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**European Union Future for
Western Balkans Countries
(with special consideration of Serbia)**

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Abstract

This article explores the prospects and challenges of the Western Balkans countries in their journey towards European Union (EU) integration. The texts delve into the historical context, current state of affairs, and future possibilities for these countries within the framework of EU enlargement policy. Through comprehensive analysis, the author assesses the complex dynamics shaping the region's relationship with the EU and highlights key factors influencing the path towards accession. Issues such as political instability, economic development, and regional cooperation are scrutinized to provide insights into the evolving EU-Western Balkans dynamic.¹

Keywords

European Union, European Union Future, Western Balkans, EU Enlargement Policy, History, Idea of Europe, Non-Discrimination, Global History, Society Model, Democracy, Serbia

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¹ The abstract was created with ChatGPT 3.5.

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Introduction

From 1 to 4 December 2019 I was on a promotional tour in Serbia for the [Serbian edition](#) of my book “Was wird aus der Europäischen Union? Geschichte und Zukunft”.² A total of five newspaper interviews, one radio and one television interview had to be conducted as well as four lecture and discussion events.

The topic of EU accession is clearly a hot topic in Serbia, since the accession process is not coming off the mark. The EU is not particularly interested in accelerating the process, but may underestimate the frustration in the Western Balkans and the risks. The war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine seems to change the EU’s priorities in favour of the West Balkans countries but with February 2024, no major progress can be reported.

² Reclam, Ditzingen, 2018.

The lecture to [Matica Srpska](#) (Novi Sad) – “The oldest Serbian literary, cultural and scientific institution”, as the Academy states on its homepage – on 3 December 2019 dealt with the question of the EU future of the Western Balkans countries in a broader context.

The EU’s Enlargement Philosophy

“Any European country can apply for membership if it respects the EU’s democratic values and is committed to promoting them.”¹

This simple sentence, which can be found on the information page of the EU Commission, expresses the EU’s enlargement philosophy.

For four decades this philosophy was filled with life: The six founding members of the EEC (European Economic Community), which were the same as those of the ECSC (European Coal and Steel Community) (the Benelux countries, France, Italy, Germany), always claimed to represent the whole of Europe. They identified Europe and the EEC. It was often alluded to the fact that the EEC resembled the Carolingian Empire in spatial terms.

The consequence of this self-conception of representing the real Europe was openness to the enlargement of the Community, which was actually carried out in several stages. Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom joined in 1973, Greece in 1981 (while Greenland left the EC in 1984), Portugal and Spain in 1986. The unification of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic also effectively enlarged the EC. Austria, Sweden and Finland joined in 1995. The largest enlargement took place in 2004, Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU in 2007 and Croatia in 2013.

The enlargements of 1981, 1986 and 2004 sealed historical upheavals in the countries concerned that had ended dictatorial regimes. It is noticeable that Greece, Spain and Portugal joined the EC much more quickly after the end of their respective dictatorships than was the case after the upheavals of 1989. Since 2004, the membership dynamics have been faltering, although it would be in the logic of the historical enlargement philosophy to quickly integrate the others, above all the Western Balkan states.

In 2003, the EU Thessaloniki Summit actually agreed on the next major enlargement to include the successor states of Yugoslavia as well as Albania, but priorities were changed from 2014. The former EU Commission under Jean-Claude Juncker (2014–2019) had formulated a number of priorities for its work, but these did not include EU enlargement. French President Emmanuel Macron in particular was on the brakes. He called for consolidation and

reform of the EU before new members join. I will analyse later whether these arguments make sense or not.

Nevertheless, Serbia, Montenegro and North Macedonia as well as Albania and Turkey are currently candidates for accession. Ukraine and Moldova were added to this list in December 2023. Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo are possible candidates for accession.

Joining the EU needs to be carefully considered. Brexit is very instructive in this respect. In 2016 a narrow majority in the United Kingdom voted in favour of Brexit. The difficulty in ‘doing the Brexit’ is perhaps the best way to see what European unity means in practice. We usually refer to this unity as “European integration”. Growing together over years, from the start of the accession process to actual membership, cannot be easily stopped.

As a result of this insight, the many voices in recent years, especially from the political right and right-wing extremists, in favour of withdrawing from the EU or the EURO, have largely fallen silent.

We do not know how the United Kingdom will develop since Brexit has been consumed, but all the difficulties that already exist underline the following principle: whoever joins the EU should do so in the consciousness and with the will not to leave the EU.

In the following I work on three theses:

1. The Western Balkans is an integral part of Europe
- 2 The EU is Europe’s most dynamic force
3. The future of Serbia, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Moldova, Ukraine, and, perhaps, Georgia, lies in EU Europe.

Thesis I: The Western Balkans is an Integral Part of Europe

In terms of cultural history, the EU goes back to the idea of Europe. The idea of Europe means to think of Europe as a united whole. Traces of this idea can be found in ancient Greece and in the European Middle Ages, but it only became concrete in the course of the 15th century. It was a special historical constellation that led to the explicit idea of European unity.

In the East, the former Eastern Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, disappeared with the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. It was not so much the fact that with the Ottoman Empire there was now a new great power, even if one had to fear the consequences, but rather the changed situation for Christianity, which led to a gradual identification of Europe and Christ-

ianity. However, Emperor Maximilian I, for example, maintained his universal claim to power, and the imperial court had information about Christian communities in Africa and Asia, such as India. Nevertheless, the view gradually narrowed. The division of Europe into Catholic and Orthodox churches did not prevent the gradual identification of Christianity and Europe.

In addition, there were the voyages of discovery and trade along the coasts of Africa and, at the end of the century, the discovery of America. All this took a while to become known to contemporaries. But as early as 1494, with the Treaty of Tordesillas, the two then great sea powers Spain and Portugal divided the New World into a Spanish and a Portuguese zone. Since the middle of the 15th century, the question has been asked whether the inhabitants of the islands in the Atlantic – such as the Guanches on the Canary Islands— or the so-called Indians in America were human beings.

That means you had to adapt your view of the world. There were four continents and not only three as in ancient tradition, there were beings elsewhere in the world who were not mentioned in the Bible, but who were to be regarded as human beings not least because of authoritative answers by the popes. And finally, a Muslim world stretched from the west coast of North Africa to the east to all of Anatolia and the first European regions in southeastern Europe.

In 1535 a picture was created which shows very clearly the results of the processing of all these changes. It was conceived by Johannes Putsch, a follower of Ferdinand I, the brother of Emperor Charles V.

The picture illustrates an ideal view of Europe: Europe is a continental body bordered all around by water. A body is the ideal realization of unity. This fundamental concept of unity is linked to the vision of imperial, i.e. Christian, universal rule over the whole of Europe. Moreover, the figure of Queen Europe contains the idea of paradise.

It is the image of a *corpus mysticum politicum*. The Catholic Church understood itself as *corpus mysticum*. Already in the late Middle Ages the monarchies began to transfer this understanding to themselves, a monarchy like the French was a *corpus mysticum politicum*. In the early 16th century this idea was finally transferred to Europe, Europe was understood as a “Christian Republic”. It is easy to see that the “Balkans”, which were only much later called “Balkan countries”, are an unrestricted part of this idea of Europe.

The formulation *res publica christiana* can be found in European peace treaties up to the French Revolution. At the end of the 18th century, of course, one no longer thought of a Europe united under the Emperor, but of a network of peace treaties that would ensure balance between the great powers and guarantee the existence of small states.

The idea of a “Holy Alliance”, which the Russian Tsar Alexander I presented to the Austrian Emperor and the Prussian King at the end of the Congress of Vienna in the autumn of 1815, continued these traditions. And at least on paper almost all small and large powers joined this Holy Alliance!

With the national movements and the new nation states in the 19th century, the political situation in Europe changed again, but the idea of European unity was adapted accordingly. The nation state, even though its emergence was accompanied by violent conflicts and sometimes wars, was regarded as something modern and forward-looking, and every people – this was of course always a vague concept – was granted the right to political self-determination in its own state. Ultimately, the nation states were regarded as brothers, there was no contradiction between a peaceful Europe and a Europe of nation states.

In the 19th century, the idea of the “United States of Europe”³ was born, which continues to be attractive to this day. It is actively articulated in the election campaigns to the European Parliament (2019 and 2024).

After the First World War, the question of the political unity of Europe was intensively and broadly discussed, as was the question after the Second World War. But it was only after 1945 that European institutions such as the Council of Europe were established.

The historical ideas of European unity have always encompassed the whole of Europe. The picture of 1535 deliberately ignores the fact that part of south-eastern Europe was already dominated by the Ottoman Empire. These regions nevertheless remained in the body of Europe.

The national movements of the 19th century also initially strengthened a geographically comprehensive concept of Europe. Of course, there are different views on this. The works of Larry Wolff on the “Invention of Eastern Europe”⁴ and of Maria Todorova on the “Invention of the Balkans”⁵ have long set a precedent. In the meantime, however, the results have been

³ Schmale, Wolfgang (2024): United States of Europe The civil society idea of Europe after 1918. Universität Wien (<https://doi.org/10.25365/phaidra.478>).

⁴ Wolff, Larry (1994): *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment.* Stanford.

⁵ Todorova, Marija Nikolaeva (1997): *Imagining the Balkans.* New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

viewed more critically. Was something like “Eastern Europe” really “invented” in the late 18th century? Was something like “the Balkans” really invented, i.e. constructed, in the 19th century?

Of course, it would make no sense to deny that ideas of European subspaces with special characteristics have emerged. But such ideas developed more or less simultaneously in relation to Western Europe, Central Europe, Southern Europe, Scandinavia. For all these spaces, special concepts for a common political and economic structure were developed in phases. This is true again and again for the Balkan region.

It should not be overlooked that colonial thinking also spread within Europe and this helped to determine the view of supposedly backward regions. Nevertheless, different points of view always overlapped. The Danube Monarchy expanded in the Balkans until the First World War. This may well have been colonial, but at the same time a space emerged that was connected to the general, industrial and technical developments in Europe. The Ottoman Empire was pushed further and further out of Europe, making the historical concept of Europe much more meaningful.

Especially in the late 18th century and in Europe after the Congress of Vienna, Roman and increasingly Greek antiquity were remembered. This included the Balkans in the concept of Europe, but not excluded them. In the Enlightenment, Europe was regarded as a culture that extended as far as the Urals.

And as far as Serbia is concerned, I only recall the Serbia essay by the famous historian Leopold von Ranke⁶ and the publications by Felix Kanitz⁷. Both embodied Serbia in the culture of Europe.

Much of what is subsequently used to describe European culture, such as Art Nouveau, Modernism around 1900”, urbanism, art, music, theatre, opera, interwar architecture, affects the Balkans as much as other regions.

Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that, culturally speaking, Western Europe, especially France, was regarded as Europe and self-assessment depended on it. So there were asymmetries in the perception of oneself as European, which may still have an effect today.

⁶ Ranke, Leopold von (1829): Die serbische Revolution. Aus serbischen Papieren und Mittheilungen. Mit einer Charte von Serbien. Hamburg: Friedrich Perthes.

⁷ Kanitz, Felix Philipp (1868): Serbien. Historisch-ethnographische Reisestudien aus den Jahren 1859–1868. Leipzig: Fries.

The two world wars have strengthened rather than weakened the idea of European unity as a whole. European unity should finally be realised in order to create peace. At first, however, there was less unity than ever before, but that did not change the fact that the idea of European unity was never abandoned, but was constantly renewed and retained its comprehensive character in principle. The same is also true: there is no idea of Europe without the Balkans. And without the idea of Europe there is no EU.

Thesis II: The EU is Europe's Most Dynamic Force, so it is Good to be a Member

After the Second World War, numerous European and international organisations were founded. The European Coal and Steel Community was limited to 50 years, it ended in 2002; the Western European Union, founded in 1948, ended in 2011 – both organisations have to some extent merged into the EU. The EFTA (European Free Trade Association), founded in 1960 and less binding than the EEC founded in 1957, still exists, but three of the last four members, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein, are also members of the EEA (European Economic Area), an “EU light” with 31 members.

The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance existed from 1949 to 1991, while its western counterpart, the OEEC, founded in 1948, continues to exist under the slightly changed name of OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development).

In the meantime, the Eurasian Economic Union (2014) has been founded under the leadership of the Russian Federation, to which Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan also belong. Other more recent foundations, to which Serbia also belongs, are the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (since 1992) and the CEFTA (Central European Free Trade Agreement) (also since 1992 with a greatly changed membership).

Founded in Belgrade in 1961, the Non-Aligned Movement, which still exists today, extended beyond Europe from the outset. The UN was the successor to the League of Nations; the latter had been strongly European in character, and the UN was international from the outset, but no less important for Europe.

The largest organization in terms of the number of member countries today is the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation), which comprises 57 states. Some are located at least geographically only partly in Europe, such as the Russian Federation and Turkey, and not in Europe, such as Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Canada, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan,

Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, the USA. After the Second World War, the OSCE or its predecessor, the CSCE, was the first joint, predominantly European organization of the two blocs, and through it human rights, civil rights and the rule of law became a decisive basis for the idea of European unity.

Founded in 1949, the Council of Europe is the second largest organisation with 47 member countries, but Belarus is not one of them. Kosovo is not one of them because, unlike Belarus, it is not recognised as a state by all countries. Canada, Japan, Mexico and the USA have observer status, as do Israel and the Holy See. The Europe of the Council of Europe should be built above all through human rights, the promotion of culture and, in particular, of young people.

Finally, the EU, in principle the youngest European organisation, founded in 1992 with the Treaty of Maastricht, which does of course date back to the EEC of 1957.

The EU is one of the largest economic powers in the world. Citizens can move freely within the EU because of European citizenship rights, they can live and work where they want, they enjoy the same rights everywhere. The EU is not yet a state of its own, but it now has many of the characteristics of a state, which benefits the economy, people and culture.

One of the EU's most important objectives remains to increase prosperity across the EU. This is difficult and lengthy, but there have been many successes. Those who belong to the EU are part of a solidarity community and benefit from the money that the members pay into the EU budget. The economically weaker countries receive subsidies that are higher than their contribution to the budget. This is probably one aspect that makes the EU particularly attractive for accession.

It is also true that the EU contributes to the maintenance of peace. War has become pointless because peace in the EU is the only source of great wealth.

The EU forms a common judicial area in which legal stability prevails. That is particularly valuable today when you look at countries where arbitrariness is the norm: Russian Federation, China, Turkey, USA, etc. If the economy is to flourish, it needs legal stability, and people need to be sure that their rights are guaranteed and protected.

The EU stands for a particular model of society as set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union: "The values on which the Union is founded are respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to all Member States in a society

characterised by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men”.

Every country wishing to join the EU must check for itself whether it is in line with this model of society. Living pluralism and non-discrimination requires a national effort. It is not only the government of a country that must want this, but also its citizens. And we must be prepared to defend this social model against its opponents.

The EU also makes it clear that “Europe” – to be more precise: “European Union” – today means more than Europe. On the one hand, today’s 27 members belong geographically completely to Europe, on the other hand, several member countries like France still have overseas territories despite the end of colonialism. The EU, for example, borders directly on Canada, since the islands of St. Pierre et Miquelon are French. Not to mention the possessions of EU countries in the Caribbean or the Pacific, not to mention the Spanish exclaves Ceuta and Melilla in northern Morocco.

Many countries on earth now have a close relationship with the EU without being members. This must be taken into account when defining exactly what the EU is. It is more than the 27 member countries. It is less and less about Europe, but more and more about a global context. As the world grew larger in the 15th century from a European perspective, Europe was increasingly defined by demarcation and the description of differences. In our time, the opposite is happening: Europe is becoming more and more global and defining itself globally. Of course, demarcations still play a role, but they run along global lines.

This brief historical retrospective shows that whoever wants to join the EU today joins less a European organisation than a global one. When, after 1945, the old dream of common European political institutions came true, the rules of the game for the idea of Europe changed. The adjective “European” in the name “European Union” refers to the origin and seat of the Union in Europe, but now means much more than just Europe.

Thesis III: The Future of Serbia, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia, Albania as well as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Ukraine and Moldova lies in EU-Europe

If we look back at the strengths of the EU that I outlined earlier, it is easy to see that accession will be beneficial for all the countries of the Western Balkans. But also for the EU. The idea of European unity is nearing completion, and that is important because it is one of the central foundations of the EU. Geopolitically, the EU must have a great interest in not losing the Western Balkan countries to other actors with influence, especially the Russian Federation and China.

In my view, the main reason why the enlargement process is stalling despite the fact that it worked very dynamically between 1973 and 2013, in other words for 40 years, is *not* that the previous enlargements have yet to be digested, so to speak. Moreover, the consolidation of the EU before the next enlargement steps is an exaggerated argument or testifies to a misinterpretation of the situation.

Nor do these arguments have anything to do with the normal accession process, which is a very lengthy one. This is because the EU is now a complete cultural system, an independent European culture. In order to succeed in this, a great deal of preparation is needed. How fast or slow this can be is, of course, also up to the candidate countries themselves, but the EU must show a sense of proportion. None of the countries that joined the EU in 2004 had completed the transformation process, and in most cases this is still not the case, at least in some areas. The current candidate countries must therefore not be expected to undergo a complete transformation before accession, which is part of EU membership.

One must also not overlook the fact that the old member states also had to transform themselves from 1989 onwards; one speaks of co-transformation in order to make it clear that the upheaval of 1989/1991 meant transformation not only for the East but also for the West.

The basic problem today is rather that the previous unification philosophy has reached its limits. The EU is in a phase of transformation, but I believe that it can also be managed with new members.

The main reason for this thesis is that the EU is an association of nation states. No more, no less. It is in the nature of the EU that the member states not only pursue common goals, but also their own, mostly national, goals. This has always led to problems, but they have been

solved. As long as the EU remains such a community of states, nothing will change in this basic situation. This means that this problem will have to be dealt with in the future, regardless of whether there are 27, 31 or more members. If we no longer dare to do that, the EU will be at the end of its rope.

I would now like to look a little at the relationship between the EU and the nation-state members. This is an important question, because Serbia will also have to address it: How Serbian can Serbia be when it joins the EU?

Historically, one must begin with a paradoxical-sounding observation, based on research by Alan S. Milward⁸: the process of European integration has saved the nation state. It has not robbed it of its sovereignty. When Serbia joins the EU, it can look to the future with confidence.

After the Second World War there were strong voices among the European Movement and the European Federalists not to restore the individual nation states first, but to create a European federal state. We do not know whether this would have worked. If it had come to this, it could have been only a Western European federal state, a later accession of other countries would perhaps have been much more difficult than the accession to the EC (European Community) or EU. But it is pointless to speculate about it, it has come differently.

After the war, the nation state had to be redefined. The nation state of imperialism was historically outdated and had failed, leading to the First World War. The Balkan states and the newly created states after the First World War were at best superficially integrated into international structures. These were not sufficient to stabilise the states.

After 1945 this meant for the concept of the nation state: it had to serve peace within the framework of common structures, it had to serve the well-being of the population, it had to belong to international structures which contributed to its economic, political and military stability. This changed the tasks of the individual state: peace is a common task and is more than just no war. The well-being of the population depends greatly on the well-being of as many people as possible in as many neighbouring states as possible. The welfare state of the post-war period was not a purely national achievement anywhere, neither in the East nor in the West, nor among the non-aligned, even though it was portrayed as such. Without dismantling tariffs, free trade, common product standards, etc., no national prosperity can be created. This would not have been possible without international or European Community

⁸ Milward, Alan S. (1994): *The European Rescue of the Nation-State*. London.

structures. A nation state without a well-functioning economy is a contradiction in terms; without the special promotion of economic cooperation after 1945, some states would not have been able to hold their own because, like the new states after the First World War, they could not have achieved a well-functioning economy.

The main effect of the European and international structures was the creation of stable states. We can see just how enormously important this was today, when states are disintegrating in many regions of the world, especially in Europe's neighbourhood.

All this applied to the West, the East, the non-aligned countries – despite ideological and systemic differences. However, these differences became more and more noticeable from around 1970 onwards. Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik and especially the CSCE process from 1973 onwards and later the disarmament talks were intended to counteract the negative consequences.

I will not deepen these thoughts and work out the differences between the blocks (west, east, non-aligned). It would also not change the realization that the nation states owe their survival as a normal form of government not to themselves, but to the European or international embedding. Strictly speaking, the EU is only one of several possibilities, but it is the most successful.

One important lesson can be drawn from this: Anyone wishing to join the EU is welcome to see oneself as a nation state, but must be aware that there are narrow limits to nationalism. Nationalism leads to a loss of sovereignty. This means that the Russian Federation and China are not serious alternatives to the EU, the proximity to these two empires leads to a loss of sovereignty, while membership of the EU maintains as long as national consciousness or patriotism does not become nationalism.

European integration, the result of which is the EU, has relaxed the relationship between the nation states on important points – in favour of peace. In the EU and the internal market, the political borders between states no longer play the same role as in the past. In the past, these were borders that hindered or interrupted the mobility of people, goods and capital. Borders were needed to assert a national identity. Today, borders in the EU are permeable and people themselves decide where they want to live and work. I say this with a view to Serbia and Kosovo. The solution lies in joint membership of the EU.

Think of the German-French and German-Polish neighbourhood, of the wars in which one of the questions has been the national affiliation of Alsace-Lorraine or Silesia and Gdansk.

Today it is a remote story, the borders are open, because these countries are together in the EU, the people have reached out their hands. EU law protects minorities and prohibits discrimination. These are not empty words, the European Court of Justice is judging, the EU Commission ensures that the law applies and is enforced.

Not least because of this, only democratic countries can become members of the EU.

From the time between the two world wars one could learn that the form of government of democracy could only develop well if the neighbouring states were or remained democratic. In the EU, the democratic form of government, which is a constitutional state based on human rights, plays a central role in the way the EU sees itself. Those who want to safeguard and protect their democracy are right in the EU.

There are two points to note here: (1) The fact that the EU is so clearly linked to democracy, the rule of law and human rights was not the case from the outset. This has only developed over the years. (2) The Member States may all be regarded as democracies, but the EU Treaty expressly grants them their own legal traditions and their preservation. No state constitution in Europe is the same as any other.

The EU Treaty regulates what falls within the exclusive competence of the Commission – that is the supranational element. The Treaty regulates what is to be decided jointly by the Commission and the Member States; everything else remains in principle a national competence, even if there are common legal principles such as non-discrimination, which always apply and must be applied, no matter who is responsible.

Everyday life in the EU shows that it is not always easy to keep a balance here. There is a temptation to put national egoisms or party political goals, which are sold to the public as national goals, above the goals of the community.

In particular, problems that have causes outside Europe have been pointing to fault lines for some years now. That is why I stressed earlier that the EU is at least as global as it is European. It has long been a great mistake to believe that the EU is only about Europe and about making itself at home in Europe. No, it is more and more about tackling global problems that can only be tackled by a strong community and not as a single state.

A community like the EU opens up certain political choices to all who are in the process, as different interests are constantly being negotiated with each other. It is often like a bazaar. Everyone knows that you have to pay a price to others for your interests, but you can push the price down or get more for the same price. As long as this system is not overused and

overly selfishly abused, it will work, and if it gets out of balance, it will be delicate. A community like the EU does not work without a minimum of solidarity among its members.

Many fields, such as international migration, climate change, international trade, digitisation, organised crime, terrorism, war, are global phenomena, but they affect each individual state and each individual. This leads to special national paths, which are usually combined with the claim to power of one party each, as in Poland until December 2023, and currently Hungary. The securing and expansion of the power of one party in the country is combined with transnational problems and the refusal of solidarity. In addition, alliances are being built with empires such as the Russian Federation and China, knowing that these two are more interested in a weak than a strong EU.

No matter which international organization or community a country wants to join, there are always current problems as well as advantages. The EU is no exception. Membership brings with it obligations as well as rights, nobody can only benefit from it, but must also take the legitimate interests of others into consideration as a gesture of solidarity.

These statements are banal, but are constantly present in the everyday life of a membership. But since this is always the case and everywhere, one can simply say that it is part of it.

I believe that Serbia can accelerate the accession process if it not only talks and negotiates with the EU institutions and other European governments, but also promotes itself to EU citizens. There is little knowledge about Serbia in the western parts of Europe. Serbia could change that. It is advisable not only for Serbia, but for every European country, not only to concern itself with itself and its historical problems, but also to approach the populations of the other countries and interest them in themselves.

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¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/eu-enlargement_en#context.