

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the European Union's (EU) cooperation mechanisms, primarily EU enlargement, in its pursuit of relations with the Western Balkans states as candidate members of the EU. By applying Buzan's security frameworks, this study assesses the monumental shift in the EU's cooperation frameworks, which are reactive and entangled with concerns of geopolitical security and threats, exemplified by Western Balkans states as a result of the aforementioned discourse process. The first research provides an analysis of the EU's enlargement agenda and how it sees the Western Balkans as a geopolitical strategy, utilizing Buzan's security framework and its multi-dimensionality to formulate the argument in which securitization affects EU's approach towards enlargement. The second research will then focus on the Western Balkans states as individual domestic actors in reacting to the shift of the EU's enlargement process, demonstrating how Albania, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina possess different interests and stances regarding EU enlargement which solidifies a respond in countering Russia's influence in the region as a securitized actor. Through qualitative analysis, this research argues that EU enlargement with the Western Balkans exemplifies an alignment of cooperation that will give in, despite of its historical ties with the EU and/or Russia, to mutually benefit both parties, particularly in terms of security, politics, economics, social, and cultural measures. The findings contribute to discussions on European politics, EU enlargement, securitization, and the role of the circulation of norms and ideas in addressing geopolitics.

Keywords: European Politics, European Union, EU cooperation frameworks, EU enlargement, EU normative power, Geopolitical dynamics in Western Balkans, Identity of Western Balkans in Europe, Securitization, Security Multi-Dimensionality, Cognitive Prior, Europeanization, Stabilitocracy, Ukraine-Russia war