptic from the first day.” (Petrović, 2008)

Vučić: “Ratko Mladić is a national hero-” (Novaković, 2014))

Vučić: “ The concept of Great Serbia is a historical goal, which we can achieve within fifty to hundred years.” (Čavoški, 204)

These statements are illustrations of the policy orientation of Tomislav Nikolić and Aleksandar Vučić whilst they were deputy leader and the secretary general of the Serbian Radical Party. The SRS is known as “the most nationalistic and populist party” in Serbian politics (Stojarová, 2010, p.47). The official party program of the SRS is divided into five parts. Firstly it elaborates on the Nationalist Program, which is followed by Political, Economical, Social and Cultural programs.

It is apparent from the first part of the program that one of the main priorities of the SRS is the promotion of the concept of ‘Great Serbia’ as well as the importance of the unification of the Serbian lands, unity of Serbs, development of national consciousness, patriotism and preserving national traditions. (Srpska Radikalna Stranka, 2009, p.2-4)

The second part of the program is focused on political issues, which includes foreign policy priorities of the SRS. The Radicals speak of a strong anti-Western policy; it pronounces clear affinity with the Russian Federation: “We will develop the traditional friendly relations with nations and countries that helped us in our most difficult historical moments” (ibid., p.28). The SRS refuses membership of NATO as well as condemning cooperation with the ICTY. The official party program of the SRS does not explicitly mention their position towards membership of the EU but indicates that they are not interested in membership of this international organization: “There is no reason for our country to access certain international organizations that aim to implement the political will of one or a group of countries onto the other members“. As a best example of such

organizations the SRS mentions “many organizations which focused almost all of its activity on the humiliation of the Serbian people and state” (ibid., p.29). Despite the fact that the program does not name the organization one can assume that the party program refers to the member states of NATO and subsequently those of the EU. Additionally the political testament of the official party leader Vojislav Šešelj published from the prison in the Hague in December 2006 states that “Serbia can never join the EU and NATO because there the biggest enemies of Serbia are in there” (Albunović, Petrović, 2008). This document was supposed to be the ‘blueprint’ of the SRS policy.

As regards the party leadership, the official leader Šešelj surrendered to the international criminal tribunal for former Yugoslavia in 2003. At his departure he told his deputy leader Nikolić, “from now on you lead the party, do the best you can. Do not listen to me” (E. B.H. 2008). Nevertheless, Nikolić fully complied with the rules that existed in the SRS and always consulted Šešelj for every major decision, who in practice kept leading the party from prison (Čekerevac, 2008). Eventually, it was Šešelj’s strong influence in the party leadership that led to the disagreement between him and Nikolić, who eventually left the party and together with Vučić established the Serbian Progressive Party. More detailed analysis of the reasons for the split is presented in the later part of this thesis, in which the author analyses the motives of the shift of Nikolić’s and Vučić’s policy.

In sum, the SRS is an ultra-nationalist party isolated from the international community, with an anti-Western foreign policy orientation. Its former deputy leader and secretary-general Nikolić and Vučić were elite members of this party for most of their political careers. Before moving on to the analysis of the Serbian Progressive Party it is important to mention that in addition to the political ties between Nikolić and Vučić and Šešelj, there were also personal ties which are often overlooked. However, they must be taken into consideration in order to understand the nature of their relationship and the influence that Šešelj had on Nikolić and Vučić.¹²

¹² Nikolić associated himself with the views of Vojislav Šešelj, In a letter to Šešelj he wrote: “I only believe in two things, God and you “ (Spaić, 2012) Furthermore Nikolic and Vucic wer member of the SRS for 18

2.2.2 Serbian Progressive Party (SNS)

Nikolić: “Of course we need to enter the negotiations with the EU, in fact it is the most important thing for Serbia.” (Mondo, 2014)

Vučić: “ Yes we see Serbia in the EU, our path is the European path.” (Bahri, 2014)

Vučić: On the concept of ‘Great Serbia’: “We can now openly declare that it is not our policy as it is unrealistic and frivolous.” (RTS, 2014)

Vučić: On Ratko Mladić: “SNS will never protect anyone charged with a crime.”
(Tanjug, 2012)

These statements illustrate the great shift in the policy orientation of Nikolić and Vučić as the elite members of the Serbian Progressive Party. The SNS is a central-right political party which started as a caucus of the Serbian national assembly. The caucus was called “Forward Serbia” (Napred Srbija) and was established by Nikolić in September 2008, after he stepped down from the position of SRS’s deputy leader. After short hesitation seventeen radical MPs including Vučić joined Nikolić’s political caucus. In October 2008 the Serbian Progressive Party was officially established. Nikolić served as party leader until he was elected president in 2012 and stepped down from the position in favor of Vučić who is a current Serbian Prime Minister; nevertheless he is still associated with the party and its ideals. The party program of the SNS is called the “White book: A Program of Change”. The program addresses twenty main subjects, which vary from economical, political, social, environmental to cultural issues.

The biggest emphasis in the SNS party program are pronounced in the first two points which stress the importance of a strong economy and the need to attract investors into Serbia. The SNS declares its affinity for the EU, which is seen as an important economic partner of Serbia. The program states that they have “a new task in the area of economic relations with foreign countries, with the goal of integration of Serbian economy into the economy of the European union and the world” (Srpska Napredna Stranka, 2011, p.10).

and 15 years respectively. Moreover, Nikolic and Vucic also had personal ties with Seselj. Seselj is a godfather of Vucic’s kids as well as he was groomssman on his wedding. Nikolic is a godfather of Seselj grandchildren.

The third point of the program focuses on Kosovo and Metohija: it recognizes that the lack of normalization of relations has had a bad influence on Serbia's position in the world: "SNS sees all the negative implications of the absence of negotiated, lasting and sustainable solutions to the most important state issues may have on the international position of Serbia, its internal development as well as peace and stability in the Balkans." Nevertheless, the Progressives "can not and will not recognize Kosovo's independence" (ibid., p.38).

The foreign policy orientation of the SNS is formulated in the fourth point of the White Book called "Serbia in Europe and cooperation with the world". The SNS acknowledges that only formulation and implementation of responsible foreign policy will guarantee fulfillment of its national interests in all fields. Serbia's peaceful development and good relations with international actors are crucial for the realization of this goal. Its foreign policy priorities are formulated in the following order:

1. Membership of the European Union
2. Military neutrality
3. Intensification of cooperation with the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China and Japan
4. The best possible relations with the United States
5. Strengthening and deepening relations with all the developing countries
6. Respect and full implementation of the Dayton and other international treaties and resolutions
7. Constant effort and commitment to improve the status of the Serbian people in neighboring countries (primarily the former Yugoslavia) (ibid., p.40-41).

In sum, the SNS established in 2008 by the former members of the SRS is a center-right Serbian party, which puts focus on economic development and the progress and stability of the Republic of Serbia. Its foreign policy priority is primarily focused on the cooperation with and membership of the EU. Nikolić and Vučić as its former and current leader gained the greatest public support in their political careers as members of the SNS.

As regards the comparison of the political parties in Serbia, according to Bochsler (2010) the parties are divided on the basis of how they address four main “political conflicts” (Bochsler, 2010, p.99-101). For the purpose of this paper the area of nationalist-authoritarian values and the related area of foreign policy orientation are relevant and used for the comparison of the SRS and SNS.¹³

The nationalist-authoritarian dimension relates to the concept of ‘Great Serbia’, a vision of Serbian ethnic superiority, as well as to the issue of Kosovo. Whereas the Radicals strongly advocate the need for “unification of Serbian lands”, the Progressives respect the Dayton Treaty¹⁴ and consider it “a key for stable and smooth regional development” (Srpska Napredna Stranka, 2011, p.40-41). As regards the issue of Kosovo, both political parties are strictly against recognition of it as an independent state. Despite the fact that the Radicals did not explicitly mention Kosovo in their party program, they repeatedly highlighted the importance of respecting the principle of territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs of countries. Furthermore, Šešelj’s political testament advises Serbia “to break diplomatic relations with all countries that recognize the independence of Kosovo and Metohija” (Albunović, Petrović, 2008). The progressives, on the other hand, directly address the Kosovo issue in their party program. Differing from the Radicals, they recognize that the long lasting conflict with its former province is a result of not only the “insincere and inconsistent policy on Kosovo and Metohija by the international community” but also “of the ruling elites in Serbia” (Srpska Napredna Stranka, 2011, p.38-39). Furthermore, they acknowledge that international mediation could play a positive role in resolving this issue (ibid.). As opposed to the SRS, therefore, the SNS expresses its affinity with the EU and its willingness to cooperate and fulfill conditions required for EU membership. As such, the SNS belongs to the pro-European camp.

¹³ The issues are related “since the EU integration process is conditional on cooperation with the ICTY and civic rights” (Bochsler, 2010, p.104).

¹⁴ Dayton Treaty is a peace Agreement is peace agreement, signed at the end of Bosnian war in 1995, which among other things sets the territorial changes regarding territory of former Yugoslavia.

This section examined differences between the former and current political parties of Nikolić and Vučić. After the analysis of the statements of the leaders and the party programs of the SRS and SNS, one can claim that the most salient difference between the two parties is in the orientation of their foreign policy. This difference serves as a demonstration of the policy shift and is a foundation for further analysis of the motives which triggered this policy turn.

2.3 Media discourse related to the policy shift

The opinion of media regarding the topic is diverse. Several journalists believe in the ‘genuineness’ of Nikolić’s and Vučić’s policy shift; however, the prevailing media opinion regarding the shift in Nikolić’s and Vučić’s policy is rather skeptical. Immediately after the establishment of the SNS, the policy journal *Helsinška Povelja* reacted by publishing several articles that questioned the motives of Nikolić and Vučić. The general view of the reporters is that Nikolić and Vučić have not changed and remained Radicals (Stanić, 2008). Radović (2008a) claims that the split from the Radicals was a strategic move aiming to make their party more attractive to the voters that were threatened by the “aggressive” Šešelj. As regards the political transformation of Vučić, writers of *Helsinška Povelja* suggested that his pro-European “new skin” is an act which will only be exposed after some time passes (Radović, 2008b): "All the opportunities in front of him and he is only at the beginning of the presentation of the new party and personal image”.

The greatest wave of criticism about the ‘genuineness’ of the SNS declared policy orientation came after Nikolić was elected as President and the SNS won the parliamentary elections in 2012. Sonja Biserko, founder of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, expressed worries that the victory of the SNS and Nikolić meant the return and legitimization of key people from Milosevic’s era in political life, culture, education, and the economy. Biserko expected that Nikolić’s victory would “of course, bring a slowdown in relations with the EU“ (Biserko, 2012, p.4). Gligorov Professor at the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies also doubted the sincerity of the

SNS policy. According to Gligorov (2012, p.6), the fundamental shift in Nikolić's and Vučić's policy "is only a declarative adjustment" implemented with the objective to gain public support; the pro-European orientation is a result of a strategic calculation. Furthermore, Vučić, as the most powerful man in Serbia, is, according to Biserko (2003, p. 4) "reaching out to the international community as a Trojan horse who needs to show the new face of the Progressives."

To sum up, prevailing opinion of the media is that Nikolić's and Vučić's motives were interest-driven, and their policy shift was driven by the logic of consequences, associated with the bid for power. Nevertheless, the media bias outlined in the methodology must be taken into account. The next chapter of this thesis aims to shed more light on the issue and provide a balanced interpretation of the motives driving the political shift of Nikolić and Vučić.

III. CHAPTER

After setting the theoretical foundation of the thesis and presenting an assessment of the shift in the foreign policy priorities of decision makers Nikolić and Vučić, this chapter analyses the motives for this shift.

The first subchapter of this section bridges the theoretical framework of March and Olsen outlined in the first chapter with the empirical part focusing on the motives of the decision-makers. The aim of this section is to define motives that could suggest that the policy shift was driven by one of the logics of action and so prepare the ground for the actual analysis. This subchapter also highlights the limitations of the theoretical framework deriving from the division between the two categories of logics. The second subchapter considers official party programs, speeches, interviews, statements, national newspapers as well as the personal experience of the author gained on several field trips in Serbia. Firstly, it analyses several issues relating to the policy of Nikolić and Vučić; this includes circumstances of the split of the SRS, the steps taken by the SNS-led government regarding Kosovo and other issues demonstrating consistency with the declared pro-European orientation, the political actions of Nikolić as a president including his first official visits, as well as further analysis of the SNS party program. Such analysis is provided in order to develop a deeper understanding of the subject and consequently to attempt to identify and categorize the actual motives driving the behavior of the Serbian statesmen.

3.1 Potential motivation of the decision-makers

Before identifying and categorizing the actual motives for the shift in the foreign policy preferences of Nikolić and Vučić, it is important to outline the possible motivations which would suggest that the political actions of the Serbian statesman were driven by one of these logics of action.

Interest-driven motives of Nikolić's and Vučić's foreign policy shift would be those that were driven by the aspiration to fulfill their subjective or collective goals based on their preferences and interests. The most obvious motive would be political ambition; both politicians knew that a pro-European policy would be appealing to voters and that only abandonment of the Radical rhetoric would raise their popularity. This would further suggest that the popularity of the EU in Serbia was taken into account and influenced the actions of the decision-makers. One could claim that the second possible motivation that would suggest that the authors were driven by the logic of consequences is the calculation of benefits and losses resulting from membership of the EU; this would be a collective goal.¹⁵ Accordingly, if the interest in the material benefits, that is the economic prosperity of the country, was a principal motive for the adoption of a pro-European policy, it might seem that the logic of consequences played a crucial role in the decision-making process. This analysis can be developed on another level by assuming that the actors calculated that economic prosperity would lead to their likely re-election and as such fulfill their individual political goals. The collective goal in fact would be a means of achieving a personal goal. On the other hand, however, the motivation of national economic prosperity can also be identified as representing an ideological change of the decision-makers. If they considered the EU economic model as the most suitable model for their country and they internalized such an idea, their motivation to adopt a pro-European foreign policy could be seen as a result of acting in accordance with what is 'appropriate'. Furthermore, both motives, pursuit of individual goals as well as implementation of the most appropriate economic model, are not mutually exclusive; this highlights the problem of treating the two logics as separate categories.

The logic of appropriateness assumes that an actor acts in accordance with what he considers to be good, reasonable, true or correct. The behavior driven by the logic of appropriateness in the case of Nikolić and Vučić's adoption of a pro-European foreign

¹⁵ Nevertheless, it is important to mention that membership of the EU is related to several different dimensions, of which detailed analysis would be beyond the scope of this thesis. For the purpose of this paper the author works with simplifications and only takes into account the one that is relevant for the discourse, the normative and economic dimension. 'Normative dimension' in this paper refers to the normative influence of the EU leading to the ideational change of the decision makers, whereas 'economic dimension' represents material benefits for the country. The two dimensions are not mutually exclusive.

policy suggests that the decision makers have genuine interest in the EU and what it represents; both on an economic and a normative level. Thus, if the political actors considered a pro-European orientation as adequate behavior it suggests that the principles of the SRS did not correspond with Nikolić's and Vučić's personal judgment of what is appropriate. The logic of appropriateness would suggest that they decided to establish a pro-European party not because of the expected personal gains from this decision but because they considered the EU direction to be the best thing for the country; this is to say that the pursuit of a collective objective was not a means of achieving personal goals. This, however, does not imply only an interest in the material benefits that EU membership offers, but also an adoption of norms such as the promotion of democracy, good governance, human rights, a market economy, and everything that the EU represents. If their behavior was a result of such an ideological shift, the self-interest of the decision-makers or the potential material benefits that arise from EU membership would therefore be irrelevant variables in their initial decision. The continuity of a pro-European policy, even after the election of these statesmen to the highest political posts in the country, could indicate that self-interest was not a primary motivation for the political shift. Nevertheless, even in the case that such continuity is evident, one cannot surely claim that only the logic of appropriateness played a role in the initial decision to adopt pro-European policy. It can also be connected with the long-term personal objectives of the decision-makers which are however almost impossible to identify. In sum, it is difficult to draw a straight line between the two logics in several situations.

This section highlighted several possible motivations that could play a role in the decision of 2008. It does not exclude the possibility that a combination of the two logics played a role. On the contrary, it highlights that in several situations it is difficult to apply one or the other logic implying a limitation to March and Olsen's theoretical framework which suggests that the logics are "sufficiently distinct to be viewed as separate explanatory devices" (March and Olsen 1998, p.953). The following chapter takes into account the complexity of attempting to determine whether motives were driven by one or the other logics of action.

3.2 Analysis of the motives on particular policy areas and situations

The aim of this empirical section is to identify the motives that inspired Nikolić and Vučić to change their foreign policy preferences. This subchapter is organized around the analyses of several policy areas and situations. The first topic concerns the circumstances of the split. The second section relates to the continuity of the pro-European policy over the past six years, drawing particular attention to the first official visit of Nikolić as newly elected president. Thirdly, this subchapter further analyses the SNS party program in order to evaluate the importance of the economic benefits of EU membership.

3.2.1 Split of Serbian Radical Party

The circumstances of the split between Nikolić and the SRS are crucial to an analysis of the logics playing a role in Nikolić's foreign policy shift. If the reason for the partition of the SRS was truly Nikolić's discontent with the party's policy towards signing the SAA with the EU, it suggests that Nikolić considered EU membership to be of substantial significance. It was seemingly of enough importance to warrant Nikolić leaving the party he had been a member of for his entire political career, and leading him to establish a new political party which holds an opposing position towards European membership. Such actions appear to be driven by the logic of appropriateness.

However, the following analysis proves that this account that explains Nikolić's parting from the Radicals as a result of the disagreement over the European issue is misleading. In doing so, it provides a comprehensive insight into this subject and draws attention to the often overlooked internal developments of the SRS.

The first major significant disagreement between Nikolić and SRS official leader Vojislav Šešelj occurred in May 2008 over the issue of the party nomination for a new Prime Minister. Šešelj privately agreed with the leader of the DSS, Vojislav Kostunica, that Kostunica himself would be their joint nominee for position. The fact that such an agreement was made without the knowledge of deputy leader Nikolić initiated tensions in

the party (Martinković, 2008). As Nikolić reveals in the interview for the newspaper *Politika*, when he learned that the agreement was made “behind his back”, he reacted by consulting Šešelj and asking him: “Can I lead the party as we have agreed and as I have been doing so far, with me making decisions?” Šešelj responded negatively which caused Nikolić to resign. Šešelj then reportedly asked him to stay on one more year which Nikolić initially agreed to. (Tanjug, 2008a; Albinović and Petrović, 2008). This incident of May 2008 weakened the internal structure of the Serbian Radical Party.

In September 2008 the Radicals promised their support to the then ruling coalition by voting for the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union. The condition for such support was approval of their amendment to the agreement.¹⁶ However, despite the fact that this amendment was approved by the coalition, Šešelj changed his mind and decided to boycott the vote on the agreement. In the meantime however, Nikolić had promised the coalition that they could count on the Radicals’ vote. (Babović, 2008; Tanjug, 2008) Šešelj’s sudden decision to deny this already promised support was “the last straw” for Nikolić who had already considered leaving the party. Nikolić’s decision to eventually split from the SRS was to a large extent due to his reluctance to break this given promise and also because he was tired of the constant changes and ambiguous orders from Šešelj that limited his policy. (Radović, 2008a) The SAA with the EU was therefore the catalyst for the split, not the main cause. When Nikolić was asked in an interview what were the reasons for his split with the Radicals he claimed that there was no ideological divide within the party; the reason for his resignation was the “failure to comply with the agreement, principles and above all morals” (Radisavljević, Laketić Males, 2008a, p.3) and his desire not to “be treated as a rag anymore” (Čekerevac, 2008, p.7). Additionally, the claim that the EU did not play crucial role in the split of the Radicals is further proven by the fact that Nikolić’s caucus “Forward Serbia” eventually decided not to vote for the SAA (E.B.H. 2008). Nevertheless, the ratification of the SAA in the Serbian parliament helped Nikolić to cross the Rubicon.

¹⁶The amendment included a clause conforming that Kosovo is an integral part of Serbia and that only united Serbia in its internationally recognized border will participate in European integration.

The former secretary-general of the SRS, Vučić, was not as outspoken as Nikolić about the signing of the SAA and the split of the SRS. At this time of turmoil in the SRS, Vučić did not declare his position on the issue and remained in the middle between the two blocs; instead, he stayed in the background, not attending party meetings and temporally withdrawing into seclusion, reportedly dealing with family issues (Spaić and Jevtić, 2008; Cvetković, 2008). There were several opinions regarding Vučić's hesitation to express his opinion on the topic. Most of them suggested that Vučić was simply bandwagoning. He evaluated the disadvantages that joining any of the blocs could bring to his political career. Zoran Stojiljković, professor at the Faculty of Political Science in Belgrade, claimed that Vučić inclined more towards Nikolić's bloc but his final decision would only be given after it became clear which bloc held more power and which he could benefit more from (Males, 2008; Radisavljević, Laketić and Males, 2008b).

After the analysis of primary as well as secondary sources in this regard, the author came to the conclusion that the disagreement over the SAA was not the main reason for the split of the Radicals. The divide was an outcome of a political process rather than of an ideological difference. Nikolić's initial support for the SAA does not mean that he became a reformist, or even a revisionist, given that in his speech at the inaugural meeting of the SNS Nikolić declared their "loyalty to the radical ideology" and claimed that he is a statesman that "had to adjust to inconvenient times" (Radović, 2008a, p.25). Such analysis suggests that the assumption that Nikolić considered European membership to be of great importance is not correct, which implies that his establishment of a pro-European party only some weeks later was not likely to have been driven by an ideological transformation. As regards Vučić's final decision to join Nikolić's bloc, it was seemingly based on a strategic calculation of the consequences of such an action. His hesitation and lack of a specific position on the European issue implies that it was personal gain and not a genuine interest in the EU which influenced his final decision to leave the SRS. Overall, the analysis of the circumstance of the Radical split suggests that the motivation of both statesmen for the establishment of a pro-European political party was driven by the logic of consequences.

3.2.2 Continuity in a pro-European policy

The continuity of the pro-European policy as an indication of ideological change is the subject of this section. The starting point of this analysis is May 2012 when Nikolić won the presidential elections and the SNS, with Vučić as its new leader, gained the most votes in the parliamentary elections.

The first indicator of policy continuity is an official visit of Nikolić as newly elected president. According to Miroslav Lajččák, Managing Director for Russia, the Eastern Neighbourhood and the Western Balkans of the European External Action Service (EEAS), Nikolić was aware that the destination of his first visit sends signals to the international community about “how he will act as a president” (Jevtić, 2012, p.3). Nikolić’s first official visit as president was to Brussels. The European officials were pleased to see that the new president and government coalition did not intend to obstruct the pro-European path of Serbia and that European membership remained Nikolić and Vučić’s priority even after gaining power. Furthermore, the negative predictions of the media regarding Nikolić and Vučić’s policy did not come true. In fact, Serbia progressed in their Euro-integration efforts by gaining candidate status in March 2013. The media’s doubts about the ‘genuineness’ of Nikolić and Vučić’s pro-European policy was also challenged in April 2013 when the coalition led by the Progressives took the unpopular measures of opening up a dialogue with Kosovo in order to further progress the integration process.¹⁷ By doing so, Serbia met the conditions of the EU, and the European Council decided to open an accession negotiation in January 2014. Such continuity of the pro-European policy opens up the possibility of considering ideological change in 2008 as a motive for its adoption. However, it is also important to consider this continuity as a means of realizing undeclared long-term individual objectives. In fact, further analysis of the events connected with the first official visit of the president reveals that Nikolić visited the Russian Federation shortly before his presidential inauguration. Nikolić attended the congress of United Russia, and was received by President Putin (Vignjević,

¹⁷ Aleksandar Vucic was considered to be a person who facilitated talk between Kosovo and Serbia and then Prime Minister Dacic was adhering to his “orders” (DeLauney, 2014).

2012). This suggests that an ideological change did not occur for Nikolić and Vučić. However, when analyzing the decisions of the current president and the Prime Minister regarding Kosovo and Metohija, one cannot definitively claim which of the logics prevailed and what was Nikolić and Vučić's actual motive in this regard. The intention of normalizing relations with its former province, which was strongly recommended by the EU, could on the one hand arise from their consideration that such an action is the reasonable, right and good thing to do and therefore would be driven by the logic of appropriateness. The logic of consequences, on the other hand, would suggest that the decision-makers calculated the pros and cons of this normalization of relations and came to the conclusion that the benefits arising from cooperation with the EU were higher than the costs.

In sum, the first official presidential visit in Brussels together with other policy steps of the SNS-led coalition taken in order to progress Euro-integration efforts, disprove the claims that the pro-European foreign policy orientation of the SNS is only a “declarative adjustment” and could indicate ideological change of the decision-makers. On the other hand, Nikolić's visit to Russia shortly before his inauguration reveals his enduring affinity towards the Russian Federation, which gives credence to the assumption that the consistency of the pro-European policy is a result of strategic calculation. Nevertheless, Nikolić and Vučić's policy towards both the EU and Russia does not provide a comprehensive answer for determining the logic driving the motives for their initial adoption of a pro-European policy in 2008. Such a conclusion leads the author to consider the limitations of the theoretical framework.

3.2.3 Economic gain as a motivation

The fact remains that the official party program of the SNS as well as the actions of its leaders prove that European membership is a priority of SNS foreign policy. This section highlights sections of the party program as well as statements of the decision-makers that suggest that economic gain is the primary goal for adoption of a pro-European policy.

As already mentioned in the second chapter of this thesis a closer look at the SNS party program and the statements of its officials shows a great emphasis on the importance of the economic development of Serbia. In his inaugural speech Nikolić mentioned that the European Path represents the “path of the future, and the path of economic prosperity” (Spaić and Latković, 2012, p.2). The SNS party program also states that the Progressives support the European integration process because they believe that EU membership is the best way to fulfill the long-term interests of Serbian citizens (Srpska Napredna Stranka, 2011). Further analysis of the party program also reveals that economic development, at any cost, is the primary goal of the Progressives. The program declares that “there are no bad or good markets, all markets that provide an opportunity for Serbia to place their products and goods, are good and necessary” (Srpska Napredna Stranka, 2011, p.12). This suggests that fulfillment of a collective goal is a motivation behind cooperation with the EU. According to March and Olsen’s distinction, such motivation is driven by the logic of consequence. If another organization or country offered Serbia economic gains, it is likely that it would become a priority in Serbian foreign policy. This assumption is further supported by the following statements: Nikolić: “We have to go in the EU, we want to, but first we want Serbia. Never forget that our Serbia is more important than the world. Serbia needs to search for friends on all sides” (Fonet, 2008). Nikolić: “Serbia needs big projects and programs for progress and therefore we have to be open to anybody that wants to help us develop and invest in us” (T.T., 2008).

In sum, the former and current leader of the Progressives consider economic progress of the country to be the most important issue on their agenda. The adoption of a pro-European foreign policy is connected to their belief that the EU is a suitable actor that can assist Serbia in achieving a collective goal. The EU is therefore seen as a tool which should be used in order to achieve economic prosperity for the country and therefore is a foreign policy preference of the current ruling elite. Ristić (2012) claims that a better economic situation in the country results in greater public support for the politicians in power and therefore improves their chances of re-election; on the other hand, turning away from the EU would result in the declining support of voters. “Nikolić and Vučić did not adopt the pro-European foreign policy out of belief or conviction, but simply out of

political pragmatism” (Ristić, 2012) This suggests that their initial motive was to pursue personal objectives through achieving collective interests. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that “self-interest is not necessarily the same as selfishness“ (Goldmann, 2005, p.40). The decision-makers’ individual interests might be compatible with what they perceive as ‘appropriate’; this hypothesis, however, the research was not able to confirm. In this case, the two logics can complement each other or even overlap.

To conclude the findings of this chapter, the motives driven by self-interest and strategic calculation of the decision-makers seem to prevail over those driven by the logic of appropriateness in the decision of Nikolić and Vučić to adopt a pro-European foreign policy priority. Nevertheless, in several situations and area of the analysis, the motives proved difficult to be assigned in one of the categories.

Conclusion

In October 2008, Serbian politics witnessed a great political transformation: anti-Western Radicals became pro-European Progressives. This thesis has analyzed the circumstances and the motives for the political shift of Tomislav Nikolić and Aleksandar Vučić. The research hypothesis was based on the theoretical framework of social constructivism, in particular on the concepts of the logic of appropriateness and the logic of consequences. This thesis made use of qualitative research methods, including a case study and discourse analysis. The empirical analysis led the author to the conclusion that the political shift from anti-Western to pro-European preferences in Nikolić's and Vučić's foreign policy was primarily driven by the logic of consequences; however, due to the often possibly overlapping character of the logics, this could not be demonstrated in all the researched policy areas and situations.

The analysis of the party programs, scholarly literature, media sources, interviews, and statements of Nikolić and Vučić on several issues relating to the adoption of a pro-European policy suggest that it was the motives which were driven by the self-interest and strategic calculation of the decision-makers which prevailed. The logic of consequences as an explanatory tool of Nikolić and Vučić's behavior was particularly demonstrated in the analysis of the circumstances of the split of the Serbian Radical Party. This assumption is based on Nikolić's statements that the only reason for the Radical split was an internal disagreement about the leadership of the party. The ideological difference between Šešelj and Nikolić and Vučić did not occur, which implies that Nikolić and Vučić stayed loyal to radical ideas, which are incompatible with a pro-Western foreign policy orientation. Moreover, Vučić's hesitation about leaving the SRS, related to his pursuit of self-interest, further supports the claim that the initial adoption of a pro-European orientation was not motivated by ideological change. The logic of appropriateness as an explanation of behavior, on the other hand, proved to be applicable only to a surface examination of the issues. The initial opinion arising from scholarly literature, as well as from other sources, states that Nikolić and Vučić split from the Radicals due to disagreement over the EU issue. If the two decision-makers truly made this major political decision due to a belief that the European path is the best for the

country, this would imply that they had internalized a 'European identity'. After the analysis however, this account proved to be insubstantial.

Nevertheless, several situations and areas of the analysis proved difficult to be assigned definitively to one of the two separate logics guiding human behavior. These includes the continuity of the pro-European policy after the elections, as demonstrated by the normalization of relations with Kosovo as well as the first official visit of Nikolić as president. Moreover, the economic gains of EU membership, although seemingly a result of strategic calculation of consequences, can be also driven by the logic of appropriateness. Essentially, in some cases it was possible to identify one or the other of the logics; in others, however, not only were the motives of the decision-makers not clear but also the distinction between the two logics was difficult to identify, as they often overlapped. This is to say that the empirical analysis of the motives led the author to uncover certain limitations of the theoretical framework applied in the thesis, particularly regarding the separation of the two logics of expected behavior. These limitations, however, did not hinder the analysis; on the contrary, by questioning the dividing line between the two logics it made the analysis richer and more detailed. In fact, one can only agree with Goldmann (2005, p.48): "The distinction between the logics has made scholars think in new, important ways."

The relationship between the theoretical framework and the subject of empirical analysis can therefore be interpreted as 'mutually explanative'. The outcome of this research is therefore a better understanding of the motivation of the two Serbian decision-makers as well as a reflection on the limitations of the theoretical framework.

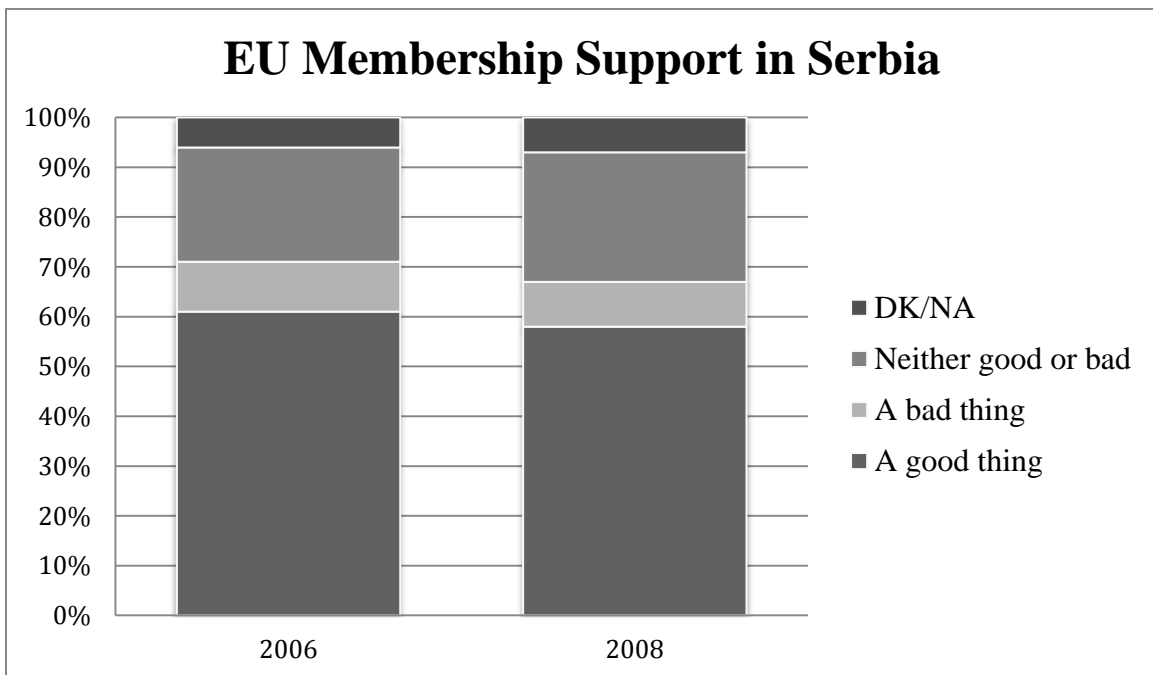
Tomsilav Nikolić and Aleksandar Vučić are currently the two most influential politicians in Serbia, a country whose political development could have an impact on the stability and prosperity of the whole of the Western Balkans; these factors give this thesis significant societal and academic relevance. The analysis of their motives for the sudden adoption of a pro-European policy is a foundation for possible predictions of their policy in the near future. This thesis fills the gap in the literature and sheds light on the specific areas of research related to the party politics in Serbia, individual decision-makers and

the logics of action. Furthermore, this research could serve as a base for further analyses of the motives for the adoption of a pro-European foreign policy, given that the limited scope of this paper left several dimensions of this issue untouched. Such dimensions, among others, include the potential influence of the broader political context in Serbia in 2008 on the decision of policy makers, as well as the influence of a global political context related to the global economic crisis.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Perceptions of the EU in the Western Balkans in 2008.

Question: Generally speaking do you think that Serbia's membership of the European Union would be a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad? (% base: samples of random 1000 people.



source: (Gallup Balkan Monitor, 2009)

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