



Foreign policy: Montenegro's EU membership aspiration

What type of factors, international structural, domestic, or individual level factors can best explain Montenegro's foreign policy shift toward the European Union?

Bachelor Thesis by Marko Teodosijević
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Leiden University – Faculty of Social Sciences
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Supervisor: Dr. W.P. Veenendaal
Student number: s1547690
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Chapter 1: Introduction

In February 2017 the headline of *The Independent* read: “Russia plotted to kill Montenegro’s PM and overthrow government to stop country from joining NATO” (Osborne, 2017). Small states do not often dominate the headlines, but Montenegro has recently appeared in numerous media outlets regarding an attempt of a *coup d’état* to oust Montenegro’s EU-leaning leader Milo Djukanović. When the dissolution of Yugoslavia began in 1991, Montenegro, the smallest of the six constituent republics, faced an uncertain future. Montenegro has an ethnically diverse population and with war raging in neighboring Bosnia and Kosovo, violence could have easily spread to Montenegro as well, but the country remained free from bloodshed. After 1997, the ruling party of Montenegro, the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS), stated that ‘Euro-Atlantic’ integration is Montenegro’s number one foreign policy goal (Pavlović, 2016). Montenegro’s recent desire to join NATO and the EU puts a serious strain on its relationship with traditional allies, Russia and Serbia, and it is not immediately clear why Montenegro is willing to risk damaging this historical relationship in exchange for NATO and EU membership. Montenegro presents a unique case because it is an extremely young state, and has shown high levels of political stability in recent decades, something very remarkable in comparison to other Balkan states. Additionally, Djukanović, who has been the leader of Montenegro for almost twenty years, and is widely accredited for Montenegro’s transition toward Europe and the West. Djukanović’s efforts to bring Montenegro closer to the EU, in combination with his domination of Montenegrin politics, suggests that Montenegro’s foreign policy might have been a direct result of an individual, stressing the relevance of agency within agency-structure theories. The result of this analysis could prove that the consensus in the IR literature, which says that international structural factors can best account for the foreign policy decisions of small states, is wrong, breaking a long-held intellectual tradition and providing a wholly fresh basis for future foreign policy inquiry with respect to the ‘levels-of-analysis’ perspective. Therefore, the research question of this thesis is: what type of factors, international structural factors, domestic level factors or individual level factors, can best explain Montenegro’s shift in foreign policy and in particular Montenegro’s recent desire to become a member of the EU.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

2.1: International structural factors

In international relations theory, neorealism assumes that international politics are dominated by great powers and that small states are vulnerable and dependent on other larger states (Rothstein 1966, 1988; Vital 1967; Fox 1959; Vandenbosch 1964; Sveics 1969). Vulnerabilities rather than opportunities prevail as the most striking manifestation of smallness in global politics (Payne, 2004, p. 634; Sutton & Payne, 1993, p. 591). Similar to neorealism, neoliberalism accepts that world affairs are shaped in significant ways by competition among states, implying that a central authority regulating the behavior of states does not exist in the international system (Heywood, 2014, p. 62). Therefore, the relative size of states often becomes an important detail in respect to the state's power and ability to influence world affairs. However, unlike neorealism, neoliberalism accepts the possibility for small states to play a large(r) role in world politics through cooperation in international organizations (Vital, 1967, p. 130; Cooper & Shaw, 2012, p. 197; Thorhallsson, 2012, p. 135). In reality, small states are very active in international organizations, because apart from providing more opportunities for cooperation, most international organizations are based on the principle of equality, and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the small state is commonly acknowledged when a state is accepted as a member (Heywood, 2014, p. 459). Like many scholars have pointed out, the issue of security is perhaps the most prevalent question small states have to deal with (Sutton & Payne 1993; Bartmann 2002, p. 363). Therefore, small states often seek formal status of independence in international organizations to gain support from the international community to maintain the existing international frontiers, also commonly known as the ideology of extantism (Schaffer, 1975, p. 26).

In the last half century the number of small states in the world has been steadily rising but small states are still largely excluded in the study of international relations and comparative politics (Veenendaal & Corbett, 2014, p. 530; Neumann & Gstöll, 2004, p. 7; Bartson 1973, p. 13). This is the reason why not a lot has been written on the foreign policy of small states. The few scholars that have written on this topic emphasize on the small states' external environment precisely because their key objective is to ensure security, leading to the assumption that their foreign policy is less constrained by domestic factors (Elman, 1995, p. 174; Kassimeris, 2009, p.

86). Similarly, Knudsen (1997), Snyder (1991), Rosenau (1996), Taylor (1995), McNamara (1993), and others argue that that domestic factors matter little in explaining the behavior of small states in the international arena. East (1973, p. 558) and Hey (2003, p. 4) for example, describe how small states have fewer resources available that they can use to develop a foreign policy and point out the fact that small states are more likely to engage in risky behavior. These are all examples of scholars that have analyzed the foreign policy of small states from a neorealist point of view, and who have consequently downplayed the role that international organizations can have in international affairs.

Many scholars, who work from a liberalist point of view, have pointed out how small states tend to be very active in international organizations (Anckar, 2004; Sutton, 2010; Corbett & Cornell, 2015; Veenendaal, 2014). The research done by Corbett and Cornell (2015, p. 6), Stringer (2006, p. 550), and Van Fossen (2007, p. 126) for example, have shown how small states can derive benefits from international organizations by leveraging aid, support from larger states, and by voting in blocs. In addition, many studies such as the ones made by Thorhallsson and Wivel (2006), Thorhallsson (2000), and Archer & Nugent (2002) have focused on the strategies used by small states in the EU to leverage their external position in world affairs. One advantage of joining the regional economic integration of the EU is that it allows small states to obtain the benefits that are usually only available to large states, such as economies of scale and increased competition (Thorhallsson & Wivel, 2006, p. 655). Furthermore, small states can exercise influence through occupying important institutional positions and small states have been instrumental over the years in promoting many specific issues within the EU, such as Greece obliging the EU to face the Cypriot issue, Finland promoting the 'northern dimension', and Portugal keeping East Timor on the agenda (Archer & Nugent, 2002, p. 8). Contrary to what neorealism says, these studies show that international organizations do play an important role in international politics. International organizations are very important for small states because they form a platform where states can meet, discuss common issues and form a united front in the pursuit of a common agenda.

All in all, there seems to be a consensus among scholars that domestic determinants are less salient when studying small state foreign policy because external constraints are more severe than domestic constraints (Taylor, 1995, p. 202; Sutton & Payne, 1993, p. 580; Handel, 1981, p. 11; McNamara, 1993, p. 306). In this

consensus, small state behavior is seen from a state-centric perspective in which foreign policy outputs are a response to external constraints. Changes in small state foreign policy are considered isomorphic to fluctuations in the structure of the international system or the degree of threat posed by the great powers, thus including domestic affairs in the analysis of small states' foreign policy is supposed to be a fruitless endeavor because analyzing the international situation offers enough explanation on the small state's position in the international system and its interaction with the great powers (Elman, 1995, p. 172). Contrary to the scholarly consensus, Elman (1995, p. 175) argues that whether international or domestic level factors matter more is an empirical question and should not be assumed a priori. In contests between levels of analysis, neither domestic nor international arguments automatically win.

2.2: Domestic level factors

Even though domestic factors are generally relegated to a lower level of importance for the analysis of small states' foreign policy, there is a case to be made not to discard domestic factors altogether. Firstly, Putnam's (1988) "two-level" theoretical approach became very influential because it introduced an analysis in terms of two-level games that, unlike state-centric approaches, recognize the inevitability of domestic conflict about what the national interest requires. The two-level approach recognizes that central decision-makers strive to reconcile domestic and international interests simultaneously (Putnam, 1988, p. 460). Putnam argues that the debate whether domestic politics determine international relations, or the reverse, is pointless, because the answer to the question is that both levels are interrelated (Putnam, 1988, p. 427). Putnam's approach strengthens Elman's case that domestic factors should also be taken into consideration when one explores a state's foreign policy. Secondly, Kissinger (1966) describes how the domestic structures present an unprecedented challenge to the emergence of a stable international order. Kissinger (1966, p. 503) argues that if the domestic structures of the states engaging in international relations are based on similar notions of what is 'just', a consensus about acceptable aims and methods of foreign policy can develop. When the domestic structures are based on fundamentally different conceptions of what is just, conducting international affairs becomes increasingly complex. The domestic

structure crucially affects the way the actions of other states are interpreted (Kissinger, 1966, p. 504). In other words, when the domestic structures of two states, and the concept of legitimacy on which they are based, differ widely, as is the case with authoritarian and democratic states, it will be much harder for the states to persuade each other and reach an agreement. Thus, domestic structures have an important role on the way states conduct their foreign policy according to Kissinger (1966).

Regarding small states and democracy, according to several publications, small states are comparatively more likely to have democratic systems of government than larger states (Anckar, 2002; Ott, 2000; Srebrnik, 2004; Dahl & Tufte, 1973; Diamond & Tsalik, 1999). There are many definitions of democracy, but based on Dahl's (1971) conceptualization, which entails that contestation for public office must be open to the public, the argument that small states are more democratic holds. Additionally, according to Anckar (2002, p. 386), Srebrnik (2004, p. 330), and Founding Father James Madison (2008, Federalist Paper X, p. 54) small states are predisposed to be more politically stable because they generally have a more homogenous population, have more cultural consensus, the relationship between representatives and voters is closer, and the population is generally more involved in politics than in larger states. Some scholars also refer to the homogeneity of the population to explain the prevalence of democracy in small states (Dahl & Tufte, 1973, p. 91; Katzenstein, 1985, p. 87; Anckar, 1999, p. 40). Reaching a similar conclusion, Gerring and Zarecki (2011, p. 3) argue that community identity and consensus are easier to construct, and social order is easier to maintain when communities are small. Plato and Aristotle also warned that the *polis* should not be too large that its citizens are not able to assemble and discuss politics (Baldacchino, 2012, p. 106). The larger the polity the greater the potential number of conflicts, each of which poses coordination problems, and in extreme cases, disrupts the peace. Lastly, small states are presumed to be more transparent, which is considered an integral part of democracy (Farrugia, 1993, p. 225).

However, despite numerous qualitative studies proving the statistical correlation between small size and democracy, there are several studies that point out that small states are not always as democratic as they seem to be. Veenendaal (2015, p. 92) makes a case stating that even though statistical correlation between population size and democracy has been proven in recent years, more case-oriented and

qualitative publications have highlighted the democracy-undermining effects of smallness. Particularistic forms of political participation, patron-client linkages, disproportionate executive dominance, polarization, and the more personalistic nature of politics in small states are examples of democracy-obstructing political dynamics that result from a small population size (Veenendaal, 2013, p. 247; Veenendaal & Erk, 2014, p. 141; Veenendaal, 2015, p. 106; Farrugia, 1993, p. 223). Srebrnik (2004, p. 335) has also shown that in the internal politics of small states corruption, exploitation, and fraud are not uncommon among other practices corrosive to the democratic process. In general, a more in-depth focus on the internal political dynamics of small states reveal that there is a disparity between the formal democratic structures in small states, and the more practical nature of political competition (Veenendaal, 2013, p. 245).

Apart from the arguments that Putnam (1988) and Kissinger (1966) provide to look further into the domestic politics of small states and how it may affect their foreign policy, the contradictory conclusions between quantitative and qualitative studies regarding small size and democracy give further encouragement to look into the domestic structure of small states. If foreign policy not only depends on international structural factors, but also on domestic factors, then the disparity between formal political structures and democracy-obstructing political dynamics that result from a small population size is an important facet of small states' domestic politics that should not be omitted in a small state's foreign policy analysis because it can have implications on the state's ability to successfully conduct diplomatic relations with other states.

2.3: Individual level factors

As a result of deeply ingrained cultural assumptions, approaches to the study of leadership usually start with the idea that leaders are necessary for the functioning of a state and the idea that a strong leader is beneficial for a country still persists around the world today. Nonetheless, the debate over the role of individuals and their influence in shaping historical outcomes is both old and unsettled (Jones & Olken, 2005, p. 837). Within this debate, authors range from absolutist stances to more moderate, inclusive ones. At one extreme, Tolstoy's historical theory is perhaps the most dismissive about the role of leaders, wherein historic figures are seen as mere

ex-post justifications for events wholly beyond any individual's influence (Gemmill & Oakley, 1992, p. 115). Marx on the other hand, writes in his *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (1852) that leaders can have a small degree of influence on states, but argues that leaders must choose from a historically determined set of choices, which means that they have much less freedom to act than they think they do (Jones & Olken, 2005, p. 838).

It is clear that ambivalence exists in the literature about the extent to which leaders matter in international politics. On the one hand, national leaders are often larger than life figures with strong preferences and distinctive personalities who seem to leave their stamp on events. On the other hand, most IR scholars place great stress on the incentives and constraints posed by the environment, be it domestic or international (Jervis, 2013, p. 153). These debates tap into issues such as agency, structure, and human behavior, which is why these debates can be found throughout various disciplines. In the social sciences there is longstanding debate over the primacy of structure or agency in shaping human behavior (Archer, 2003; Hurrelmann, 1988; Elias, 1978; Turner, 1991). One perspective begins with the fact no matter how hard one looks, one never sees 'society', but only sees individuals. From this perspective, society is but an aggregation of individuals engaged in various interactions, some voluntary and some coerced (Sewell, 1992, p. 20). This conception very well represented in Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1650). The other view, brought to prominence by Durkheim, holds that society is something more than and different than a mere aggregation of individuals, even of patterns of activities by individuals (Sewell, 1992, p. 5). This perspective views structure as independent of individuals and as determining what people do. In other words, structure is the recurrent patterned arrangements that influence or limit the choices and opportunities available, while agency is the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices. Among political scientists, those who study personality point to the power of individual differences, but those who endorse structural models find this hard to accept (Jervis, 2013, p. 155).

Veenendaal's (2015, p. 246) study on the nature of political contestation in small states provides further incentive to investigate if, and how, political leaders could have influenced small state foreign policy, because his study demonstrates that political contestation in small states is usually more personalistic in nature, thus tapping into the role of agency within the structure of a small state. Additional studies

have also proven that in small social systems personality politics can lead to patron-client relationships, nepotism, and corruption (Baldacchino, 2012; Sutton, 1987; Ott, 2000; Benedict, 1967; Srebrnik, 2004). Baldacchino (2012) for example, criticizes leaders of small states for their aggrandized roles in the economy and society. He concludes that small settings increases the likelihood of authoritarianism and despotism, which can be illustrated by the relatively great number of autocratic and personalistic small state rulers within the formally democratic small states system (Baldacchino, 2012, p. 115). Smallness, as Ott (2000, p. 99) notes, creates contrasting effects. In some instances the tight control exercised by elites may result in heavy-handedness on the part of decision-makers. Where in larger states political contestation is more commonly cleavage- or ideology-based, politics of small states is much more focused on personality and personal relationships (Veenendaal, 2015, p. 254; Dahl & Tufte, 1973, p. 92).

In conclusion, the evidence gathered about the role of leaders in small social settings, sets forth the idea that political leaders of small states may have more individual power than their official roles might suggest, and as a result, the role of agency could turn out to be more prevalent within the structure of a small state.

2.4: Research question

The literature on small states indicates that there is an agreement among scholars of IR that international structural factors can best account for the foreign policy of small states (Elman, 1995, p. 175; Handel, 1981, p. 11; McNamara, 1993, p. 306). According to this view, analyzing domestic and individual level factors is supposed to be a fruitless endeavor because due to their ‘smallness’, the international environment sets such heavy constraints on small states that analyzing structural factors provides the best explanation for their foreign policy choices. This thesis challenges the consensus because upon reviewing the literature, certain tensions become apparent. Firstly, the use Putnam’s (1988) ‘two-level’ theory is so widespread exactly because it acknowledges that domestic politics and international politics are very strongly interrelated and can influence each other in various ways. Secondly, Kissinger’s (1966) work demonstrates how the domestic structure affects the state’s moral perception of what is ‘just’, and how it influences the way in which states develop their foreign policy. In addition, Anckar (2002), Srebrnik (2004), and many

others have demonstrated that small size can have an undemocratic effect on the leadership style of small state leaders, meaning that leaders of small states are more likely to have autocratic tendencies than those of large states, making it even more important to carefully investigate the power leaders of small states such as Montenegro can have. Lastly, Veenendaal (2015) and Baldacchino's (2012) work proving that small state politics are often more personalistic in nature than in large states, and that small state leaders often have more power than their official role might suggest, gives further incentive to look at the role of individual leaders and how they may have personally affected the state's foreign policy. The influence that domestic and individual level factors can have on the foreign policy and on the leadership style of small state leaders, stands in stark with the dominant view that international structural factors are in most cases enough to explain small states' foreign policy. Therefore, the research question of this thesis is: "Which type of factors, international structural factors, domestic level factors or individual level factors, can best explain Montenegro's foreign policy and in particular its dramatic shift toward the EU?"

2.5: Preliminary expectations

On the basis of the literature reviewed, three expectations of what the conclusions of this thesis will be can be formulated. These expectations will serve as a guideline throughout the investigation. However, the possibility that the conclusion will be a combination of two, or all three expectations is not excluded.

1. International structural factors are expected to provide the best explanation for Montenegro's foreign policy choices, and in particular its recent desire join the EU. This expectation is in line with the work of scholars such as East (1973), Knudsen (1997), and many more which reiterate that for small states the external factors are overwhelming to a degree that internal politics would not make any contribution to their analysis.

2. Domestic level factors are expected to provide the best explanation for Montenegro's foreign policy choices, and in particular its desire to join the European Union. In case this expectation turns out to be correct, it would strengthen the case of Elman (1995), Putnam (1988), and several others because it would reaffirm the need

to include the domestic level of analysis in order to understand why states make certain foreign policy decisions.

3. Individual level factors are expected to provide the best explanation for Montenegro's foreign policy choices, and in particular its desire to join the European Union. In case this expectation turns out to be correct, it would mark the primacy of agency in the agency-structure debate. This expectation also flows from the work of Baldacchino (2012, p. 107), and Srebrnik (2004, p. 334), that has shown that leaders of small states often have more influence and power on state processes than their official roles might suggest.

Chapter 3: Research design

3.1: Conceptualization and operationalization

The main concept of this thesis, small state, does not have a widely accepted definition and the definition of what counts as 'small state' is notoriously difficult to settle (Crowards, 2002, p. 143). The size of a state can be measured on the basis of different variables, such as population size, territory, economy or military capabilities. This thesis conceptualizes the state size on the basis of population figures, because it is the most widely used method in the field of comparative politics according to Veenendaal & Corbett (2015, p. 529). Next, regarding the boundary of what constitutes as 'small', in most of the previous literature small has been defined on the basis of arbitrary cut-off points, but the general trend over time has been a steady decrease of the cut-off point from 15 million in the 1950s, to 1.5 million in the 1990s (Crowards, 2002, p. 145). Because The Commonwealth Secretariat and the World Bank have proposed to use 1.5 million residents or less to classify countries as small, and because Montenegro fits this description, having a population of 622.159 in 2015, this thesis will operationalize the boundary of what constitutes as a small state at 1.5 million inhabitants (Cooper & Shaw, 2012, p. 44; Commonwealth Secretariat, n.d.; World Bank, 2017; Monstat 2015). Lastly, according to Heywood (2014, p. 116), the most well known definition of a 'state' is in Article 1 of the *Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of the State* (1933). Article 1 of the Montevideo Convention (1933, p. 3) puts forward four characteristics that an entity must possess to qualify as a state: a permanent population, a defined territory, a government, and the capacity to

enter into relations with other states. Statehood is most commonly interpreted in terms of political sovereignty (i.e. the capacity to enter into relations with other state), and membership at the U.N. guarantees the political sovereignty of states because every member state of the U.N has an equal chance at participating in international relations (Cooper & Shaw, 2012, p. 45; Heywood, 2014, p. 117). For this reason, for a state to be regarded as such, this thesis will use membership of the U.N. for the operationalization of a state.

For a clear conceptualization of international structural, domestic, and individual factors, it is important to mention that each type of factors correspond the 'three images' outlined in Kenneth Waltz' influential book *Man, State, and War* (1959). In his book, Waltz proposes a theory on how to go about analyzing the causes of conflict, and determines that the causes of war can be traced back to individual actions (first image), the internal structure of states (second image), and the anarchic character of international relations (third image) (Waltz, 1959, p. 13). International structural factors correspond to the 'third image', in which the anarchic world system as a whole is taken as a level of analysis (Singer, 1961, p. 80). In this case, anarchy is not defined as a condition of chaos and disorder, but rather one in which there is no sovereign body that governs the interactions between states (Heywood, 2014, p. 54). There is no body above states that is capable of establishing rules or laws for all states. As a result, if an issue at stake is important enough to a state, it can achieve outcome by its power to impose its will on another state. This is the most comprehensive level of analysis available, encompassing the totality of interactions that take place within the system and its environment (Singer, 1961, p. 80). This means that international structural factors encompasses all the power configurations in the international arena, the creation or dissolution of coalitions, modifications in the stability between the powers in the international arena, or any action taken by either states or international organizations, that may affect the behavior of Montenegro. In order to measure if structural factors determined Montenegro's behavior, it must become evident that an action undertaken by Montenegro is motivated by its capability or incapability, in terms of power, to protect its interests and provide its own security.

Domestic level factors revolve around the primary actor in international relations, the state, and focuses in particular at their internal structure (Waltz, 1959, p. 123). This thesis restricts the conceptualization of domestic factors to the

constitutional framework, elections and public opinion because according to Sterling-Folker (1997, p. 2), these are domestic variables that may affect international outcomes. The constitutional framework is chosen because it defines the legal powers political leaders and heads of state have. Elections and the contestation of power between political parties is chosen because of the intriguing fact that one political party has governed Montenegro for almost thirty years, and might suggest that this party has had a central role in Montenegro's recent foreign policy shift (Vuković, 2012, p. 2; Vuković, 2014, p. 75; Darmanović, 2003, p. 148). Public opinion will also be investigated because research has shown that public opinion has an important role in influencing the decisions taken by national governments (Inglehart, 1970, p. 795). The operationalization of domestic factors will be by detecting whether any of the three variables experienced significant changes around the same time when Montenegro's foreign policy started to diverge from its previous course.

Individual level of factors correspond to Waltz' 'first image', which argues that wars are often caused by the nature of particular statesmen and political leaders such as state leaders, or by human nature generally (Waltz, 1959, p. 16). Some theories regarding leaders of small states, such as the work of Baldacchino (2012, p. 107), Srebrnik (2004, p. 334) and Veenendaal (2015, p. 254), have shown that they often have more influence and power on state processes than their official roles might suggest, and that the nature of small state politics is more personalistic in nature. Therefore, this concept will revolve around the politics and initiatives taken by Montenegro's longstanding leader, Milo Djukanović. In order to measure if Montenegro's foreign policy shift toward the EU is a result of individual factors, the analysis must look at what decisions Djukanović personally took that might have affected Montenegro's foreign policy directly.

3.2: Case selection

This thesis offers an intensive study of Montenegro with the purpose of understanding a larger class of similar units, also commonly referred to as a case study (Gerring, 2007, p. 19). According to the techniques of case selection by Seawright and Gerring (2008, p. 296), the selected case must be a representative sample of a larger class of similar units. Montenegro fulfills this requirement because

it exemplifies certain characteristics that Macedonia, Bosnia, Serbia, and to some extent Moldova and Georgia also possess. These cases are also similar to Montenegro because they are all relatively young and small states that were once ruled by a communist regime, and all experienced economic and political instability following the fall of communism. All of them have also expressed their wish to become members of the EU (Politico, 2016). Montenegro's representativeness of the larger group makes it possible to generalize the causal inferences made in this case study to all the other cases. This thesis on Montenegro could provide a basic framework on how to approach the foreign policies of these types of states and point out which factors are most important for this particular set of cases.

Elman (1995, p. 175), Handel (1981, p. 11), McNamara (1993, p. 306), and many others have stated that for understanding the foreign policy behavior of small states, analyzing from the perspective of international structural factors should offer the best explanation for the underlying motives. The justification for the selection of Montenegro as the unit to be studied is grounded on evidence suggesting otherwise (Internationale spectator, 2017). According to several observers, the dramatic change in Montenegro's foreign policy is best explained by the game-politics of Djukanović indicating that the consensus in scholarly circles does not always hold (Pejić, 2008; Pavlović, 2016; Andersen, 2016). According to Seawright and Gerring (2008, p. 295), the general objective of a critical case study is to test general causal theories about the social world. This thesis is a critical case study because it aims, by explaining and interpreting a historical episode, to test the theory that small state's foreign policy can be best explained by international structural factors. Montenegro qualifies as a small state, thus making it a *most likely case* type, meaning that the theory should be correct in the case of Montenegro. However, if the theory turns out to be incorrect, the theory is falsified and can be rejected (Levy, 2008, p. 9).

Moreover, this thesis will use a type III case study that examines variation in a single unit, Montenegro's foreign policy, over time (diachronically) as well as at a single point in time (synchronically), thus breaking down the primary unit into subunits, which are then subjugated to covariational analysis (Gerring, 2004, p. 343). In other words, this thesis combines both temporal and within-unit variation. It will look at how Montenegro's foreign policy has evolved over time and how its foreign policy stands at one point in time, namely today. The analytical implications of this design are that it can make very informative descriptive inferences due to the depth of

observation in the unit that a single case study allows. The downside however, is that descriptive inferences do not make any assertions about causal relationships (Gerring, 2004, p. 437). It is much harder to investigate causal relationships while working in a case study because this type of inference needs a broader scope of units to assert that such a relationship does exist.

3.3: Methodology

The methodology of this thesis will be content analysis in combination with process tracing according the guidelines of White and Marsh (2006, p.22), and Collier (2011, p. 824). Content analysis will aid the investigation because it is a highly flexible method that generates findings and puts them into context through a systematic and rigorous approach of documents (White & Marsh, 2006, p. 22). Academic literature focused on Montenegro's foreign policy and its recent transition will serve as the primary source of information although additional sources such as official reports, observations from think tanks, newspapers, and election and census results will also be used to improve the trustworthiness and credibility of the observations made. The technique of process tracing is used to emphasize the causal sequence in the observations that allows making descriptive inferences because it focuses on the unfolding events or situations over time (Collier, 2011, p. 824). Thus, from a combination of both techniques conclusions will be able to be drawn because they allow making valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use (White & Marsh, 2006, p. 27).

Chapter 4: Data analysis

4.1: Montenegro during the dissolution of Yugoslavia 1991-1995

The traumatic collapse of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) in the early 1990s marks a critical juncture in Montenegro's recent history as well as for the entire Balkans. As the former federal units of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia tried to become independent by means of armed clashes, it was up to Montenegro to decide what to do next. Ultimately, Montenegro decided to unite with Serbia and the two republics formed a new entity called the Federal Republic of

Yugoslavia (FRY), which was declared on April 27th 1992 (C.I.A., n.d.). Montenegro's decision to continue in a new union with Serbia can be explained by all three levels of analysis.

To begin with structural factors, before Montenegro became one of the six constituent republics in Tito's Yugoslavia, Montenegro had already been united in a common state with Serbia (BBC, 2017). In 1918, a representative assembly of the Montenegrin people, called the Podgorica Assembly, unanimously and by acclamation decided to dethrone the current Montenegrin dynasty and unconditionally unite with Serbia under Karadjordje dynasty (Jovanić, 1974, p. 436). Montenegro experienced a relatively short independent statehood after it had received international recognition at the Congress of Berlin in 1878 because in the aftermath of World War I, and under the influence of the popular Pan-Slavic movement at the time, Montenegrin leaders stressed the necessity to unite with Serbia for the survival of the Montenegrin nation (Vujović, 1962, p. 8). In 1992, the communist rule that had kept the South Slavic nations together had crumbled, nationalism surged and tensions between the different nations led to several bloody conflicts between 1991 and 1995. In these circumstances where religion played a major role in deciding who is who, the strong similarities between the Serbian and Montenegrin nations, who shared the same Christian Orthodox religion, made for a rather simple choice on what side of the conflict Montenegro would stand.

Moving on to domestic factors, public opinion in Montenegro also shows that the people in Montenegro wanted to remain in a common state with Serbia. By 1992, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Macedonia had declared independence, and Serbia and Montenegro were the last two remaining parts of Yugoslavia. The SFRY was officially dead and in order to legitimize the creation of a new state with Serbia, the authorities in Montenegro organized a referendum by asking the electorate: 'Would you like Montenegro to remain part of a united Yugoslavia, as a sovereign republic, and fully equal to all other Yugoslav republics that wish to remain in unity' (Vuković, 2012, p. 10). The turnout of the referendum was relatively weak at 66%, but 95,4% of the electorate replied positively to the question (CEMI, 1992). It was clear that, albeit by a small margin, the unionist camp was in the majority. Furthermore, it is a well-established fact that the ruling political party in Montenegro, the DPS, had aligned itself with the Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević (Bieber, 2003, p. 20; Darmanović,

2017, p. 124; Darmanović, 2003, p. 147; Komar & Živković, 2016, p. 788). Individual factors are able to explain this fact better.

After Milošević took control of the Serbian Communist Party in 1987, in the ‘anti-bureaucratic revolution’ that took place in Montenegro in mid-1989, Milošević forced out the old communist guard of the Montenegrin Communist Party (SKCG) and installed a new group of young Montenegrin politicians that were loyal to him (Komar & Živković, 2016, p. 788). Milo Djukanović was one of them, and at the age of only 26 he was regarded as Milošević’s protégé (Internationale spectator, 2016). In 1991, the SKCG was formally dissolved and its direct successor became the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) (Bieber, 2003, p. 17). Djukanović, among other politicians loyal to Milošević, became leading figures of the DPS and occupied the highest positions in Montenegro. A year later, Djukanović, who was serving as Prime Minister, spent a lot of time campaigning for the referendum stressing the necessity of a common Yugoslav state with the Serbs (Bieber, 2003, p. 16). In the situation where the SFRY had fallen apart, and Montenegro needing to decide what to do next, the two highest-ranking politicians in the country, the President and Prime Minister, effectively executed Montenegro’s foreign policy. Momir Bulatović, who was the President, and Djukanović were both allies of Milošević, and wanted to unify Montenegro with Serbia, which they ultimately did when they signed the constitution that established the new entity (Džankić, 2014, p. 174).

4.2: Transition within Montenegro

During the period 1997-2002, Montenegro slowly drifted apart from Serbia and it began to seek closer contact with the West (Dobbs, 1999; Darmanović, 2003; Vuković, 2012; Lukšić & Kantić, 2016; Džankić, 2007, p. 102). The transition that took place in Montenegro during this period is best explained by domestic and individual factors because they were events from within Montenegro’s domestic sphere that initiated the transition. In 1997, the DPS was still the dominant force in the country, but prior to the presidential election in October of that year, a sharp division within the party emerged (Džankić, 2014, p. 176; Lukšić & Kantić, 2016, p. 690). Diverging views of the DPS’ alliance with Milošević of its two key figures, Momir Bulatović and Djukanović, turned into an open political conflict (Vuković, 2012, p. 5). In an interview with the Serbian weekly *Vreme* Djukanović said:

“Mr. Milošević is today the man of an outdated political thought, he lacks the ability to look at the strategic challenges that are in front of our countries. Milošević left a clear impression that he does not have the ability to seriously project the future on the long-term” (Vreme, 2002).

Djukanović abandoned his mentor and radically changed political and ideological views. He embraced neoliberalism and became a strong supporter of Montenegrin independence (Pavlović, 2016; Darmanović, 2003, p. 148). He also introduced new reform plans under the motto “affirmation of democracy and preservation of civil peace”, which made him a popular figure among the majority of the DPS’ members (Vuković, 2012, p. 5; DPS, n.d.). Bulatović left the DPS and founded a new political party, the Socialists People’s Party (SNP), who continued to support Milošević and a union with Serbia (Džankić, 2014, p. 1).

The results of the 1997 presidential election and the 1998 parliamentary elections were two major events that initiated Montenegro’s path toward the EU because the pro-union camp suffered two major defeats during these elections. First, Djukanović narrowly defeated Bulatović in the second round of the presidential election (SNP, 1997). Second, Djukanović’s pro-Western DPS became the largest party in parliament after the May 1998 elections (SNP, 1998). Djukanović had now established firm control over Montenegro because his party dominated the parliament, led the government coalition, and he took hold of the President’s office (Bieber, 2003, p. 32; Darmanović, 2003, p. 149). This is the moment when Montenegro stated its main foreign policy objective was membership of NATO and the EU. The governing coalition, headed by Djukanović’s DPS, was also named ‘Coalition for a European Montenegro’ (DPS, n.d.). From 1997 onwards, Djukanović’s reformist government pushed a policy that some scholars call ‘creeping independence’ (Roberts, 2002, p. 6; Darmanović, 2003, p. 149).

After Djukanović consolidated his power in Montenegro, the FRY plunged into a new crisis with fighting taking place in Kosovo this time. Djukanović managed to keep Montenegro out of this conflict stating that this was not Montenegro’s war (B92, 2017). While Milošević and the FRY became internationally isolated, Djukanović became one of the few elected politicians of the FRY with whom the Western governments would openly talk to (The Economist, 1999). Djukanović used this crisis as an opportunity to seek new allies abroad. During NATO’s 1999 bombing campaign, Djukanović decided to override the official federal foreign policy and

visited several Western leaders such as Tony Blair, Jacques Chirac and NATO Secretary-General Lord Robertson (AP Archive, 1999; BBC, 1999; NATO, 1999). According to the Federal Constitution of 1992 (Constitution of FRY, 1992), the FRY's foreign policy was to be conducted from the highest federal level, meaning that Djukanović, as President of Montenegro, did not have the authority to engage in diplomatic relations with other states while representing Montenegro. Another noticeable event that manifests Djukanović's efforts to further cut Montenegro's ties with Serbia, was the unilateral introduction of the German Mark as the official currency in Montenegro (EUobserver, 2007). Djukanović came under significant pressure from the international community to reconsider, but he did not waver (Lukšić & Kantić, 2016, p. 691).

After the fall of Milošević in October 2000, negotiations between the new Serbian government and the Montenegrin government began in order to re-establish relation. However, the negotiations quickly reached an impasse and tensions between the two government reached critical levels (Darmanović, 2003, p. 151). Djukanović demanded independence but the Serbian government was unwilling to grant it (Keane, 2004, p. 496). This is when the EU decided to intervene. As part of its Foreign Policy in the Near Abroad, the EU sent High Commissioner Javier Solana to broker a deal between the two governments (Keane, 2004, p. 497). The result of the negotiations was the Belgrade Agreement of 2002 and the creation of a new entity called the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro (SCG).

All in all, from 1997 to 2002, Montenegro slowly started severing its ties with Serbia and began its course toward the EU, which domestic and individual factors can clearly demonstrate why this happened. Structural factors cannot detect the origins of this process because its looks from a broad perspective and can only provide a weak post-factual explanation why Montenegro started cuttings its ties with Serbia. The explanation from structural factors would be that due to the negative economic and political consequences that the partnership with Serbia had brought, Montenegro decided to seek independence and strive for EU membership to improve its economic and international position. However, structural factors fail to explain why Montenegro made such a radical decision at that particular moment, and why it did not do it earlier.

4.3: Independence of Montenegro

Montenegro's process toward independence had been delayed thanks to the EU's intervention because after strong pressure from the EU, a new constitutional arrangement between Serbia and Montenegro was agreed, which transformed Serbia and Montenegro into a union of two semi-independent states. A report on the Solana process for the U.S. Congress reveals that the EU was unwilling to grant Montenegro independence (yet), mainly because the Western Balkans was still home to several strong independence movements (Julie, 2005, p. 5). Especially with the fragile settlement that had recently been achieved in Kosovo, granting independence to Montenegro could have set an unstable precedent for Republika Srpska, Tetevo, and the Preševo Valley (Keane, 2004, p. 498).

The Belgrade Agreement, which would become the highest legal act in SCG, included a special provision that gave the member states the legal right to hold a referendum for independence and withdraw from the state union (Belgrade Agreement, 2002). As a condition for granting independence, a minimum of 55% of the population had to vote in favor, with a minimum turnout of 50% (Džankić, 2014, p. 2). Montenegro's foreign policy did not change significantly during this period because independence as well as 'the road toward Europe', was the government's top priority according to the DPS' 4th party congress (DPS, 2001). Montenegro's short spell in the union with Serbia can be best explained by structural factors because it was due to the pressure of external actors that Montenegro remained with Serbia. However, independence was crucial for Montenegro's EU membership aspiration, because due to the EU's lack of a common security policy, NATO membership became an effective roadmap toward EU membership (Schimmelfennig, 2003, p. 56). Montenegro knew that NATO membership would be very hard, if not impossible to achieve in a common state with Serbia. NATO had a very negative image in Serbia after the 1999 bombing campaign, and for the Serbs, NATO membership was simply not an option (Džankić, 2007, p. 103; BalkanInsight, 2016).

In May 2006, Montenegro finally achieved independence (BBC, 2017). According to the official referendum results, 86.5% of the total electorate went out to vote, while the referendum question was answered positively by 55.5% of the voters (CDT, 2006). Now that independence was achieved, Montenegro could fully focus on pursuing its goal of becoming a member of the EU. Interestingly, in the preamble of Montenegro's new constitution, European integration is explicitly mentioned as one

of Montenegro's top priorities (Constitution of Montenegro, 2007; Vuković, 2014, p. 77).

After independence, Montenegro quickly started to make progress toward achieving its foreign policy objectives. In November 2006, soon after receiving the invitation to join the NATO Pre-membership accession program, Montenegro signed the Framework Document of the Partnership for Peace upon which bilateral cooperation with NATO could begin (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.; Džankić, 2007, p. 100). In January 2007, the European Partnership for Montenegro, an instrument of the Stabilization and Association Process introduced under the Thessaloniki Agenda (2003) for the Western Balkans countries, was signed and entered into force in May 2010 (European Commission, 2016; Džankić, 2014, p. 4). In December 2010, Montenegro became an official candidate country for EU accession, and by the end of 2016, Montenegro had opened 26, and closed 2 out of the 33 chapters of the *Acquis* (European Commission, 2016).

The fact that Montenegro's foreign policy objectives are set out in the constitution, makes it very unlikely that Montenegro will deviate from its course toward the EU because it would require a constitutional amendment to stop this process, and the DPS, who initiated the entire process, is still the ruling party in Montenegro. In addition, it is also unlikely that Montenegro's political leaders will stop pursuing EU membership because according to the latest opinion polls, 76% of Montenegro's population supports the country's EU accession process (Delmne, 2017). All in all, Montenegro's foreign policy in the period after independence is best explained by domestic factors because it is the domestic structure, encapsulated in its constitution, as well as the positive public opinion towards EU accession and the fact that the DPS was still in power, that best explains why Montenegro continued to pursue EU membership.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Having analyzed Montenegro's foreign policy in the period after the breakup of Yugoslavia, it becomes apparent that structural factors cannot always adequately explain Montenegro's foreign policy, thus proving that the scholarly consensus does not always hold. However, this does not mean that analyzing structural factors is a fruitless endeavor because in the end, the best explanation from Montenegro's foreign

policy shift and drive toward the EU is best explained by a combination of all three types of factors. The analysis shows that the disagreement between Djukanović on the one hand, and Bulatović and Milošević on the other hand, which resulted in a radical change of Montenegro's entire domestic political climate after the 1997 and 1998 elections, is crucial for understanding why Montenegro started to drift away from Serbia after this point. Djukanović's unilateral actions of visiting foreign leaders and introducing a new currency demonstrate that actions of individuals can contribute to defining a country's path. Overall, the analysis shows that the three preliminary expectations are by themselves not correct, but rather a combination of all three explain Montenegro's foreign policy the best.

Regarding small state literature, this thesis confirms the observations made by Dahl and Tufte (1973), Veenendaal (2015; 2013), and several others that political competition in small states is more personalistic in nature rather than ideology- or cleavage-based, because even though the electorate officially votes for political parties, the leader of the party is strong, if not the strongest determinant for what the party stands for. Also, Baldacchino's (2012) observation that leaders of small states often have more influence and power than their official position suggests, is confirmed in the case of Djukanović because in 1997, when he took up the mostly ceremonial role of President, Djukanović started to establish diplomatic relations with other states while his position did not officially allow it. Lastly, Montenegro's case concurs with scholars writing from a liberalist point of view like Anckar (2004), Corbett and Cornell (2015), and Sutton (2010), stating that small states are very active in international organizations, because after independence, Montenegro quickly became a member of numerous regional organizations such as the Adriatic-Ionic Initiative and the Southeast European Cooperation Process, but most of all, Montenegro immediately started making progress in its NATO and EU accession process, marking the strong will the country had to become active in the international arena.

All in all, Montenegro is an example of a case demonstrating that the consensus held in the small state literature does not always hold. The fact that this was discovered by an in-depth qualitative study shows that this method is useful and relevant for future studies. However, further research is needed in order to provide more clarity about when, and in what type of cases international structural, domestic,

or individual level factors are more important to adequately account for a small state's foreign policy.

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